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Contemporary Perspectives on School Turnaround and Reform

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School Turnaround in Secondary Schools Possibilities, Complexities, & Sustainability

Coby V. Meyers, University of Virginia; Marlene J. Darwin, American Institutes for Research

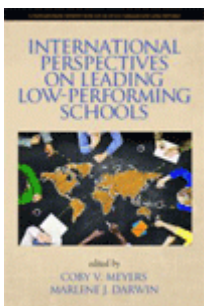
2019. Paperback 978-1-64113-873-4 \$45.99. Hardcover 978-1-64113-874-1 \$85.99. eBook 978-1-64113-875-8 \$65.

In the continuing quest to turnaround the lowest performing schools, rapid and sustainable reform, or school turnaround, seems most elusive for secondary schools. Secondary schools are rife with challenges due to their wide-ranging mission and organizational complexity. With the continued emphasis on college and career readiness and the vast learning possibilities enhanced by technology, our third book in this series, *Contemporary Perspectives on School Turnaround and Reform*, focuses on rapid school turnaround and reform in secondary schools.

In this edited volume, researchers and scholars consider the doubly perplexing challenge of school turnaround or the rapid improvement of the lowest-performing secondary schools. Although there is some evidence that school turnaround policy can impact student achievement scores, research across international contexts seldom identifies schools that substantially changed student learning trajectories and sustained them. Separately, many societies have found improving secondary schools a relatively intractable problem for multiple reasons, including school size and complexity, the micropolitics of teaching and leading within them, and cumulative widening student achievement gaps. In combination, there are almost no examples of low-performing secondary schools turning around.

The chapters in this book begin to offer some hope about how policymakers, practitioners, and researchers might begin to reconceptualize how they engage in and undertake the work of rapidly improving low-performing secondary schools. The authors provide theoretical and conceptual advancements, offer lessons learned from both successful and unsuccessful initiatives, and address practical issues with potentially accessible ways forward.

CONTENTS: Organizing Across Districts and Schools for Secondary-Level Turnaround, *Marlene J. Darwin and Coby V. Meyers*. The Secondary School Turnaround Model, *Dorit Tubin*. Heads and Tails: Possibilities and Limitations of High School Transformation, *Raquel Miño-Puigcercós and Juana M^a Sancho-Gil*. An Institutional Perspective on School Turnaround in New York City, *Madhu Narayanan*. Activating Turnaround Leadership through Solicitation of Data-Informed Decision-making Within Australian Public Schools, *Venesser Fernandes and Michael Henderson*. High School Improvement: Moving from THE Students to OUR Students, *Carmen Mombourquette, Jacey Burkholder and Corey Baker*. Promising Strategies for Improving High Schools in Massachusetts, *Alexandra M. Kistner and Laura B. Stein*. Recognizing the Strengths of 'Failing Schools': An Evidence-Based Way to Sustainable Change? *Stephan Drucks, Nina Bremm, Isabell van Ackeren, and Esther Dominique Klein*. Leadership Teams in Secondary Schools: An Untapped Resource for Promoting Improvement? *Bryan A. VanGronigen*. Where's the Playbook? Curriculum, Infrastructure, and High School Turnaround, *Adrian Larbi-Cherif, Sarah Winchell Lenhoff, and Joshua L. Glazer*. Toward an Agenda for Increased Focus on Turning Around Low-Performing Secondary Schools, *Coby V. Meyers and Marlene J. Darwin*. Biographies.



International Perspectives on Leading Low-Performing Schools

Coby V. Meyers, University of Virginia; Marlene J. Darwin, American Institutes for Research

2018. Paperback 978-1-64113-343-2 \$45.99. Hardcover 978-1-64113-344-9 \$85.99. eBook 978-1-64113-345-6 \$65.

Research is clear: School leadership quality matters. However, our knowledge of effective school leadership remains limited in at least three substantial ways. First, our understanding of school leadership effectiveness generally and school principal effectiveness specifically is limited to Western contexts, primarily North America and western European ones. Second, even in the confines of Western research and context, there has been relatively little specific focus on effectively leading low-performing schools. Third, even the conceptualization of leadership—do we mean the school principal, an administrative team, or a broader school leadership team—is a key factor in how we define and respond to the challenge of leading in low-performing schools. This book advances discussion and disseminates knowledge and global perspectives on what school leadership looks like, how it is enacted and under what circumstances, and when or where lessons might be portable.

We anticipate this book having wide appeal for researchers, policymakers, and practitioners considering school leadership and how to support it effectively. The chapters suggest a noticeable level of convergence globally on how to lead low-performing schools effectively. Yet, there are clear political and culture differences that add significant gradation to how school leaders might enact best practice locally or inform policymakers and systems leaders about how to set up school leaders for success and subsequently support them. This book is one of the first that prioritizes the universality and nuance of leading low-performing schools globally.

CONTENTS: International Perspectives on Leading Low-Performing Schools: Opportunities for Local Improvement, *Coby V. Meyers and Marlene J. Darwin*. Reclaiming Turnaround for Equity and Excellence: Leadership Moves to Build Capacity for Teaching and Learning, *Vicki Park, Cori Groth, Janice Bradley, and Andrea Rorrer*. Successful School Leadership in Japan: A Principal's Story in a High Minority Junior High School, *Ruth Ahn, Betty Alford, Hisayoshi Mori, and Amy Gimino*. Leadership Practices of Turning Around Low-Performing Schools in a Developing Country: An Asset-Based Perspective, *Sekitla Daniel Makhasane and Fumane Portia Khanare*. Against the Odds: Leadership Practices of a Redeployed Principal in Challenging Contexts in China, *Cathy Ping Xie*. The Negative Influence of Weak Leadership in Transforming a Low-Performing Rural School in Costa Rica, *Heilyn Camacho and Mayela Coto*. Building Cross-School Research Communities as a Leadership Strategy to Transform Chinese Rural Primary Turnaround School, *Peng Liu*. The Role of Leadership in Improving Low-Performing Schools: The Chilean Case, *Xavier Vanni, Nicole Bustos, Juan Pablo Valenzuela, and Cristian Bellei*. Generative Leadership in Alberta: The Power of Partnerships in School Improvement, *Carmen Mombourquette and Pamela Adams*. Supporting Schools in Challenging Circumstances in Germany: The Berlin Bonus Program, *Susanne Boese, Marko Neumann, Theresè Gesswein, Eunji Lee, Stefan Brauckmann, and Kai Maaz*. Leadership for Learning in Lithuania: Implications for Teaching and Student Achievements in Schools, *Eglė Staniškienė, Berita Simonaitienė, Brigita Stanikūnienė, Jūratė Valuckienė, and Sigita Balčiūnas*. No Simple Fixes for Schools in Challenging Circumstances: Contextualization for Germany, *Stephan Gerhard Huber*. Leading Turnaround and Improvement in Low-Performing Schools in Malaysia and Indonesia, *Alma Harris, Michelle Jones, Nashwa Ismail, Donnie Adams, and Bambang Sumintono*. Understanding Leadership to Turn Schools Around: A Review of Research Evidence, *Jingping Sun, Brenda Mendiola, Mingda Sun, and Sijia Zhang*. The Paradox of Improvement: Aspirational Professionalism in an End-of-Exceptionalism Era, *David Eddy-Spicer*. About the Editors.



Enduring Myths That Inhibit School Turnaround

Coby V. Meyers, University of Virginia; Marlene J. Darwin, American Institutes for Research

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The concept of school turnaround—rapidly improving schools and increasing student achievement outcomes in a short period of time—has become politicized despite the relative newness of the idea. Unprecedented funding levels for school improvement combined with few examples of schools substantially increasing student achievement outcomes has resulted in doubt about whether or not turnaround is achievable. Skeptics have enumerated a number of reasons to abandon school turnaround at this early juncture. This book is the first in a new series on school turnaround and reform intended to spur ongoing dialogue among and between researchers, policymakers, and practitioners on improving the lowest-performing schools and the systems in which they operate. The “turnaround challenge” remains salient regardless of what we call it. We must improve the nation’s lowest-performing schools for many moral, social, and economic reasons.

In this first book, education researchers and scholars have identified a number of myths that have inhibited our ability to successfully turn schools around. Our intention is not to suggest that if these myths are addressed school turnaround will always be achieved. Business and other literatures outside of education make it clear that turnaround is, at best, difficult work. However, for a number of reasons, we in education have developed policies and practices that are often antithetical to turnaround. Indeed, we are making already challenging work harder. The myths identified in this book suggest that we still struggle to define or understand what we mean by turnaround or how best, or even adequately, measure whether it has been achieved. Moreover, it is clear that there are a number of factors limiting how effectively we structure and support low-performing schools both systemically and locally. And we have done a rather poor job of effectively leveraging human resources to raise student achievement and improve organizational outcomes.

We anticipate this book having wide appeal for researchers, policymakers, and practitioners in consideration of how to support these schools taking into account context, root causes of low-performance, and the complex work to ensure their opportunity to be successful. Too frequently we have expected these schools to turn themselves around while failing to assist them with the vision and supports to realize meaningful, lasting organizational change. The myths identified and

debunked in this book potentially illustrate a way forward.

CONTENTS: Introduction: Debunking School Turnaround Myths, *Coby V. Meyers and Marlene Darwin*. **SECTION I: HOW CAN THE SCHOOL TURNAROUND CONVERSATION BE FRAMED DIFFERENTLY?** The Failure Fallacy: Examining the Rate of School Turnaround, *Craig Hochbein and Abby Mahone*. Understanding Decline and Failure Is Foundational to Moving Forward, *Coby V. Meyers, Craig Hochbein, Mark Smylie, Samuel Stringfield, and Marc Stein*. Neither Urban Core Nor Rural Fringe: “In-Between” Districts and the Shifting Landscape of School Performance in the United States, *David Eddy-Spicer, Erin Anderson, and Frank Perrone*. **SECTION II: HOW ARE SCHOOL TURNAROUND EFFORTS STRUCTURED AND SUPPORTED SYSTEMICALLY?** The Myth of the Single Lever Turnaround, *Sam Stringfield, Eugene Schaffer, and David Reynolds*. Everything But the Kitchen Sink: How an Abundance of Concurrent Efforts Thwarts School Improvement, *Kerstin Carlson Le Floch, Aaron Butler, and Catherine Barbour*. Reframing Turnaround: From a School Initiative to a System Initiative, *Caitlin Scott, Lenay Dunn, and Carlas McCauley*. Unfinished Business: State Education Agencies and Their Capacity to Lead School Turnaround, *Joshua Childs*. **SECTION III: HOW ARE SCHOOL TURNAROUND EFFORTS STRUCTURED AND SUPPORTED LOCALLY?** Autonomy and Accountability in Turnaround Work: The Myth of Portfolio Districts and Organizational Learning, *Laura Groth, Matthew Malone, and Joshua L. Glazer*. Assessing School Turnarounds: Using an Integrative Framework to Identify Levers for Success, *Kirsten Lee Hill, Laura Desimone, Tonya Wolford, and Adrienne Reitano*. Moving Beyond the Myths of Turnaround to Address the Intersection of Poverty and Urban Schooling, *Kecia Hayes, Angela Fulcher, Catherine Hogg, Michael Ramsey, and Danielle Proscia*. Turning Around From Within: Using Internal Capacity to Improve Low-Performing Schools, *Adriana Villavicencio*. **SECTION IV: WHO CAN PROPEL SCHOOL TURNAROUND FORWARD?** An Enduring Myth: Turnaround Leadership Is Identity Neutral, *Jennie M. Weiner and Laura Burton*. Should They Stay or Should They Go? The Mythical Appeal of Staff Replacement As a Turnaround Strategy, *Elizabeth Mann, Rebecca Herman, and Michael Hansen*. **SECTION V: HOW IS SCHOOL TURNAROUND CONCEPTUALIZED AND/OR MEASURED?** Turnaround As Faustian Bargain: The Myth of Virtuous Action, *Kimberly Kappler Hewitt and Ulrich Reitzug*. The Fallacy of School Grades: Exploring the Myth That Public Shaming Leads to School Improvement, *Robert Smith and Scott Imig*. School Turnarounds and the Test of Time, *Dallas Hambrick Hitt and Coby V. Meyers*. Changing the School Turnaround Conversation, *Marlene Darwin and Coby V. Meyers*. About the Editors.



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