Indicator: The LEA has aligned resource allocation (money, time, human resources) within each school's instructional priorities. (5171)

Explanation: The evidence review confirms that low performing schools can experience rapid and sustainable growth when an LEA grants greater autonomies and flexibilities to those entities. An LEA should allow the school leadership to identify and respond to its students' unique needs by extending decision-making authorities in the areas of its building budget, scheduling, and hiring.

Questions: What process will the LEA use to examine its current governance practices? How will the LEA transfer budget autonomies to school level leaders? How will the LEA transfer time and scheduling autonomies to school level leaders? How will the LEA transfer personnel including hiring, evaluation, and dismissal autonomies to school level leaders?

The LEA should provide schools with flexibility in budgeting, scheduling, and staffing. Programs, expenditures, schedules and staffing should promote the transformation. Consider time the most expensive resource.

Evidence Review:
Providing Flexibility in Staffing, Scheduling, Budget

State legislatures, governors, state boards of education, SEAs, and districts are uniquely positioned to create the conditions for change. As a result, states and districts also need to attend to the opportunities that state and district policy providers for districts and schools to do what they need to do to improve student performance. According to the Mass Insight Education & Research Institute's *The Turnaround Challenge*, "States and districts focused inside the system" (Calkins et al., 2007, p. 11). Its top lesson learned from high performing, high-poverty schools is, "Clearly defined authority to act based on what's best for children and learning – i.e., flexibility and control over staffing, scheduling, budget, and curriculum" (Calkins et al., 2007, p. 11).

Flexibility can take many forms. Schedules might be modified to accommodate longer school days or years to provide longer periods for some subjects or to set aside time for teachers to meet to discuss student work. Schools might elect to allocate money to hire extra reading teachers or curriculum coordinators or use some funds to pay teachers for extra hours spent examining and discussion data or engaging in professional development activities. Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (2003) states that, for the best likelihood of sustained improvement, "the school has control over the majority of its budget. To the extent possible all funds from different sources are combined and directed in support of school goals."

In a case study of improvement in the Kansas City, Kansas schools, Lane (2009) found that one of the key strategies supporting dramatic improvement was providing schools with "defined autonomy," in which principals had flexibility and control in the areas of staffing, budget, and scheduling. Specifically, to help them address the challenges of increased accountability, principals and teachers were given autonomy to decide how best to implement improvement activities in their schools. For example, to facilitate changes in staffing and scheduling, the district and the teachers' union added a provision to the teachers' contract, "contract flex,' that allowed on a school-by-school basis" (p. 28). This required that the central office place

considerable trust in local school staff, but the defined autonomy engendered "an atmosphere of trust and an emerging culture of improvement" (p. 29) and also "reinforced the idea that the district and schools share the responsibility for what happens in schools and in classroom" (p. 32). The district set non-negotiable goals, but allowed schools the latitude to decide for themselves how best to attain those goals.

Action Principles

For State

1. Provide waiver and exemption procedures whereby districts can petition for relief from regulations that restrict their flexibility in staffing, scheduling, and budgeting based on local needs (Redding & Walberg, 2008).
2. Grant charter-like autonomy to schools in the process of turnaround (Barber, 2008).
3. Amend state collective bargaining statutes and regulations that limit the ability of districts and schools to make justifiable changes in staffing, budgeting, and scheduling policies and procedures.
4. Use state policy- and rule-making authority to place constraints on the barriers caused by district policies (Redding & Walberg, 2008).

For District

1. Provide waiver and exemption procedures whereby schools can petition for relief from district policies that restrict their flexibility in staffing, scheduling, and budgeting based on local needs (Redding & Walberg, 2008).
2. Grant charter-like autonomy to schools in the process of turnaround (Barber, 2008).
3. Negotiate for changes in collective bargaining agreements to provide principals with greater control over budgeting, scheduling, and the hiring, placement, and retention of staff.
4. Give principals the flexibility to act based on what works for the school's student population – including making decisions about scheduling, staffing, and budgeting (Kowal et al., 2009).

(Perlman & Redding, 2011, p. 67)

In 2014, the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction named its 2013–2014 North Carolina Priority Schools, 74 schools in all, 60 of which are implementing a school intervention model under the School Improvement Grants (SIG) program, and 14 of which were identified under a North Carolina Elementary and Secondary Education Act Flexibility Request (ESEA Flex) submitted and approved by the U. S. Department of Education in May of 2012. In its 2014 *North Carolina Priority Schools -- Reference Guide*, the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction laid out a three-year school improvement planning process with Annual Benchmarks for School Turnaround. Year 2 is focused on the principles 'Align and Adjust', with the very first listed District activity being "The LEA has aligned resource allocation (money, time, human resources) within the school's instructional priorities" (North Carolina Priority Schools, 2014, p. 11).

In its 2014 *Improvement Plan Report* to the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction in Raleigh, NC, Ramsey Street High School in Fayetteville, NC filled out a report on what it was doing in various areas. Under "Providing operational flexibility and sustained support," certain 'Indicators' are to be addressed. Indicator A01 is "The LEA has examined current state and LEA policies and structures related to central control and made modifications to fully support

transformation"; A02 is "The LEA has reoriented its culture toward shared responsibility and accountability"; and A04 is "The LEA has aligned resource allocation (money, time, human resources) within the school's instructional priorities." Under 'Evidence', Ramsey Street High School put, "We are using blended instruction (HQ teacher, Grad Point, internet resources) as interventions to enhance instruction. Additional laptops have been requested" (Ramsey Street High School, 2014, p. 2).

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Evidence Review:

Allocation Autonomy

In many districts, leaders have adopted new strategies that have real implications for resource use in districts, including:

- **Targeted resources to narrow the achievement gap.** In this approach, district leaders work to concentrate resources and efforts on those students at most risk of low performance.
- **Decentralized reform with school-based accountability.** By decentralizing decisions about how to meet student needs and locating accountability for student performance with schools and school leaders, the expectation is that schools will be more effective and efficient at meeting the needs of their students.
- **Centralized reform or "managed curriculum."** The approach reflects a more centralized, systemic reform where district leaders create an aligned curriculum and build capacity throughout the district for the same approach to be sued in all schools.
- **Integrated (or personalized) services.** Some districts use a small schools concept to address challenges with performance at the high school level. The belief is that in a smaller, more personalized setting students will interact with a limited number of adults who know them well and who serve in a more integrated fashion to address their needs.

(Roza, 2008, p. 5)

In its *2014-2015 School Year Education Turnaround Guide*, just after 'School Leadership', the Delaware Department of Education emphasizes 'Autonomy and Accountability.' It says, "Schools need autonomy to identify and build programs and capacity that address their specific needs. Decisions regarding curriculum, instructional practices, and schedule should be made at the school level as part of a comprehensive improvement plan" (Delaware Department of Education, 2014, p. 5). According to this guide, "[T]he requirements to execute a successful Turnaround effort are incredibly straightforward. If a school has an exceptional leader with autonomy to make the best choices for his or her students, and the conditions that permit those choices are in place, excellence will ensue. The challenges embedded within this Theory of Action are to have access to a strong pool of educators to draw from, and to create the right conditions for school leaders to be successful" (Delaware Department of Education, 2014, p. 9). In its descriptions of Budget narratives ranging from '1: Below Standard' to '4: Exemplary', the description of the exemplary budget circumstance is: "The school has complete fiscal autonomy within an allotted school budget including but not limited to staffing structure, teacher compensation, technology, and curricular supplements. Leadership sets specific action plans and has the authority to shift resources to align with those priorities. The school uses a rigorous

approach to measure the impact of differentiated budget decisions on student outcomes. The school has a clear process for budget creation that involves multiple stakeholders and relevant data" (Delaware Department of Education, 2014, p. 138).

The Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement offers six Guiding Principles for Allocating Resources:

1. Use staff efficiently and be consistent with the priorities in the school improvement plan.
2. Consider time as the most expensive resource.
3. Use community resources when possible.
4. Devote resources to the prevention of academic problems, rather than to remediation.
5. Organize instructional time to support the school's instructional focus.
6. Incorporate time for professional development and teacher collaboration into the daily life of the school

(Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement, 2009)

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