

Texas and North Carolina are considered leaders in high school redesign because of the breadth and scope of their efforts. Texas is recognized for having pushed the national policy dialogue with regard to high school redesign, in partnership with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. Somewhat ahead of other states, Texas embarked on high school improvement in 2003, benefiting from an effective public-private partnership. In addition, Texas was one of the first states to move forward with an early warning system to combat high school dropout rates, and it is addressing 21st-century learning skills needs with a science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) initiative.

North Carolina was one of the first states to have a statewide system of support (pre-dating NCLB). The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NC DPI) seeks to change its image from punitive to supportive through its actions. It demonstrates a desire to ensure that its schools effectively teach *all* students. NC DPI is known for the careful and thoughtful development of its theory of action and continues to adjust its turnaround initiative and approach based on what it learns to ensure that low-performing schools are being served in the best way possible.

## Texas

Important features of Texas's programs include smaller learning communities, relationship building, and family involvement to prepare students for college, work, and life. In addition to several initiatives for turning around low-performing schools in general from which high schools can benefit, Texas has implemented the Texas High School Project (<http://www.thsp.org>), a \$260 million public-private partnership established in 2003 to improve graduation rates and enhance high school students' career and college readiness. The following are important initiatives under this project:

- The **Texas High School Redesign and Restructuring Program** (<http://www.tea.state.tx.us/index3.aspx?id=4469>) is a voluntary, competitive grant program designed to assist high schools rated "Academically Unacceptable" on a campus accountability rating.
  - Ratings are based in part on percentages of subgroup performance and students passing state tests (Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills).
  - The program provides schools with resources to implement innovative, research-based, schoolwide improvement programs.
  - The program is administered by the Texas Education Agency Division of Education Initiative, with technical assistance provided by the Region XIII Education Service Center.
- **Early College High Schools** ([http://www.thsp.org/initiatives/early\\_college](http://www.thsp.org/initiatives/early_college)) funds higher education systems to create programs in high-needs areas to give opportunities for high-risk students to earn a high school diploma and complete up to 60 college credits.
  - The program uses partnerships with foundations and private organizations.
  - The program has 12 programs throughout the state.

- **The 9th Grade Transition and Intervention Program** (<http://www.tea.state.tx.us/index3.aspx?id=3629>) prepares students for transition using both summer programs and school-year interventions.
- **Education Leadership** ([http://www.thsp.org/initiatives/education\\_leadership/](http://www.thsp.org/initiatives/education_leadership/)) supports leadership reform by providing technical assistance for leadership development and funds development of more rigorous teacher training and preparation programs.
  - The program uses partnerships with foundations.
  - The program seeks to align district and state policies.
- **New and Charter Schools** ([http://www.thsp.org/initiatives/new\\_charter\\_schools/](http://www.thsp.org/initiatives/new_charter_schools/)) supports the creation of new, high-quality college preparatory high schools as models in the public school system showing that all children can achieve.
- **Texas Science, Technology, Engineering & Mathematics** ([http://www.thsp.org/initiatives/t\\_stem/](http://www.thsp.org/initiatives/t_stem/)) is an effort to increase student achievement in all these disciplines to ensure students are prepared for 21st century jobs.
  - This program supports STEM academies and centers across the state to facilitate student and teacher preparation.

## North Carolina

The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction has implemented a statewide [Turnaround Program](#), which provides a multifaceted set of resources, training, and support to the state's lowest-performing high schools (<http://www.dpi.state.nc.us/turnaround/>). High schools are identified for North Carolina's Turnaround Program based on their students' performance on end-of-course examinations in five core subjects.

Once identified, turnaround schools are required to undergo a standard school improvement planning process in which they create an individually tailored "Framework for Action" that includes each of the following elements (Public Schools of North Carolina, n.d.):

- "Plan for 9th grade transition
- "Plan for formative assessment
- "Plan for assistance to struggling students
- "Plan for identifying and addressing literacy issues and needs
- "Plan for professional development based on student achievement data
- "Plan for reviewing all school processes and procedures to ensure that they are structured to help all students achieve proficiency
- "Process for involving the total school community in addressing the needs of the school
- "Process for establishing a professional learning community
- "Process for determining whether the school will redesign or reform...

- “Process for implementation redesign or reform...”

As part of their Framework for Action, turnaround schools must choose to implement one of three state-selected reform models—America’s Choice, Talent Development High Schools, or the North Carolina New Schools Project—or apply for the state’s approval to implement a customized reform design.

Throughout their involvement in the Turnaround Program, schools receive ongoing assistance from a state-sponsored leadership coach as well as a set of state-assigned instructional facilitators in four core content areas: mathematics, English language arts, science, and social studies. Furthermore, schools participate in various professional learning activities, including a principal executive leadership training series and teacher staff development opportunities.

North Carolina is currently working with three cohorts of schools operating on three-year support cycles. The third cohort will finish in June 2010, when, due to capacity issues, North Carolina will phase out the Turnaround Program and transfer most support services to the district level. At that time, districts will assume primary responsibility for supporting improvement in their low-performing schools, and state-level assistance efforts will focus on the state’s most challenged districts.

Public Schools of North Carolina. (n.d.). Framework for Action [Website]. Retrieved August 19, 2009, from <http://www.dpi.state.nc.us/turnaround/framework/>