



Lake County School District

Learning Beyond Walls

Key Factors in School Turnaround in Lake County School District

Lake County School District (LCSD) is working diligently to ensure that all of our students have equitable access to a rigorous and engaging education. The State Accountability System and the Colorado Department of Education's (CDE) Turnaround Network have incentivized and supported our work.

The State Accountability System

The State plays a vital role in identifying low performing schools and ensuring that all students have access to a high quality education. In LCSD the accountability system identified our district and schools as low performing. The system also expected action on behalf of the district and identified potential pathways that might improve our low performing schools. In these ways, the system incentivized us to act and also provided the Board and the superintendent with a framework for engaging the community in conversations regarding the status of our schools and how we might improve them.

The Turnaround Network at the Colorado Department of Education

Once we were incentivized to act we needed support. We wanted to improve, but didn't have all of the knowledge or capacity to do it on our own. Through work with the Turnaround Network at the CDE we built our capacity to turn our schools around. Our schools now have stronger leadership, effective professional development, better developed academic systems and positive, orderly climates. At the district level we help schools recruit and retain effective teachers, focus resources on student achievement and continually increase community involvement and transparency. Supports we received from the Network include:

- An initial comprehensive assessment of the status our schools to help us identify opportunities for improvement and prioritize next steps.
- Ongoing work with a Turnaround Support Manager, who helped us create annual strategic plans for each school and visited quarterly to build our capacity to monitor progress and develop next steps.

- Turnaround Network convenings throughout the school year, where schools and districts from across the Network come together and learn about important topics like teacher and leader recruitment and retention, professional development, effective use of data and observation and feedback for teachers and leaders. Convenings also offer an opportunity to network with other turnaround schools and districts.
- Access to key partner organizations to support school improvement. Many of our school and teacher leaders are implementing culture and instructional turnaround practices we learned from the Relay Graduate School of Education. We also calibrate our instruction to the State Academic Standards thanks to strategies we learned from the Achievement Network.

A Turnaround Pathway for Rural Schools – Capacity Building Partnerships

Our schools and district came off of the clock before we would have been required to adopt one of the designated turnaround pathways. Well before we came to the end of the clock, we developed a hybrid version of the pathway, “Management by a Public or Private Entity.” Rather than try to engage an organization to come in and take over our schools, we sought to work with partner organizations to help us build our own capacity. These partner organizations include the Relay Graduate School of Education, the Achievement Network, EL Education and the Turnaround Network. Working with partners is a pragmatic solution in a rural setting for a variety of reasons including:

- To ensure sustainability, we knew we had to build the capacity of the people who live in Lake County and will continue to live in Lake County after a partner is gone. By building our own capacity we are not fiscally or otherwise dependent on an outside organization.
- We believed that by working with our community, in our particular context we would find the local solutions that best meet the needs of our students, families and community.
- We were not aware of any management organizations that were working with and demonstrating success in schools in rural areas.

By creating a hybrid pathway, working with partners to build our own capacity, we are making progress and experiencing success. While we still have work to do, we are proud to say that our pathway is working. Our two schools that receive state ratings have been rated as having a performance plan, the highest rating a school can receive.