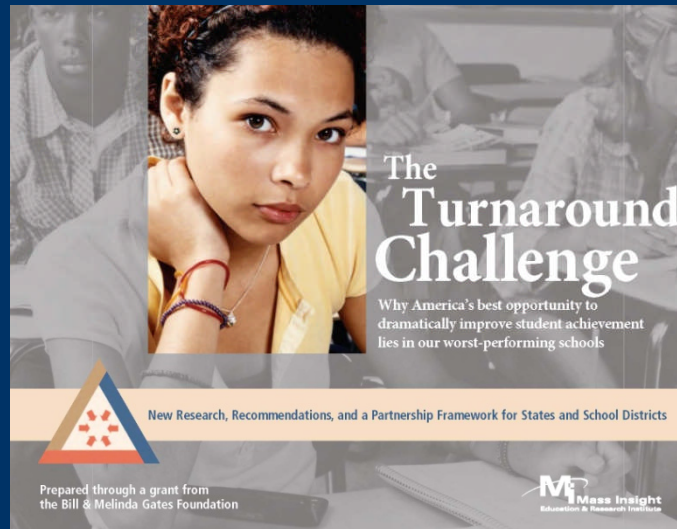


Understanding the School Turnaround Challenge

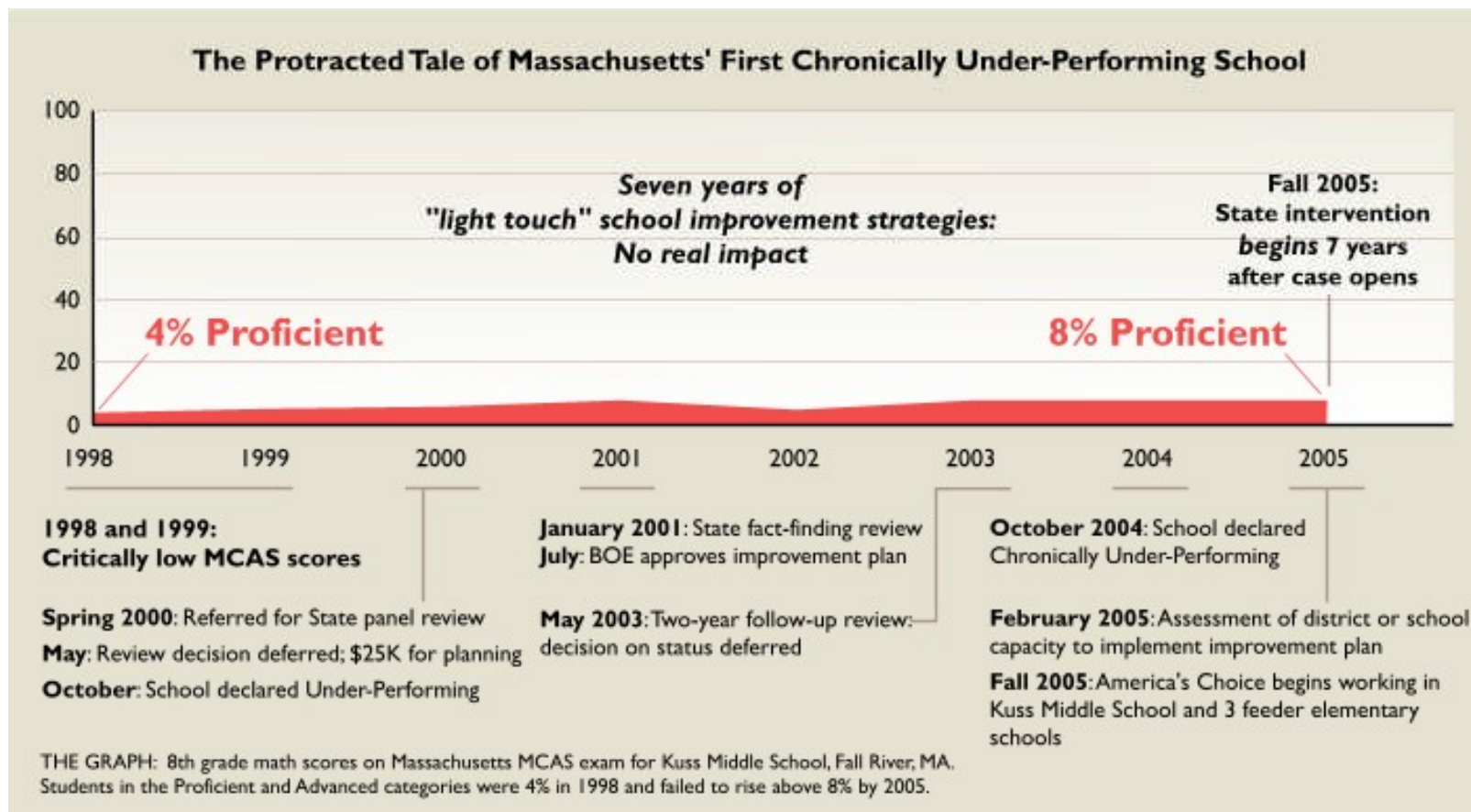
Preliminary Findings of the *Educational Capital* of the
New Tools Task Force

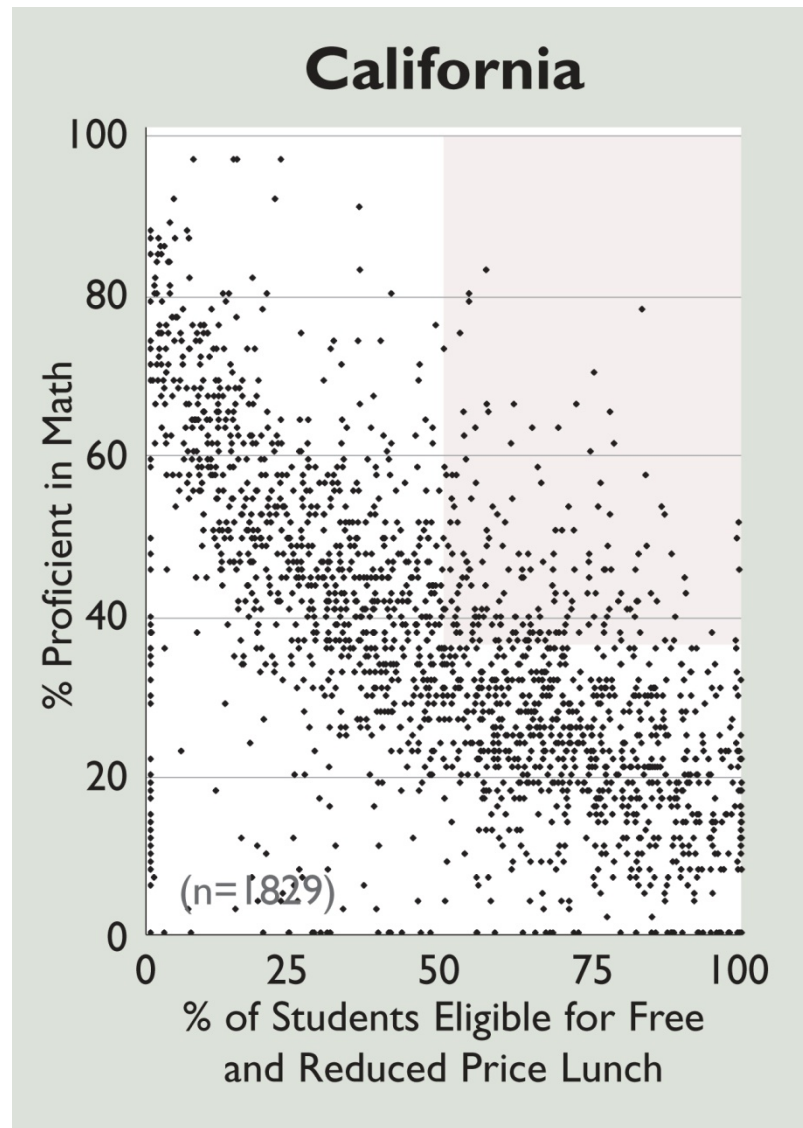
When Bold Steps Are Needed: What does it *really* take to turn around schools?



**Analysis and Recommendations
from the report produced by
Mass Insight Education & Research Institute, Inc.**
— Developed under a grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation —

The story of school turnaround to date: *marginal change = marginal results*





**Every state's challenge:
breaking the seemingly
unbreakable connection
between poverty and
underperformance**

**As poverty levels increase, achievement
decreases**

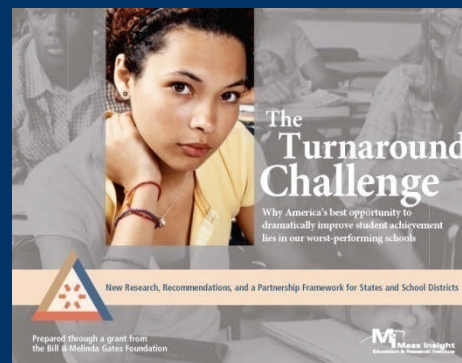
Higher-poverty schools

California 8th Grade Math Scores, 2006

Task 1:

Learn from schools that are proving *it can be done...*

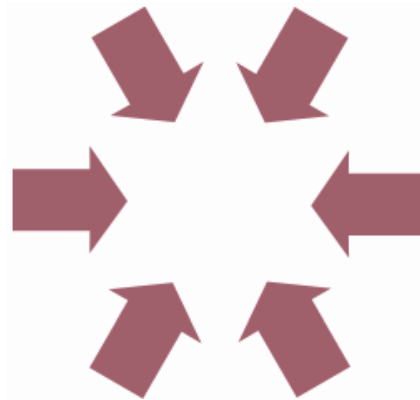
...and identify the challenges
that have limited the impact
of traditional reform strategies



**The “What’s Being Taught?”
schooling model:
*keep up with the curricular conveyer belt***



**The “What’s Being Learned?” schooling model in high-
performing, high-poverty schools:
*we commit to helping each of you succeed***



Effective schools serving disadvantaged students show these characteristics:

ANALYSIS

A clear understanding of student needs:

- Preparedness: skill levels of entering students
- Relationships: from “us/them” and “my grade/your grade” to “we/all”
- Relevance: making the learning incentive real
- Environment: social support and community connectedness

Well-integrated strategies and the capacity to deliver them:

- Rigor: higher-expectation curriculum linked to standards
- Assessment: focusing on what’s being *learned*, not *taught*
- Differentiation: structured support tuned to student needs
- Instructional capacity: professional culture of teaching & learning
- Leadership capacity: team-based management of improvement

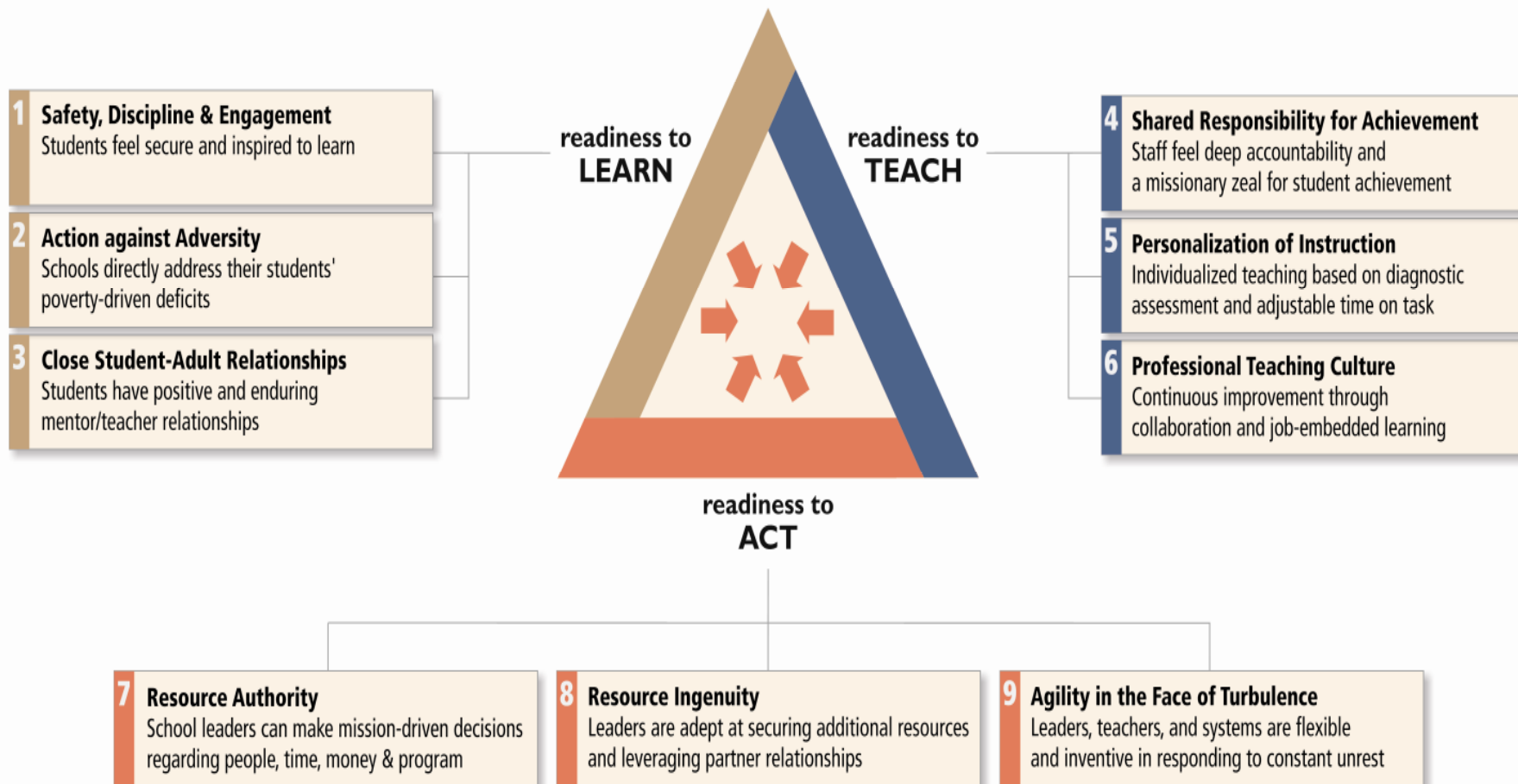
Conditions and incentives that support the work:

- Freedom to act: authority over money, time, people, program
- Professional HR norms & mission-driven incentives

How do high-performing, high-poverty schools do it? ANALYSIS

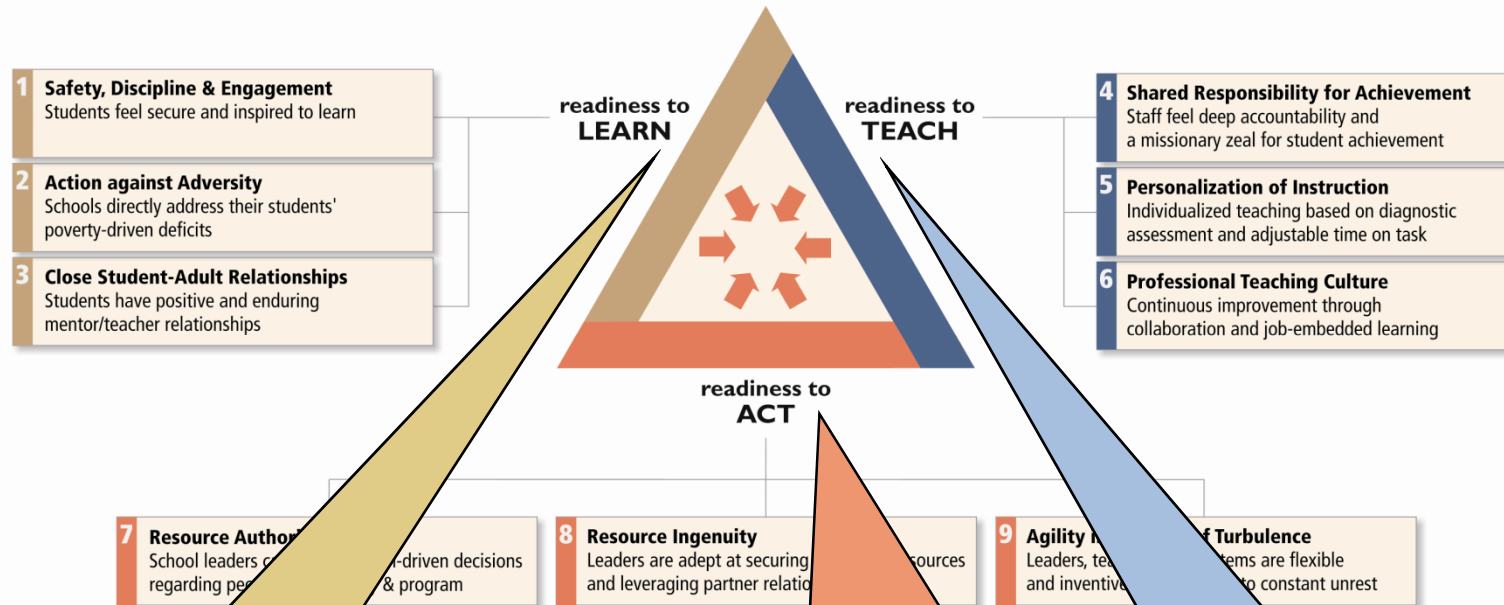
They foster students' *readiness to learn*; focus staff's *readiness to teach*; and expand their *readiness to act*.

HPHP READINESS MODEL



Understanding where even “comprehensive” *school improvement* has focused – and where it has stopped short

Elements of High-Performing, High-Poverty Schools Nationally:
Mass Insight’s “Readiness” model



Little focus on tailoring strategies to meet the different needs of high-poverty enrollments – students’ *readiness to learn*

Virtually no focus on changing the context of operating conditions in which reform takes place – educators’ *readiness to act*

Intensive focus on curriculum, instruction, assessment – teachers’ *readiness to teach*

What's Stopping You?

Create a map of the design challenges in your way

Human capacity

- Adequacy of teacher workforce
- Adequacy of top and distributed team leadership
- Adequacy of outside support system (all partners and TA)

Operating conditions

- Freedom to act: authority over key resources (money, time, people, programming) to make mission- and data-driven decisions
- Freedom from unproductive or overlapping compliance burdens
- Incentives that drive adult (and student) behavior

Resources

- Adequacy of time for learning
- Adequacy of time for teacher planning, collaboration, PD
- Adequacy of resource support in general (class size, facilities, etc.)

Four summary observations about school reform:

1. Most school reform shows up in schools as fairly disconnected *projects*



2. Even more recent efforts to make reform more comprehensive only address part of the challenge (see Readiness Triangle)



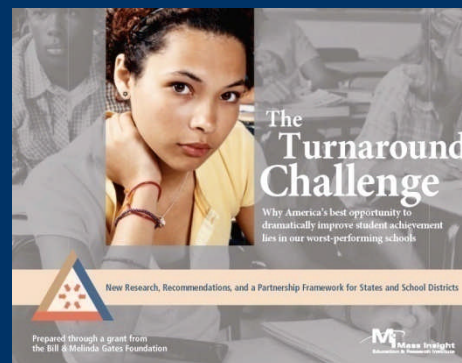
3. Truly comprehensive, transformational reform is difficult to achieve because it challenges conventional structures, processes, and “turf”



4. Chronically underperforming schools and their districts present the most plausible access point to mount that kind of reform – because the need for real change is so clear

Task 2:

*Define the **non-negotiables***
for successful turnaround at scale –
i.e., across a number of schools
in a cluster



**Turnaround:
a dramatic and comprehensive
intervention in a low-performing school
that**

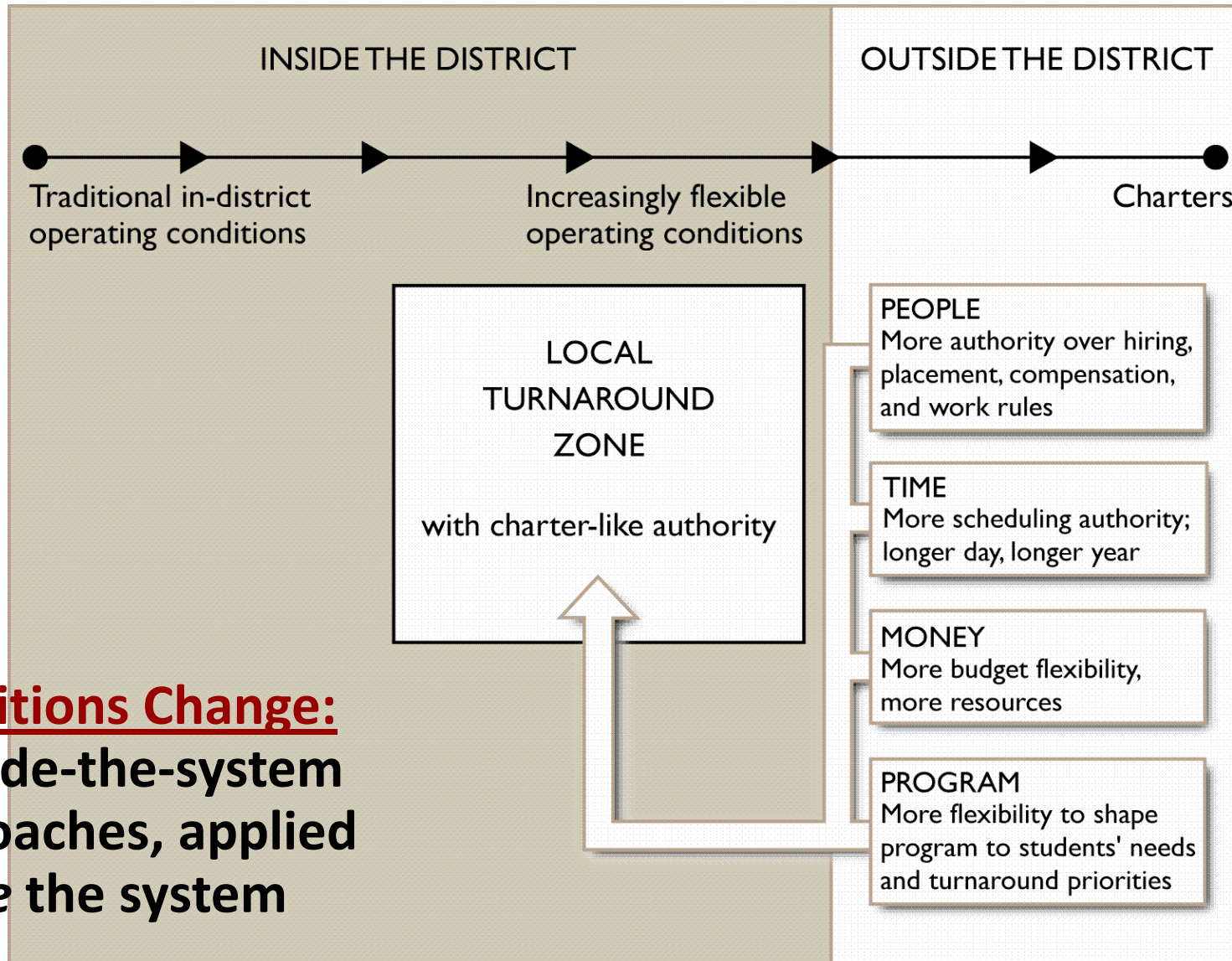
**a) produces significant gains in
achievement within two years; and**

**b) readies the school for the longer
process of transformation into a high-
performance organization**

So: What would reform that incorporates all three sides of the triangle look like?

The 3 'C's of comprehensive, coherent, *transformative* reform

- 1 Conditions** Change the rules and incentives governing people, time, money, & program
- 2 Capacity** Build turnaround resources & human capacity in schools and lead partners
- 3 Clustering** Organize in clusters by region, need, or type -- where new conditions apply and states/districts create special capacity



Conditions Change:
Outside-the-system
approaches, applied
***inside* the system**

Changing the operating conditions to support *transformation*, not just marginal change

First Critical Element: PEOPLE

Traditional School Improvement:

Help current staff perform at a higher level

- Staff development, coaching
- Leadership development

Comprehensive Turnaround:

Establish professional norms for HR management

- Turnaround leaders have authority, resources to staff the school as needed to fulfill the turnaround plan
 - Incentives to recruit highly capable teachers
 - Flexibility on staff hiring, allocation, work rules
 - Flexibility, time to make staff development coherent

Changing the operating conditions to support *transformation*, not just marginal change

Second Critical Element: TIME

Traditional School Improvement:

Some initiatives: adjust schedule, within same-length school day and year

- Block scheduling
- Extra common planning time for educators

Comprehensive Turnaround:

Expand school day and year and reinvent schedule, to fulfill turnaround plan

- Significantly more time for teacher collaborating, instruction
- Strategic assessment, re-engineering of schedule to support the plan

Changing the operating conditions to support *transformation*, not just marginal change

Third Critical Element: MONEY

Traditional School Improvement:

No real impact on budgetary authority in most cases

- Additional resources (usually staff development)

Comprehensive Turnaround

Authority to re-allocate budget to support coherent plan

- Ability to re-allocate budget strategically
- Sufficient additional resources to support the plan
 - Pay for extra time
 - Pay for incentives
 - Pay for partner support

Changing the operating conditions to support *transformation*, not just marginal change

Fourth Critical Element: PROGRAM

Traditional School Improvement:

Improve quality of current strategies

- Consulting support
- Curriculum, instruction, assessment tools and strategies

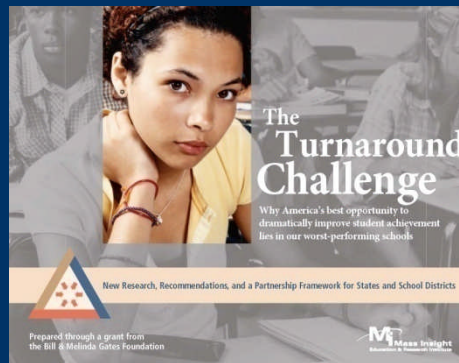
Comprehensive Turnaround:

Tailor program and overall school approach to suit needs of high-challenge enrollments

- Coherent, whole-school plan
- Integrate strategies to address impacts of poverty on students
- Relief from compliance burden in order to focus on instruction

Task 3:

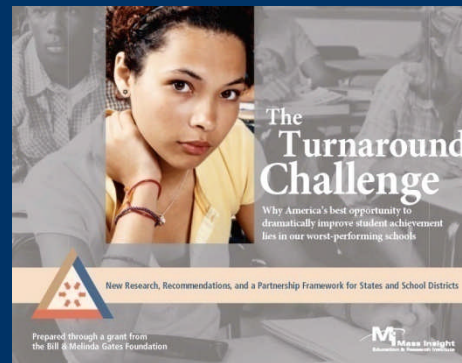
Apply the non-negotiable strategies within a new, comprehensive set of structures and supports to serve highly challenged schools and districts statewide



***Why* has so little fundamental change occurred nationally in failing schools to date?**

- **Lack of leverage:** No real help from NCLB; incremental reforms remain the common choice
- **Lack of capacity:** In state agencies, districts, schools, partners
- **Lack of exemplars:** No successful models at scale, no real consensus even on definitions
- **Lack of public will:** Failing schools have no constituency; hence, insufficient funding to date

Three Core Principles to Remember



Three core principles on school turnaround design have emerged from this research:

1. *Marginal change yields marginal results.*

School turnaround differs substantially from *school improvement*.

School improvement is 99% of what's been tried.

The high-performing, high-poverty schools show: we need a change process that leads to a dramatically different model for these schools.

Three core principles on school turnaround design have emerged from the research:

2. *Dramatic change requires bold, comprehensive action from the state, together with districts and partners*

Many communities lack the collective will to act boldly on their own.

***Acting boldly* means addressing the basic operating context of schools and ensuring readiness to teach, learn, and act**

Three core principles on school turnaround design have emerged from the research:

3. In the end, it's about people, more than programs.

Dramatic change at scale requires that states, regions, and districts find ways to add new capacity – and free up the most capable people currently in schools and districts to do their best work