



## WRAP-UP AND REFLECTION SESSION: LESSONS LEARNED AND MOVING AHEAD

**Moderator:** *Jonathan Travers – Director, Education Resource Strategies*

**Panelists:**

- *Karen Hamley Miles – President and Executive Director, Education Resource Strategies (ERS)*
- *Warren Simmons – Executive Director, Annenberg Institute for School Reform*
- *Jason Snyder – Deputy Assistant Secretary, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, U.S. Department of Education*
- *Ross Wiener – Executive Director of the Education and Society Program, The Aspen Institute*

### How the work being done in the turnaround sphere this decade is different from prior decades

Ross Wiener of The Aspen Institute stated that the work is different in two ways: (1) “Status is being given to this work; talented people are drawn to the work and we have to continue to make it an honor to do the work.” (2) “There is willingness to have broader conversations regarding challenges kids are facing in turnaround schools.”

Warren Simmons of Annenberg shared his perspective that there are negatives and positives compared to prior decades. He said, “The understanding of what it takes to create effective schools has not changed much, but there is so much reform, so little change.” However, he noted that “People realize that it involves communities and need to organize resources to focus on issues. These are the things that are needed to move towards system level changes. Union colleagues realize they need to build capacity and they need to be brought to the movement/conversation.”

Jason Snyder of the US Department of Education talked through differences between now and then:

- 1) More resources are being devoted to the effort.
- 2) Federal government is making changes to create incentives for more rigorous changes
- 3) Changes are at the system-level: the school-level, district-level, and state-level. The most improving countries in the world in education focus on the systemic improvement of teaching and learning and the US is doing the same.
- 4) Districts are building their capacity to focus on the lowest-performing schools, through reforms like district-wide evaluation systems and district-wide frameworks for teaching and learning.

Karen Hawley Miles of ERS explained her view on the positive changes: “Focus on changing rules for turnaround schools around hiring/firing, extending or using time differently, and other rule changes.” However, she pointed out the areas still needing change: “Schools as institutions are not changing the underlying structures that will support change. Teacher evaluations are so individualized, and they need to be more about teams working together and systems that support new things vs. industrial age structures.”

The conversation turned to partnerships between districts and outside providers. Miles said, “There is openness to bringing in partners, but partners need to be aligned with districts in the work they are doing.” Simmons agreed with the tension between partners and districts: “Districts need

internal knowledge management development and the view of districts as incompetent is not good because it undermines efforts for sustainability.” Wiener added, “There is a lot of knowledge being built in external partners that’s not being built internally in districts. There should be a combination of district people and partners working together to share and build knowledge capacity.”

### **Success factors in turnaround work**

This question was open to the audience. Much of the conversation revolved around how to recognize the people doing the difficult work of turnaround. One audience member said, “We need to recognize and celebrate the people who are doing well with the work. The recognition doesn’t always mean dollars; there is need to invest in people and make it a privilege to teach in turnaround schools.” In response, Simmons (Annenberg) stated, “Recognition needs to be combined with lateral capacity building. Systems can create learning communities internally to learn from each other what is successful in their own districts or externally.”

Snyder (US DOE) gave the federal government perspective on supporting talented people to do turnaround work: “The Federal government is trying to fight isolation in turnaround work by creating communities of practice to share ideas. Turnaround work takes a lot of emotional investment and is important work that needs to be recognized.”

One audience member added, “We cannot rely on intrinsic motivation only; compensation matters as well and teachers need to be compensated for taking on more difficult assignments or more responsibilities.”

Other success factors articulated by audience members were:

- Effective use of data to make instructional decisions.
- Need to understand the developmental pathways of students: how students learn and factors that affect learning.

### **Organizing resources to make long-term investments in turnaround**

Miles of ERS stated, “We do need to invest now to change underlying structures. We need to be clear about which things will go away and need to be part of continuous improvement cycles. We have not been clear about the fact that it does take more resources to do the work, but there is no consistent successful model to show that more resources lead to better results.”

Wiener (The Aspen Institute) explained, “It is correct that we need more resources to be successful with turnaround. We also need to think about how we leverage partners to build capacity.” In response, an audience member said, “There is an opportunity to reallocate what a district spends on student support services to partners as a way to save dollars.”

Simmons (Annenberg) stated, “There are no models of differentiation for turnaround that meet the needs of various student types that are struggling. We just generically say students are ‘poor’ but there are differences among the struggling student types: ELL, SPED, etc. Other countries address these differences better.”

Snyder (US DOE) said, “Regarding building sustainability, the federal government is thinking about flexibility in how districts can spend their resources. We should also all be thinking about how nonfederal resources can be identified to support this hard work.”