



Blueprint Schools Network's Response to the Louisiana Department of Education' School Redesign Request for Information

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Blueprint Schools Network is a national nonprofit organization that promotes educational equity and improves life outcomes for students by partnering with states, districts, and schools to plan, implement, and monitor school improvement initiatives. The foundation of our work is a framework of five core strategies that emerged through analyses of the attributes that drive student achievement and represent common elements of schools capable of closing the achievement gap. When implemented together, these strategies form a comprehensive and evidence-based framework for transforming chronically underperforming schools.

1. Excellence in leadership and instruction
2. Increased instructional time
3. A culture of high expectations
4. Use of data to improve instruction
5. Daily high-dosage tutoring

Blueprint's prior experience of partnering with states, districts and schools to implement whole school transformation initiatives dovetails with Louisiana's plan for struggling schools. Our approach to rapidly improving student achievement at poorly performing public schools is to partner with school districts to implement and monitor our research-based five strategy framework. We believe that the achievement gap can be closed when human capital, use of time, school culture, use of data and small group tutoring are integrated as part of a comprehensive and consistent approach to school improvement. We also believe that sustaining and scaling school improvement requires district investment and capacity-building. Thus, our partnerships are designed to leverage what school districts are already doing well and then build systems and share knowledge so that the five strategy framework for school improvement is implemented consistently and with high quality across all schools in the network.

It is important to note that Blueprint is not a Charter Management Organization (CMO). We do not believe that a single rigid approach to school design and structure can consistently meet the needs of all children. Rather, we believe that our core strategies must be continually adapted, implemented and monitored to most effectively meet student and adult needs within the context of each unique school and community.

Evidence of Track Record of Student and School Outcomes

Our partnerships in Colorado, Massachusetts, and Missouri have demonstrated rapid, significant, and sustainable academic gains, specifically in closing achievement gaps for students who are economically disadvantaged, English Language Learners, and for students who have learning disabilities. Here are a few examples of our track record and impact.

- In 2015, after two years of partnership, 10th grade students at English High School in Boston had the highest growth in math in Massachusetts and in their school's history. They also had the highest percentage of

students scoring proficient or advanced in both ELA **and** Math in their school's history (18 years of MCAS results).

- In 2015, after two years of partnership, 5th grade students at E Greenwood Elementary School in Boston had the highest math growth in Massachusetts and in their school's history (18 years of MCAS results).
- Last year, 9th grade students at Collegiate Prep Academy in Denver had the highest math growth scores for high schools in the state of Colorado.
- In 2012 after one year of partnership, all partner schools in Denver that implemented Blueprint's five school improvement strategies
 - Outperformed Denver Public Schools in percentage point gain for students scoring either proficient or advanced in reading.
 - Three out of six schools ranked in the top 7 percent of schools statewide for growth in reading.
 - All partner schools ranked in the top 13 percent of 1,829 schools in the State of Colorado for student growth in math using Colorado's Median Growth Percentile metric.
- For the first time in its 33 year history, Montbello High School in Denver Public Schools saw 100% of its graduating seniors accepted to a two or four year post-secondary school in 2013.
- After two years of partnership, Bentley Academy Elementary School in Salem, MA moved from Level 4 status (chronically underperforming) to Level 1.
- In 2015, four of our partner schools in Saint Louis Public Schools that implemented the Blueprint Math Fellows Program jumped two levels on Missouri's state accreditation rating (Unaccredited, Provisional, Accredited, Distinction), rising from "Unaccredited" to "Accredited" in just one year.

Blueprint's Model for School Improvement

Blueprint's model for school improvement derives from ongoing research on common practices of schools capable of closing the achievement gap between low-income students and their higher-income peers. Blueprint was founded to implement these practices within traditional public schools.

1. Excellence in leadership and instruction: Blueprint works with each district to recruit, identify, and train a cohort of principals and teachers to work in its turnaround schools.
2. Increased instructional time: Blueprint schools increase the time students spend on task and engaged in meaningful learning activities by extending the school day, week, and year.
3. A culture of high expectations: Blueprint works with schools to develop plans, systems and tools to improve school safety, climate, learning environments, and expectations for students.
4. Use of data to improve instruction: Blueprint partners with districts and school leaders to implement data-driven instructional systems, including interim assessments, in order to meet the needs of all learners.
5. Daily high-dosage tutoring: Blueprint manages the national recruitment, selection, training, professional development, and evaluation of a corps of full-time tutors (Fellows) for each district. Classroom instruction is supplemented with individualized tutoring during the regular school day. This intervention is known as the Blueprint Fellows Program.

Together, these strategies form the foundation of our three distinct and differentiated pathways for partnering with schools, districts and states:

School Improvement Partnership: As a school improvement partner, Blueprint works in close coordination with schools, districts, and state departments of education to plan, implement, and monitor school turnaround initiatives aligned to our five-strategy framework. Blueprint provides extensive technical assistance to district and school leaders to support the implementation of customized plans, systems, and structures.

School Operator: As a school manager and operator, Blueprint assumes full responsibility of daily school operations, school management, and the implementation of our five-strategy framework.

Math Fellows Program: The Blueprint Math Fellows Program can be implemented as an independent academic intervention or as part of our school improvement partnerships. Math Fellows are full-time AmeriCorps tutors that provide students with highly personalized tutoring in mathematics during the regular school day throughout the academic year.

Since Blueprint has three distinct program models, we apply an analysis model that assesses the supporting conditions and capacity of a potential district partner and the complexity of the school turnaround. This analysis helps us decide which program (school partner, school operator or Math Fellows program) will work best for the district to achieve its goals. From our experience working with both urban and rural districts, the most important attribute of an ideal district partner comes down to the mindsets of the people with whom we team. Our work relies on partnership and on developing enduring working relationships that are grounded in a focus on student achievement, collaboration, a shared sense of urgency, innovative problem solving and a long term commitment to changing life outcomes for students.

Blueprint's framework of five core school improvement strategies are designed to leverage the strengths of other third party providers to support coherent school and district improvement. We partner with the Achievement Network in Boston, Denver, Salem and Holyoke to enrich data-based decision-making at our partner schools. In Oakland we partner with MCREL International to infuse "curiosity" components in our math tutoring program to deeply engage students in concepts and problem solving. In addition, Blueprint has formal partnership agreements with Teach for America, City Year and Boston University to bring additional resources to our school improvement initiatives. Finally, in June of 2013, The Blueprint Fellows Program was selected by the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) to become an AmeriCorps affiliated program.

Four years ago, Blueprint was able to successfully expand our operations in Colorado to support students in Massachusetts. The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education played an essential support role in enhancing our ability to serve schools and districts in the following ways:

- Provided capacity building funding for Blueprint and other organizations to scale up to support Level 4 schools across the Commonwealth
- Provided access to a high capacity technical support team and a dedicated liaison to:
 - Broker introductions with Superintendents and district leadership teams
 - Support the development of detailed partnership MOUs with districts
 - Troubleshoot, monitor and mediate emerging partnerships
 - Identify avenues where state policy can be leveraged to change the ways schools do business
 - Provide gateway to state-level departments, resources and experts
- Convened a professional learning network of organizations working on Level 4 and 5 schools in MA

Blueprint shares the Louisiana Department of Education's commitment to level the playing field for the many students and families who cannot yet access schools that adequately prepare them for college and career.