



**IT TAKES MORE  
THAN A HERO**

SCHOOL RESTRUCTURING  
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### Introduction and Key Findings

In late January 2008, school restructuring made headlines in Ohio when the Cincinnati Public Schools and the Cincinnati Federation of Teachers jointly announced that the principal and all staff at long-struggling Taft Elementary would have to leave their jobs at the end of the school year. Though replacing staff is a federal option under the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), officials from both the Cincinnati district and the Ohio Department of Education (ODE) say it is best exercised as a last resort. This was the case at Taft, where multiple other strategies had been tried over nine years without producing adequate gains in student achievement.

According to Stephen Barr, associate superintendent for Ohio's Center for School Improvement, the state's strategy to help all underperforming schools focuses on training principals and faculties to analyze student data, draw up improvement plans based on data analysis, and implement best practices in school leadership and instruction. The emphasis is on building the capacity of the staff currently working in struggling schools. "We've redefined leadership, not as the hero with the answers but as a set of practices" that involves training a school's principal and teachers to work together as a leadership team, Barr said.

While Ohio fully complies with federal requirements for restructuring, Barr noted that the state's view of how best to improve instruction in struggling districts and schools is philosophically very different from the current federal restructuring options, which encourage replacing school leadership and staff in restructuring schools. "[Ohio's approach] really gets out of this notion that you have to have some magic person walk in there and save the day," he said. Such heroes are hard to come by, he said, and when someone does turn a school around, "they get hired off. That's not a workable model."

Restructuring is the last consequence under NCLB for schools failing to make "adequate yearly progress" (AYP) toward their state's student achievement targets

for five or more consecutive years. The federal law requires districts to choose one of five options for their restructuring schools that are intended to reshape these schools dramatically. Federal guidance discourages schools from making minor changes in response to restructuring, but it leaves much of the details of decision making and implementation to districts and schools (U.S. Department of Education, 2006).

This report by the Center on Education Policy (CEP) examines the choices about restructuring made by the state of Ohio and some of its school districts and schools. The report also looks at how these choices are being implemented and their initial impact. We chose Ohio as one of five states in which to study restructuring because it has a significant number of schools in the later stages of improvement under NCLB. Ohio had a state accountability system in place before NCLB was implemented and was therefore among the first states in the nation to have schools fail to make AYP for eight or nine consecutive years, placing them in years 7 or 8 of improvement.

The research for this report was conducted in the fall and winter of 2007-08 and is based on interviews with state officials, reviews of restructuring documents, and analyses of state test data. It is also based on in-depth case studies of four districts with schools in restructuring—Cincinnati Public, Cleveland Metropolitan, Mansfield City, and Mount Vernon City—and of nine schools within these districts. Most of the information for the case studies came from interviews with local administrators and teachers.

Several key findings emerged from our analysis:

- ***After holding steady for two years, the number of Ohio schools in the planning and implementation phases of restructuring more than doubled between 2006-07 and 2007-08.*** Most of these are urban schools. The number of Ohio schools in restructuring, including both Title I<sup>1</sup> and non-Title I schools, leveled off at 56 schools for 2005-06 and

<sup>1</sup> Title I schools are those that receive federal funds under Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act as amended by NCLB; this program supports education for low-achieving children in low-income areas.

2006-07; in part this was because some restructuring schools were closed in 2006. In 2007-08, the number of Title I and non-Title I schools in restructuring jumped to 130; this total includes 90 schools in restructuring planning (year 4 of NCLB improvement) and 40 schools in restructuring implementation (year 5 of improvement or beyond). Three-quarters of all schools currently in restructuring planning and implementation are located in Ohio's eight largest cities.

- ***Very few schools have exited restructuring.*** Since NCLB was implemented, only 7 of the 177 Ohio schools ever in restructuring have successfully exited. Five more briefly exited but later fell back into school improvement. Recent test results do not suggest that many more of these schools will be exiting restructuring soon. From 2005-06 to 2006-07 testing, the percentage of students scoring at or above the proficient level in restructuring schools declined by two percentage points on average in English language arts (ELA) but rose by four percentage points on average in math. Because these changes occurred over just one school year, additional years of test data are needed to determine whether these results represent a general trend.
- ***Ohio has received permission from the federal government to withhold federal funds specifically reserved for school improvement if districts with eligible schools do not sign a letter of agreement with the state.*** In the letter, districts agree to share data and permit state officials to visit their schools. Previously, as is common in other states, Ohio distributed these school improvement funds based solely on a formula that typically included the number of district schools in improvement and the phases they had entered.
- ***Taking "any other" action to restructure school governance is by far the most popular restructuring option in Ohio.*** In the 2006-07 school year, 93% of Ohio schools in restructuring planning and implementation chose the so-called any-other option in federal law, which allows them to take any major action, aside from the four more specific options in the law, that will produce fundamental change in the school's governance structure. In Cincinnati, for example, the any-other option means that restructuring schools are overseen by a Redesign Committee, a joint creation of the school district and teachers' union that holds final authority over their budgets and school planning. Replacing the principal and teachers has become a less popular option, used by just 4% of restructuring schools in 2006-07 compared with 30% in 2005-06. The options of becoming a charter school or contracting with a private entity to manage the school were used by only one school each in 2006-07.
- ***Although case study districts and schools are using multiple strategies beyond the federal options for restructuring to try to improve student achievement, they rarely had external, systematized supports and rarely planned extensively during the restructuring planning year.*** Of the districts we studied in depth, only Cincinnati had developed a targeted, coherent system of support exclusively for schools in restructuring. Of the six case study schools in year 4 of school improvement, none had a restructuring plan in place at the time of our research, which was roughly halfway through the school year. Some school-level interviewees explicitly stated they preferred to focus on their existing reform efforts in hopes of making AYP and avoiding restructuring.
- ***Case study districts have chosen to replace staff in schools in restructuring but have often done so reluctantly.*** Sometimes decisions to replace staff have led to unintended consequences, such as placing teachers into positions for which they were not highly qualified. Also, some schools had already replaced the principal and at least some staff shortly before entering restructuring, and these schools were more focused on assimilating the new people than on restaffing again so soon.
- ***The state is piloting new and improved strategies to support schools in restructuring.*** In 2007-08, the state piloted diagnostic teams to work in two high-need districts and then implemented the process in six other districts. The purposes are to provide an external view of district and school practices and behaviors, to help determine their most pressing issues, and to provide a starting point for improvement planning. These teams will continue to work with districts in corrective action, where schools in restructuring are often concentrated. The state is also exploring ways to create uniform quality standards for instructional coaches, a strategy used in all case study schools and districts.

## Study Methods and Background

For the past four years, the Center on Education Policy has conducted a series of analyses of the school restructuring process in selected states. Previously, we have issued four reports on the restructuring process in Michigan (CEP, 2004; 2005; 2007b; 2008b), three on restructuring in California (CEP, 2006a; 2007a; 2008a), and two on restructuring in Maryland (CEP 2006b; 2007c). An update on Maryland and a new report on restructuring in Georgia are forthcoming. These reports are available at [www.cep-dc.org](http://www.cep-dc.org).

Initially, CEP chose to study restructuring in Michigan, California, and Maryland because these states had already begun implementing test-based accountability systems and calculating AYP under the Improving America's Schools Act (IASA) of 1994, the federal law that preceded NCLB. As a result, these states had schools reach the restructuring phase of NCLB sooner than most other states. As other states see more schools enter restructuring, they can learn from the experiences of these states in the vanguard.

For school year 2007-08, CEP has expanded its research on restructuring to include Georgia and Ohio. To collect information on restructuring in Ohio, CEP consultant Maureen Kelleher interviewed state department of education officials and analyzed state and local documents and data. To learn more about the details, challenges, and effects of restructuring at the local level, she also conducted telephone and on-site interviews with school district administrators, principals, teachers, and other staff in the following four districts and nine schools:

- Cincinnati Public Schools, a large urban district, serves more than 33,000 students in the city of Cincinnati. Three schools participated in our study: Parker Elementary, Price (formerly Whittier) Elementary, and Taft Elementary. Kelleher interviewed the principal and teachers at Parker and Price (Whittier). For Taft, she interviewed district officials, particularly Beth Schnell, Instructional Support Team lead principal, to learn about the events that led to the district's well-publicized decision to restaff the entire school for the 2008-09 school year. Schnell, a former principal at another Cincinnati public school, led the team of instructional support coaches working with Taft's principal and teachers and served as the liaison between the school and the Redesign Committee.
- Cleveland Metropolitan School District, the second largest district in Ohio, serves more than 52,000 students in the city of Cleveland. Three high schools participated in our study: East High School, East Technical High School, and Marshall High School. CEP also interviewed district staff and consultants involved in Cleveland's new school creation effort, conceived in part to address the need for restructuring Cleveland's high schools.
- Mansfield City Schools, a small urban district in central Ohio, enrolls 4,855 students. Newman Elementary and Malabar Middle School participated in our study.
- Mount Vernon City Schools, enrolling 3,894 students, serves a rural area of central Ohio between Cleveland and Columbus. Mount Vernon Middle School was the focus of our study in this district.

With guidance from the Ohio Department of Education, we chose these districts to represent both the variety of communities served by restructuring schools across the state and the diversity of approaches being used to restructure schools. Cleveland is the Ohio district with the most schools in restructuring planning or implementation and is embarking on new school creation in response to mounting pressure to restructure schools, a process we will continue to track into 2008-09. Cincinnati, which also has a large number of schools in restructuring, is the only district in our study with an established, systemic plan for all its schools in NCLB restructuring. Mansfield is a small city with schools challenged by high poverty. In November 2007, Mansfield served as one of the pilot districts for the state diagnostic teams. The rural Mount Vernon district is working to improve instruction in math and for special education students to address the root causes of its middle school's failure to make AYP.

In each of these districts, local personnel chose the schools to participate in this study. The interviews, observations, document reviews, and data analysis were conducted from October 2007 through March 2008.

## Overview of Restructuring in Ohio

Ohio provides assistance to restructuring schools primarily through federal school improvement funds authorized by Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act as amended by NCLB, and through state training and technical assistance to districts in the later stages of improvement. The state also collects information about schools' restructuring choices.

### FEDERAL AND STATE RESTRUCTURING REQUIREMENTS

The No Child Left Behind Act requires all states to test virtually all students annually in reading/language arts and mathematics in grades 3 through 8, plus once during high school. It also requires all schools and districts to meet targets for adequate yearly progress that place them on track for ensuring that 100% of students will be academically proficient by 2014. Between 2006-07 and 2007-08, Ohio raised its targets for the percentages of students that must score at or above the proficient level for a school or district to make AYP (see **table 1**).

Under NCLB, schools and districts that have not made AYP for two consecutive years are identified for improvement and subject to sanctions. If a school continues to fall short of AYP targets and remains in

improvement status, the sanctions progress from offering public school choice in year 1 of improvement, to providing tutoring services in year 2, to undertaking "corrective action" in year 3. After five consecutive years of not making AYP, schools must plan for restructuring (year 4 of improvement). After six consecutive years of not making AYP, schools must implement their restructuring plans (year 5 of improvement).

Schools identified for restructuring must choose from the following menu of options designed to completely revamp the school:

- Entering into a contract to have an outside organization with a record of effectiveness operate the school
- Reopening the school as a charter school
- Replacing all or most of the school staff who are relevant to the failure to make AYP
- Turning operation of the school over to the state, if the state agrees
- Undertaking any other major restructuring of the school's governance that produces fundamental reform

**Table 1. Percentage of Students That Must Score At or Above the Proficient Level on State Tests for Ohio Schools to Make AYP**

Grade	Reading		Mathematics	
	2006-07	2007-08	2006-07	2007-08
Grade 3	71.2%	77.0%	60.6%	68.5%
Grade 4	68.3%	74.6%	67.1%	73.7%
Grade 5	63.8%	74.6%	49.6%	59.7%
Grade 6	75.8%	80.6%	55.1%	64.1%
Grade 7	68.6%	74.9%	47.3%	57.8%
Grade 8	73.8%	79.0%	47.5%	58.0%
Grade 10	71.8%	77.4%	60.0%	68.0%

Table reads: For a school or district to make adequate yearly progress for school year 2006-07, 71.2% of its students had to score at or above the proficient level in reading and 60.6% had to score at or above the proficient level in math.

Source: Ohio Department of Education, 2008a.

In theory, Ohio allows schools to use any of these restructuring options, but in practice, the state does not have the capacity to take over restructuring schools, said Barr, who directs the Center for School Improvement.

Perhaps because these options are designed to radically change schools, implementation can be complex. All require adjustments to schools' financial operations, and some may require additional resources, particularly if the school must train staff to work together in new ways.

### NUMBER OF SCHOOLS IN RESTRUCTURING

Since NCLB was first implemented in the 2002-03 school year, 177 Ohio schools have entered restructuring planning or implementation. This number includes both Title I and non-Title I schools and represents less than 9% of all elementary and secondary schools in the state. Of these schools, only seven have successfully exited restructuring. Five others exited but subsequently fell back into school improvement status. Another 38 schools have been closed. (One school that successfully exited restructuring was also later closed.)

In the 2007-08 school year, 97 Title I schools—or about 5% of all Ohio elementary and secondary schools—were in the planning or implementation phase of restructuring based on their 2006-07 test scores. In addition, 33 non-Title-I schools reached year 5 of school improvement and were surveyed by the state about the restructuring option they chose. This total of 130 schools in restructuring represents a 43% increase over the previous year. Prior to 2007-08, the number of schools in restructuring planning or implementation had held steady for three years.

States vary widely in their numbers of schools in restructuring. While Ohio has a relatively small number of these schools, it also has schools that have been in restructuring for several years because it began to identify schools for improvement earlier than many other states, under the federal law that preceded NCLB. Thus, Ohio already has schools in their fourth year of restructuring implementation (year 8 of improvement). Of the 97 Ohio Title I schools in restructuring in 2007-08, 62 are in the planning phase and 35 are in the implementation phase. Nearly one-third of those in restructuring implementation have failed to make AYP for eight or nine consecutive years; eight Ohio schools have missed targets for eight years (and are now in year

7 of improvement), and three have failed to make AYP for nine years (year 8 of improvement). The federal law does not contain any special provisions, beyond the regular restructuring requirements, for schools that remain in restructuring implementation for multiple years.

### STATE ASSISTANCE IN RESTRUCTURING

Ohio has developed a three-tiered model of support for districts and schools in various stages of NCLB improvement, including schools in restructuring planning and implementation. Informally, the model is known as the “cone” or “pyramid of interventions.” Under the model, the state progresses from providing a general level of support and oversight to all districts to providing a more intense level of assistance to districts that need additional support, and then moves to the most intense levels of support for the highest-need districts. Ohio primarily targets state support for school improvement at districts, on the theory that improving districts' capacity to analyze data and draft plans to meet the needs revealed through data analysis will benefit all schools in the district. “We're trying to raise the whole ship, not just fragments of the ship,” said Barr.

How Ohio determines where a district and its schools fall within the cone is changing. Under the current system of NCLB accountability, districts in corrective action and districts with multiple schools in school improvement were considered the top tier of the cone, receiving the most intense support for school improvement planning. The state has prioritized districts' needs for support by examining the number and percentage of their students missing AYP targets. In 2006-07, the state received permission from the U.S. Department of Education to target school improvement funds to Ohio districts with the largest numbers and percentages of students who were not proficient. Schools in restructuring are concentrated in these districts. The initial list included 25 districts.

In 2007-08, Ohio also piloted efforts to change how it delivers intensive support to diagnose and address the obstacles preventing districts and schools from helping their students achieve. In previous years, the state had several separate teams working with its most challenged districts: a literacy intervention team, a special education team, and an overall team supporting interventions. In the summer of 2007, these teams were consolidated into 16 state support teams working

regionally across Ohio. In the fall of 2007, new diagnostic teams funded with federal school improvement dollars began making observations and collecting data in high-need districts to help central office staff in these districts develop data-based plans for improvement. The team reviews school and district practices and behaviors. Findings from individual school report and the district reports are aggregated by a computer system and become the basis for the full report. District officials are expected to use the information, along with guidance from the state support team and from a computerized tool called a “decision framework,” to identify needs and then to develop focused improvement plans. The decision framework makes data analysis and decision-making much easier and accurate. In early fall 2007, diagnostic teams visited Columbus and Mansfield to field test the diagnostic review process. Feedback from the two pilot reviews were provided orally and on-site to the district. All subsequent reviews included a written report of the district and schools findings and a scheduled presentation of the findings to district and school staffs.

It is too early to determine the impact of the new approach to data gathering and analysis, but the state expects it will “demystify data analysis and diminish the notion that improvement can only be obtained through heroic people or negative consequences,” said Barr. “We are betting that helping people make smarter decisions and improving the quality of supports will be more useful in the long term.”

### FUNDING FOR RESTRUCTURING

Beginning in 2004, all states were required by federal law to set aside 4% of their total district allocations under Title I to assist districts and schools in improvement, including schools in restructuring. However, states that did not receive sufficient increases in Title I allocations could not set aside the full 4% because of a “hold-harmless” provision in NCLB preventing them from doing so if it would cause districts to lose funds compared with the previous year.<sup>2</sup> In Ohio, overall Title I allocations have fluctuated, and so has the set-aside due to the hold-harmless provision. For example, in 2007-08, the state awarded \$18.5 million in school improvement grants, with \$5.5 million going to schools in restructuring planning or implementation. In 2006-07, however, the state

could award a total of only \$5.8 million, with \$750,000 going to schools in restructuring. This was due to the impact of cuts to Ohio’s Title I allocation during federal fiscal year 2005. “We had this roller coaster . . . which made it very difficult to create a stable system of funding for school improvement,” said Barr.

The state awards school improvement grants to districts at a level of \$60,000 per building, of which \$50,000 must be spent in the building itself and \$10,000 may be shifted to another school or pooled to provide services across multiple participating schools. Each school in improvement may receive grants for no more than three years. These grants can be awarded at any stage of school improvement, and over time the state has begun to award grants earlier in the school improvement process. Early in the implementation of No Child Left Behind, districts had greater say in which schools received grants and the amounts that were allocated. However, in 2005-06 no school received more than \$50,000, and in 2006-07 only seven of 99 schools awarded grants received more than \$50,000. Each of the seven received \$100,000.

In 2006 the Ohio Department of Education requested and received permission from the U.S. Department of Education to change the way it allocates the 95% of Title I school improvement funds that the law says must be distributed to school districts with schools in improvement. While all districts with Title I schools in improvement, corrective action, and restructuring are eligible for the funds, the state now gives funds only to districts that are willing to sign a letter of commitment that requires them to work with a state support team, implement only research-based practices, ensure high-quality service providers, allow providers access to teachers and to building data, and establish procedures to observe expected changes in instruction. (One district has refused to sign the commitment letter.) Eligible districts then receive funds through a need-based formula that measures the number of district schools in improvement and the number and percentage of non-proficient students districtwide. At least 75% of all schools in the selected districts receive funds.

Ohio’s new approach is a departure from how most states allocate these funds. CEP’s 2006-07 survey of all 50 states showed that states typically allocate funds to

<sup>2</sup> This situation is explained in more detail in two CEP reports on Title I funding (2006c; 2007d) available at [www.cep-dc.org](http://www.cep-dc.org).

schools and/or districts based on some type of formula that includes the number of schools in improvement, the phases of improvement these schools are in, and the schools' poverty rates but that does not take into account a district's willingness to provide data or comply with other state requirements for schools in improvement (CEP, 2006d). Before receiving permission for this change from the U.S. Department of Education, ODE followed the usual practice of allocating funds by a formula, and still does with districts that agree to the state's compliance requirements.

As part of the agreement, Ohio received permission from the U.S. Department of Education to target school improvement funds to "priority districts." These districts had the greatest numbers and percentages of students not meeting AYP targets in the state, regardless of the number of schools in improvement or the number of years those schools had been in improvement. The state allocated funds with the goal of giving each priority district enough money to make a minimum grant of \$50,000 to 75% of its schools in any stage of improvement. "We're not pulling out restructuring as a separate category" for targeted assistance through school improvement grants, Barr said. "We're trying to invest as early as we can."

NCLB permits states to use the remaining 5% of Title I school improvement funds to develop their own strategies to assist schools in improvement, including those in restructuring. How states use these funds to monitor and assist restructuring is a state decision, and states have taken a range of approaches. Some states help schools design restructuring plans and explicitly sign off on those plans, while others do not collect any information on schools in restructuring beyond what they collect from other schools in improvement. Ohio collects information on the restructuring options chosen by schools and focuses its funding and technical assistance most intensively on high-need districts, which tend to have higher numbers of schools in restructuring.

By federal law, restructuring is a district responsibility, and Ohio's strong tradition of local control reinforces that provision. Still, Barr added, the state is trying to assist districts

with meeting that responsibility by helping them diagnose school problems and develop school improvement plans to address them. Ohio has used its school improvement funds to establish the aforementioned state diagnostic teams. These diagnostic teams were piloted in 2006-07 in two high-need districts: Columbus, which had 17 schools in restructuring during school year 2007-08, and Mansfield, which had 2 schools in restructuring planning. Although the teams observe schools and classrooms, their efforts are also focused on determining which district-level supports for schools in improvement are working and which are not. Barr noted that each diagnostic team helps district officials identify their district's and schools' biggest needs for improvement. The state support teams can then customize supports to help districts meet their specific needs.

The state support teams, funded by state general revenue and federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act monies, offer technical assistance to districts regarding school improvement planning, literacy, and special education. This type of support can be especially useful when a district's identified needs cut across areas traditionally considered separate, such as literacy and special education.<sup>3</sup> The state has targeted the state support teams' work most intensively at districts with schools in school improvement, but as Ohio begins to implement its differentiated accountability system, the team's focus will shift to districts with the largest percentage of AYP conditions not met.<sup>4</sup>

Funding for schools in improvement in Ohio has increased since the Congress provided additional funding for this purpose that was not dependent on the 4% set-aside. In December, Ohio received \$4.3 million in new federal funds for school improvement, which Barr said would stabilize the funding somewhat. State officials intend to have districts use these funds to implement data-driven decisions, which might include bringing in instructional coaches; the state expects the money to reach schools beginning in summer 2008. Priority for these funds will also be given to districts with the largest number and/or percentage of students not meeting AYP targets.

<sup>3</sup> For more information about these diagnostic teams, see Elliott, 2008.

<sup>4</sup> Ohio calculates "AYP conditions" for districts by aggregating all the opportunities to make or miss AYP in all the schools in the district, as well as for the district as a whole. The state then determines the percentage of those opportunities that were missed. If a district misses fewer than 20% of the opportunities, the district is considered low-support. If a district misses more than 30% of the opportunities, it is considered high-support. Districts that miss between 20 and 30% of the opportunities are considered as medium-support.



In January, the state was working out a set of commitments that districts would be expected to make about the use of the funds. Most likely these would involve agreements to meet state requirements for coaches and for the quality of school planning.

### OPTIONS CHOSEN BY RESTRUCTURING SCHOOLS

Although states are not required by law to track schools' restructuring choices, the Ohio Department of Education has collected this information for the past two years from all schools in year 5 of school improvement regardless of Title I status. In both years for which data are available, the any-other option was by far the most popular. In 2006-07, 93% of restructuring schools surveyed reported using the any-other option, up from 79% in 2005-06. As shown in **table 2**, fewer schools chose to replace staff in 2006-07 than in 2005-06. The other restructuring options were chosen by just two schools in 2006-07.

The state asks schools choosing the any-other option to describe in their own words the actions they took. State officials then group these self-descriptions into categories. Schools were not placed into more than one self-

reported category. As **table 3** indicates, changing school governance and increasing district oversight were the most popular actions reported by schools using the any-other option.

It is important to note that ODE is not required to check to ensure that all schools are actually implementing their restructuring strategies. In a national sample, the Government Accountability Office (2007) found that many schools in restructuring did not actually implement any of the federal options. "With the significant number of compliance requirements under NCLB, even restructuring does not tend to rise above the crowd" of monitoring issues to which the state must attend, Barr said. As the number of restructuring schools grows, the state's capacity becomes even further stretched.

Initially, ODE wanted to require restructuring schools to work with an external coach. However, "when we started looking at the quality of external people going in, we had to revisit that," Barr explained. The state still encourages restructuring schools to work with an external coach and is trying to develop a quality-control system to help build a pool of coaches as a resource for the state's most challenged schools.

**Table 2. Numbers and Percentages of Ohio Schools in Restructuring Implementation Using Various Options**

Restructuring Option	Number and Percentage Using Option, 2005-06*	Number and Percentage Using Option, 2006-07*
<b>All schools in restructuring</b>	<b>56 (100%)</b>	<b>56 (100%)</b>
Undertaking any other major restructuring of the school's governance that produces fundamental reform	44 (79%)	52 (93%)
Replacing staff	17 (30%)	2 (4%)
Reopening the school as a charter school	0	1 (2%)
Entering into a contract to have an outside organization with a record of effectiveness operate the school.	0	1 (2%)
Unknown	5 (9%)	0

Table reads: In 2005-06, 44 schools, or 79% of the 56 schools in restructuring, chose the option of "undertaking any other major restructuring of the school's governance that produces fundamental reform."

\*In 2005-06 some schools chose more than one restructuring option, so numbers in this column add up to more than the total number of schools in restructuring and more than 100%. In 2006-07, percentages do not total 100% due to rounding.

Source: Analysis by the Center on Education Policy of unpublished data from the Ohio Department of Education, March 2008.

**Table 3. Actions Taken by Ohio Schools Using the “Any-Other” Major Governance Change Option**

Self-Described Action	Number and Percentage Using Action, 2005-06	Number and Percentage Using Action, 2006-07
<b>Restructuring schools that chose the “any-other” option</b>	<b>44 (100%)</b>	<b>52 (100%)</b>
Change school governance	0	14 (27%)
Increase district oversight of the school	10 (23%)	0
Establish redesign committee	10 (23%)	5 (10%)
Bring in outside experts	7 (16%)	6 (11%)
Reconfigure school(s) in grade span, size, etc.	5 (11%)	9 (17%)
Redesign curriculum	4 (9%)	5 (10%)
Close school	3 (7%)	2 (4%)
Other	5 (11%)	11 (21%)

Table reads: In 2005-06, 10 restructuring schools, or 23% of the 44 schools using the federal any-other option, chose to increase district oversight of the school as their major governance change.

Source: Analysis by the Center on Education Policy of unpublished data from the Ohio Department of Education, March 2008.

### RESTRUCTURING SCHOOLS MAKING AYP

**Table 4** shows the number and percentage of schools within each category of federal options that made AYP based on 2005-06 and 2006-07 test data. The table also shows how many schools met individual targets in English language arts or math. In general, the percentage of restructuring schools that made AYP in either year was small, 11% in 2005-06 and 10% in 2006-07.

Using statistical techniques called Chi squares, CEP compared the likelihood of a school in Ohio making AYP using a particular restructuring option with the overall likelihood of a school in restructuring making AYP. The number of schools was large enough to do this statistical test only for two types of restructuring options, replacing staff in 2005-06 and the any-other option in both 2005-06 and 2006-07. Our statistical tests found no significant differences for these two options in the share of schools making AYP or meeting targets in ELA or math. In other words, schools that replaced staff or used the any-other option were no more likely to make AYP than restructuring schools were overall. (It was not possible to apply this statistical test to schools that became charter schools, entered

into a contract with an outside organization, or replaced staff in 2006-07, because the sample size of just one or two schools was too small.)

To further examine differences in outcomes of particular strategies, we used two linear regressions in which the outcome variables were the percentages of students scoring at or above the proficient level in ELA and math. The goal was to test whether individual options were associated with higher percentages of students scoring proficient. Again, none of the strategies were significantly associated with better testing outcomes in either year. Therefore, it appears that one particular option should not be recommended more than another.

From 2005-06 to 2006-07, the percentage of students scoring at or above the proficient level in ELA did not increase on average. In fact, the percentage proficient decreased by two points on average in the 37 restructuring schools with two years of ELA data. In math, performance was better in the 36 restructuring schools for which we had two years of data. In these schools, the percentage proficient increased in math by four points on average from 2005-06 to 2006-07.

**Table 4. Numbers and Percentages of Ohio Schools Choosing Various Restructuring Options That Met AYP Targets**

Restructuring Option	2005-06			2006-07		
	Schools Made AYP	Schools Met ELA Targets	Schools Met Math Targets	Schools Made AYP	Schools Met ELA Targets	Schools Met Math Targets
All schools in restructuring implementation	11% (6 of 56)	38% (21 of 56)	30% (17 of 56)	9% (5 of 56)	11% (6 of 56)	34% (19 of 56)
Undertaking any other major restructuring of the school's governance that produces fundamental reform	9% (4 of 44)	36% (16 of 44)	30% (13 of 44)	8% (4 of 52)	10% (5 of 52)	33% (17 of 52)
Replacing all or most of the staff who are relevant to the failure to make AYP*	12% (2 of 17)	41% (7 of 17)	41% (7 of 17)	50% (1 of 2)	50% (1 of 2)	100% (2 of 2)
Entering into a contract to have an outside organization with a record of effectiveness operate the school <sup>†</sup>	NA	NA	NA	100% (1 of 1)	100% (1 of 1)	100% (1 of 1)
Reopening the school as a charter school <sup>†</sup>	NA	NA	NA	0% (0 of 1)	0% (0 of 1)	100% (1 of 1)

Table reads: Based on 2005-06 testing, 9% of the schools that used the any-other restructuring option made adequate yearly progress by meeting achievement targets in both English language arts and math; 36% of schools using the any-other option met achievement targets in English language arts, and 30% met targets in math.

\*Only two schools chose this option in 2006-07, so 50% represents one school and 100% represents two schools.

<sup>†</sup>Only one school chose this option in 2006-07, so 100% represents one school.

Source: Analysis by the Center on Education Policy of unpublished data from the Ohio Department of Education, February 2008.

Percentages in individual schools varied a great deal. The highest performing quartile of restructuring schools made a 6 percentage point gain in ELA and a substantial 13 percentage point gain in math between 2005-06 and 2006-07 testing. By contrast, the 25% of restructuring schools with the least growth (the lowest quartile) lost ground in both subjects, posting an average drop of 10 percentage points in ELA and 5 points in math during this period. However, because year-to-year test results do not always represent meaningful changes in student achievement, these changes in Ohio may not be indicative of an overall trend. Therefore, we will continue to track percentages of proficient students in Ohio's restructuring schools in future reports.

## Common Themes From Restructuring Districts and Schools

Several common themes emerged from our case studies of four Ohio districts and nine schools.

First, although case study districts are trying district-level strategies such as instructional coaching in restructuring schools, only Cincinnati among these districts has developed a coherent system of support specifically targeted to schools in restructuring. Cincinnati stood out among our case study districts for creating a joint school district/teachers' union Redesign Committee to oversee restructuring schools, for targeting intensive instructional coaching to these schools, and for piloting the national Teacher Advancement Program in these schools. In Cleveland and Mansfield, the entire district

needs so much attention that officials struggle to find enough resources to target extra support to the neediest schools. And in Mount Vernon, only one school is in restructuring planning, so the district might not need a comprehensive system.

Second, during the period of our research (October 2007 through March 2008), none of the six case study schools in restructuring planning had yet developed a plan for the following year. Most were focused on implementing their existing instructional strategies in hopes of making AYP. Many of the staff we interviewed said they did not know what the federal restructuring options were until a CEP consultant explained them. Administrators and teachers in these schools said they wanted more information about these options and would welcome state guidance in restructuring planning. Some said the threat of replacing staff might spur some teachers into taking instructional reforms more seriously. Many interviewees, especially in Cleveland and Mount Vernon, agreed that teachers did not believe they would be affected by restructuring. Current uncertainty about the future of NCLB reauthorizing legislation may reinforce this belief. “[Some teachers] believe there is going to be a change in our government, and the law is going to change and it is not going to matter. They are going to outlive it,” said Deborah Strouse, a veteran teacher at Mount Vernon Middle School who now serves as an instructional coach to her peers. “Others are working very, very hard and taking it very seriously.”

Third, replacing school staff was a restructuring strategy used in all four districts studied, but it was used reluctantly and sometimes with unintended consequences. Because Cincinnati district leaders remembered earlier unsuccessful restaffing efforts in other schools, the district’s Redesign Committee decided to replace the principal and faculty at Taft Elementary only after the school had been in improvement for seven years and in restructuring implementation for two years. In both the Cleveland and Mansfield districts, longstanding tensions between the central office and local schools were exacerbated by restaffing decisions. Mansfield’s teacher restaffing procedure, which had teachers bid for jobs in order of seniority as required by their contract, put some low-seniority teachers into positions for which they were not highly qualified. Case study schools that chose to restaff struggled to find qualified teachers to fill their positions and to acculturate the new teachers they hired. At some schools, districts had already chosen to replace staff before a school

entered restructuring. As a result, these schools were more focused on assimilating the newly arrived staff than on restaffing a second time so soon after the first.

Fourth, all four case study districts also used instructional coaching to help schools in restructuring, usually as part of an effort to bring coaches into all district schools. In Mansfield, Mount Vernon, and Cincinnati, coaching complemented efforts to help teachers analyze data about their students’ academic performance, and then use that information to inform their instruction—for example, by reteaching a concept to a small group of students who showed little or no understanding of it on a sample test. In Cleveland, coaches split their time between helping teachers refine their instruction and tutoring students who needed extra attention to pass the state high school graduation test. In Cleveland, a district official noted the difficulty of finding enough qualified coaches to meet the schools’ needs.

Fifth, in their quest to improve student achievement, case study schools used multiple strategies simultaneously, usually a mix of one of the federal restructuring options laid out under NCLB, districtwide improvement strategies, and in-house thinking and research into best practices. In some schools, such as the Cincinnati restructuring schools that are piloting the Teacher Advancement Program (TAP), teachers and principals found their mix of strategies to be mutually reinforcing and pointed to gains in student achievement as evidence of success. However, the experiences in the Mansfield district may indicate a limit to the number of new reforms schools can absorb at once. Everyone interviewed in Mansfield, from key district leadership to primary school teachers, agreed that the depth and speed of change had taken a heavy toll on teachers and even students. Some teachers admitted they were not sure if they would continue teaching in Mansfield next school year due to stress.

Sixth, some case study districts are beginning to look at new school creation as a restructuring strategy. Both Cincinnati and Cleveland are incorporating Ohio’s new STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) initiative into their NCLB restructuring efforts. Cincinnati is converting one restructuring elementary school into a STEM school, and Cleveland is opening two new STEM high schools, partly in hopes of diverting enrollment away from existing high schools that are struggling to raise student achievement. (Currently, 8 of Cleveland’s 21 high schools are in restructuring planning; none is in restructuring implementation.)

## Restructuring in Cincinnati

The Cincinnati Public Schools district serves the city of Cincinnati in southwestern Ohio, just across the Ohio River from Kentucky. The district enrolls nearly 35,000 students, of whom 70% are African American, 23% are white, 4% are multiracial, and just over 1% are Latino. Two-thirds of the students come from low-income families. The case study schools all had higher poverty rates than the district as a whole, with more than 80% of students coming from low-income families. John P. Parker Elementary and William H. Taft Elementary also had higher concentrations of African American students, 89% and 95%, respectively. Although the district earned a ranking in the middle tier of the state accountability system, the district did not make AYP in 2006-07 for the fourth year in a row and is in NCLB's corrective action phase of district improvement. It is one of Ohio's 25 districts targeted for federal Title I school improvement funds.

For this study, a CEP consultant interviewed principals and teachers at Parker Elementary and Reese E. Price Elementary, a new school established in a new building in fall 2007 to replace Whittier Elementary. The CEP consultant also spoke with leadership coach Beth Schnell, who directed the team of instructional support coaches working at Taft for the last three years, consulted with the building's leadership team, and served as liaison from the school to the district's Redesign Committee.

According to its 2006-07 school report card, Parker Elementary in Cincinnati's Madisonville neighborhood

served 517 students, a large majority of whom (89%) are African American. In addition, 84% of the school's students are low-income and 22% are students with disabilities. In 2006-07, Whittier Elementary served 559 students, more than two-thirds of whom were African American; 90% of the students were low-income and 27% had disabilities. Price Elementary, the new school that replaced Whittier, serves 743 students in the Price Hill neighborhood on Cincinnati's west side, according to school staff. Taft Elementary serves 204 students, most of whom (95%) are African American; 90% of the students are low-income, and 24% have disabilities.

Each of the three schools showed a different pattern of student test results from 2005-06 to 2006-07, as displayed in **table 5**. At Price (Whittier), overall achievement in reading and math improved markedly. At Parker, test scores rose slightly in math and declined slightly in reading. At Taft, math scores rose somewhat, but reading scores fell sharply.

### ALTERNATIVE GOVERNANCE IN CINCINNATI

When a Cincinnati school enters restructuring, its management authority is transferred from the principal to the Redesign Committee, a joint district/teachers' union group. This committee assumes final authority for the school's budget, curriculum, instruction, and professional development.

Cincinnati's Redesign Committee existed before the advent of NCLB. In its early years the committee oversaw replacement of staff in nine struggling schools

**Table 5. Percentages\* of Students Scoring At or Above Proficient in Three Cincinnati Elementary Schools**

School	Reading 2006	Reading 2007	Math 2006	Math 2007
Parker	47%	46%	31%	34%
Price (Whittier)	32%	44%	7%	38%
Taft	52%	34%	20%	24%

Table reads: The percentage of Parker Elementary School students scoring at or above the proficient level on state reading tests declined from 47% in 2006 to 46% in 2007. The percentage proficient in math rose during the same period from 31% to 34%.

\*Rounded to the nearest whole percentage.

Source: Ohio Department of Education, unpublished data provided at CEP's request.

(Fischer, 2008), but the results were disappointing. “Before No Child Left Behind, they did that blowup of the school. It didn’t seem to work,” said Bill Myles, administrative officer of school improvement for Cincinnati Public Schools.

A teacher who worked in one of those early restaffed schools agreed. “You were restaffed but you didn’t have support,” said Tonya Flannery, now a teacher at Price Elementary.

NCLB offered the district an opportunity to rethink its strategy. “What we thought is, if we got highly effective coaches in those buildings and really monitored to make sure that they were following this plan under the governance of the redesign, that we would see a quicker turnaround and long-range benefits,” Myles said.

Cincinnati developed Instructional Support Teams (ISTs) to provide this coaching. Each restructuring school is guided in its day-to-day operations by its IST, consisting of a “lead principal” (leadership coach and, in restructuring schools, liaison to the governing Redesign Committee) and content coaches in literacy, math, science, and special education. Each IST is responsible for eight to ten schools, not all of which are in restructuring. However, the district guarantees that schools in restructuring will have someone from the IST on site daily, providing coaching in his or her area of expertise.

In 2006-07, Cincinnati piloted the Teacher Advancement Program in three restructuring elementary schools: Parker, South Avondale, and Whittier (now Price). TAP was first developed by the Milken Family Foundation in 1999 to attract and retain talented teachers by offering a career ladder, differentiated pay with incentives, high-quality training, and evaluation of teaching practice.

### COACHING FOR SCHOOLS IN CINCINNATI

In Cincinnati, restructuring schools do not have the freedom to choose their own professional development. Instead, IST coaches work closely with the school’s principal and teacher leaders to help them analyze benchmark assessment data to determine where new instructional strategies might produce significant gains. Then, IST coaches train the faculty as needed to use district model lessons geared to particular standards and other best practices. For example, said

Myles, many students in restructuring schools struggled to answer extended-response questions on the state test. According to Myles, teachers were told, “Here [are] the things you have to do in this school. We have to have this 30 minutes that we’re working on this. We have to pull up past tests and look at those extended-response questions. You have to sit down as a team and grade those answers together.”

Price Principal Alesia Smith said the strict guidance has been helpful. She credited her school’s improved achievement in part to the staff’s implementation of districtwide initiatives, such as the push to set aside 30 minutes daily for small-group and one-on-one reading instruction and district training on how to teach state standards to individual students.

As a new principal when she took over at Whittier (now Price), Smith has appreciated the support she has received from her lead principal, Bill Myles. Although Myles has a senior position in district administration in addition to coaching principals, Smith sees him weekly for their regular meeting and more often when she has questions. “He pretty much is on call for me. I’ll just text him a question, and then he’ll [say], ‘I’ll be over and I’ll show you what I’m talking about,’” she said.

With guidance from Myles, Smith has been observing teachers to determine their best grade placement and has reassigned teachers to different grades as needed. As early as 2004-05, she said, the school began to make academic gains, which she attributes in part to teachers’ new grade assignments. At this point, she said, “I believe we have everybody where they should be.”

Smith also credited her school’s progress in part to IST content coaching. For example, her school’s science coach met with a new teacher to discuss what the test data showed about which science standards her students had and had not mastered. After their discussion, the teacher decided she wanted to check her students’ understanding more frequently, so she began having her students write “exit tickets,” quick summaries of what stuck in their minds from the day’s lesson. With that quick, daily gauge of what her students had and had not learned she could create the next day’s opening problem based on that knowledge.

At Parker, Principal Lynsa Davie said IST coaches have helped two long-term substitute teachers get up to

speed quickly. One substitute knows the school and students well but is teaching a new subject area, while the other is new to both the school and the material. The IST coaches, Davie said, “are right on it. They’re in the classroom, they’re modeling lessons, giving them resources, and they’re sticking with them and monitoring their progress and reporting back.”

### TEACHER ADVANCEMENT PROGRAM IN CINCINNATI

In the 2006-07 school year, Cincinnati Public Schools chose to bring the Teacher Advancement Program into the district by piloting it in three restructuring schools where student achievement was trending upward. TAP is funded by a federal Teacher Incentive Fund grant, which supports local and state efforts to attract and retain high-caliber teachers in high-poverty schools. Schools in TAP have designated “master teachers,” who are freed from full-day classroom teaching. They analyze their school’s student achievement data, research strategies to address identified student weaknesses, and pilot those strategies in a demonstration classroom. Once a strategy has shown results with students on site, master teachers teach it to the rest of the faculty. Master teachers are supported by mentor teachers, veterans who continue to have their own classroom but help coach and encourage their colleagues as they try new strategies.

Due to budget constraints at Parker Elementary in 2006-07, only the school’s language arts teachers participated in TAP. Maria Davis, an upper-grade language arts teacher, said she learned new instructional strategies, tried them in her classroom, and saw results. “I had like a 10% increase in my reading scores,” she said. “It has improved my teaching and definitely makes me look at what I do and why I do it.” TAP has also made a substantial impact on her professional role beyond the classroom. In October 2007, Davis won the prestigious Milken Educator Award. “I know I’ve done things over the last several years, [but] I think TAP had a world to do with all that,” she said.

Davis continues to teach language arts and also serves as a mentor teacher to her 7<sup>th</sup>- and 8<sup>th</sup>-grade colleagues in language arts and social studies. For 90 minutes each week, she and her “cluster” meet with the upper-grade master teacher to review achievement goals and learn a new instructional strategy. The master teacher introduces the strategy, and then small groups role-play

teaching the strategy and reflect afterwards on how to refine their technique. Finally, they share student work samples related to the previous week’s topic. Teachers bring two examples of high-level work, two of average work, and two of lower-level work to the cluster and discuss how to raise the lower-level and average work to the high-level standard. “We do a lot of comparison and going back through and reviewing,” said Davis.

Cluster meetings have also created precious, consistent time for teachers to engage each other in professional conversation. “It really gives you time to learn more, discuss, share strategies, things that have been working and didn’t work for you, [and ask] ‘what did you do?’ We don’t get enough of that in teaching,” Davis noted.

Principal Davie agreed that cluster meetings have had a strong impact on teachers’ growth, both individually and as a team. “It has had a tremendous effect on teacher collaboration, on the rigor that’s going on in the classrooms, the conversations the teachers are having, and the sharing and the trust that it has put in place,” she said. “Teachers are now having more conversations among themselves outside of their box, whereas when I came in it was very cliquy . . . Now they’re sharing and trusting other teachers that they normally would not have been in contact with.” Davie acknowledged that Parker lost ground on AYP in 2007 testing but continues to believe that full implementation of TAP will produce substantial student achievement gains. Together, TAP and Parker’s Instructional Support Team “are very effective,” she added.

Davis agreed, but noted there have been some barriers to implementing TAP fully. Although she has had opportunities to visit her colleagues’ classrooms, a lack of substitute coverage has sometimes prevented her from observing teachers on the demanding TAP schedule, which recommends at least three visits per teacher per year. Some of her own training has also been postponed because she has found it difficult to leave her students. Davis wears many hats around Parker, which can take her away from her students more than she likes. “Of course you need the training, but you don’t want to leave the classroom either,” she observed.

At Price (Whittier), Principal Alesia Smith said TAP’s incentive structure has changed the way teachers and administrators view testing. To raise student achievement quickly, many schools across the country have

focused on raising achievement for students “on the bubble”—those closest to achieving the test scores needed for proficient performance—sometimes at the expense of reaching students who are farthest behind. However, TAP’s incentive structure encourages teachers to shoot for one year’s growth for a year of instruction for every child, regardless of the student’s starting point. “Before [TAP], we looked at how many kids we could get to pass the test. Now we look at how we can educate each child in this building,” said Smith.

Jennifer Mauch, an upper-elementary language arts teacher, serves as a TAP mentor teacher at Price. She has seen TAP professional development produce results for students. After a cycle in which teachers learned strategies to help students write more detailed answers to extended-response questions, every single student wrote detailed answers with a topic and a closing sentence. “I had not seen that before,” Mauch said. In 2007-08, teachers focused on teaching inferencing strategies, and she could see students checking for comprehension by slowing down to read difficult passages.

TAP also builds a strong professional culture among teachers and encourages them to find their own solutions to their students’ learning challenges. “We are not being told by an outside source what is best for our students. It helps increase teacher leadership and buy-in,” said Mauch.

### RESTAFFING AT CINCINNATI’S TAFT ELEMENTARY

Taft is the first school that Cincinnati’s Redesign Committee has chosen to restaff completely since No Child Left Behind was enacted. Beth Schnell has been the IST lead principal (leadership coach) at Taft for the last three years. During that time, the building principal was replaced. “Each year we’ve done progressively more things with the school” in an effort to raise student achievement, she noted.

In 2005-06, her first year of coaching at Taft, Schnell focused on working with the school’s instructional leadership team to encourage them to examine their student data and instructional practices. Based on that initial analysis, Schnell and the building principal worked together to target coaching to particular grade levels. Although instructional coaches were in the building regularly, teaching model lessons to demonstrate instructional strategies, teachers did not imple-

ment these strategies in their own lessons. Nor did the principal push teachers to use the new strategies, Schnell said. That year, Taft did not make AYP, and math scores declined.

In 2006-07, Taft was put under the governance of the Redesign Committee, and the principal was replaced. Schnell’s role was expanded to include acting as liaison between Taft and the Redesign Committee. That year, the school’s major strategy to boost achievement was to increase teacher training and support in math by aligning the IST math coach with Project Grad, an existing district-funded support program. “We really refocused Project Grad,” Schnell recalled. “We focused Project Grad’s professional development money on math. All of Taft’s Title I funds went to support Project Grad.”

By about midway through 2006-07, instructional coaches had also retooled their strategy for working with teachers, at Schnell’s direction. Coaches began to co-teach with the faculty, planning lessons with teachers and working together in the classroom. Afterward, the coach would sit down with the teacher to ask reflective questions about how the lesson went and offer observations about what went well and what could be improved. Classroom teachers made some instructional changes, Schnell said, but they still didn’t use the new techniques independently. “You would see it working while you were there, but the minute you left and came back, you could just see it was gone.”

In 2007 testing, Taft’s reading scores declined substantially. The number of students scoring at or above the proficient level in reading dropped by about 18 percentage points. “It was very frustrating,” Schnell recalled. “I love the kids at Taft, and I didn’t see that same passion with all the teachers I worked with. It’s hard.” By the end of the year, Schnell and the building principal had worked out a plan to move stronger teachers into tested grades and refer weak teachers to Cincinnati’s highly regarded peer review process, through which they would be mentored and regularly observed by highly skilled peers until they either improved or left the district. (Two teachers had already been through one year of peer review and were referred to a second year. In Cincinnati’s program, peer evaluators can decide to recommend that a teacher’s contract not be renewed after one or two years of the review process.)



Taft began school year 2007-08 in the district's TAP program, but was pulled out because TAP conflicted with the established peer review process. Teachers involved in either peer review or TAP are evaluated more frequently and more carefully than regular district teachers, but the requirements for peer review are not the same as those for TAP, so no teacher can participate in both programs at once. Schnell said it rapidly became clear that enough Taft teachers should be referred to peer review to drain the school's small faculty of the critical mass of teachers needed for TAP. Though Taft lost its new master teacher in the switch, it kept 90 minutes of weekly professional development time. Taft has since used that time for teachers to work with the IST by looking at state standards and developing instructional strategies to help students meet them.

As of late January 2008, Schnell said short-cycle assessments indicated "improvement in some grades," especially grade 3. She expressed hope that test scores would improve enough in 2008 testing for Taft to qualify for NCLB's safe harbor provision. Under safe harbor, a subgroup or school can make AYP even if it does not meet state test score targets, as long as the number of students who are not proficient is reduced by 10% from the previous year and additional AYP requirements, such as attendance or graduation rate benchmarks, are met. "We've just got to keep the rigor up," said Schnell. "That's the big thing, rigor, to really have the faith that the kids can do it." Even these encouraging signs do not change the larger need for a drastic change, she added. "I don't think there is anything else we could do at the school other than do what we did. We've tried. We've poured lots of resources into this school." Indeed, state data show Taft has received \$171,944 in Title I school improvement funds since 2003, above the median amount that restructuring schools have received statewide in the same period.

In 2008-09, Taft will be entirely restaffed and will have a new curricular focus on science and math. Through a partnership with the University of Cincinnati, Taft will become a STEM school. The district will preselect a pool of principal candidates, and a committee that includes union-designated teachers, district officials, parents, and community members will choose the principal.

## Restructuring in Cleveland

The Cleveland Metropolitan School District serves 52,769 students in the city of Cleveland in northeast Ohio. About 67% of its students are African American, 16% are white, and 14% are Latino; 100% are low-income. District leadership changed in 2006 with the arrival of new Chief Executive Officer Eugene T.W. Sanders, who promised to raise student achievement substantially in his first year.

Sanders made good on his promise. After missing AYP targets for four years in a row, in 2006-07 Cleveland made AYP as a district and achieved its highest ranking ever in the state accountability system, reaching the middle of the scale. Cleveland made AYP through NCLB's safe harbor provision. Five of the district's 105 schools are in restructuring implementation, and 13 are in restructuring planning, including the three high schools visited for our study. The Cleveland district remains in corrective action and is among the 25 high need districts the state is targeting for school improvement funding and additional assistance.

### DISTRICT-LEVEL STRATEGIES IN CLEVELAND

Sanders has replaced a large portion of the district's central office leadership. This has made it difficult to trace the history of restructuring efforts in Cleveland because of lost institutional memory. As of February 2008, Pam Smith, Sanders' chief of staff, had been with the district for 16 months. In that time, she said, all restructuring schools have received instructional coaches, training on teaching to standards, and additional district funds for textbooks and supplies. Some restructuring schools sent their school leadership teams to training through Mid-Continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL), a federally funded regional education laboratory that also consults nationally. The district's Title I school improvement funds paid for instructional coaches and leadership training.

Finding qualified coaches has been so difficult, however, that Cleveland redirected Title I school improvement funds that the state had earmarked for coaching into publisher-provided professional development, said Chief Academic Officer Eric Gordon, who has been with the district since October 2007.

The district's high level of need across the board has prevented the central office from devoting significant resources to schools in the later stages of school improvement, including restructuring. "There has been, at least from my early observations, very little attention paid to [these] schools," Gordon said.

Gordon also said the district chose to replace principals at some schools in 2006-07, but the schools selected were not only those in restructuring or corrective action. "Although central office was clear about its decisions, those rationales were not clearly communicated to school people," Gordon noted. In the wake of the replacements, there was talk among principals of forming a union, but that talk has died down, he said.

In the future, Gordon said, he would prefer not to use contracting, chartering, or restaffing as restructuring options. "I realize with the law, I may not end up having that opportunity, but my hope is that we fix from within," he said. His goal is to change instructional practice, not "move our problem around" by reassigning teachers and principals. "The reality is these teachers are going to be teaching somewhere."

### NEW SCHOOL CREATION IN CLEVELAND

In January, Cleveland announced plans to open two new high schools for the 2008-09 school year: one focused on science, technology, engineering, and mathematics and the other centered around industrial design and technology. The new MC2STEM High School is sponsored by the Metropolitan Cleveland Consortium for STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics), a collaboration of the area's school districts, colleges and universities, and various corporate, public, and nonprofit partners. The new small school will open in August 2008 with a cohort of 100 freshmen: 75 from Cleveland's public schools and 25 from inner-ring suburban districts. Enrollment is projected to grow to 400 students in grades 9-12. The new industrial design school, which counts the Cleveland Institute of Art and Cuyahoga Community College among its partners, will follow a similar enrollment model.

Gordon said the two schools are the beginning of a new school creation strategy that will restructure the district's high schools by providing new options for students and redirecting enrollment away from persistently low-achieving schools. Cleveland has created an office of

new schools to oversee the effort and has looked to districts like Chicago Public Schools, which is more than halfway through an ambitious plan to create 100 new schools by 2010. Prior to being hired as principal for the MC2STEM High School, Raymon Spottsville served as the interim head of Cleveland's new schools office. Cleveland won a state grant of \$600,000 to support the MC2STEM High School's startup costs and is seeking corporate and foundation grants.

### RESTRUCTURING PLANNING AT THREE CLEVELAND HIGH SCHOOLS

CEP visited three schools in Cleveland—East High, East Technical High, and Marshall High. **Table 6** displays the percentages of students scoring proficient in reading and math at the three schools.

At all three schools, staff said that as of early February of 2008, their schools had made no restructuring plans, nor had they received any guidance from the district or other entities regarding restructuring options. However, all three schools had implemented other district and in-house strategies intended to improve student achievement. Ohio high school students must pass an exit exam, the Ohio Graduation Test, in order to earn a diploma; the test is also used for NCLB accountability at the high school level. Interviewees at all three Cleveland high schools said two of their key school improvement strategies were tutoring for students who had yet to pass the OGT and state-funded OGT coaches who tutor students but also coach teachers to help them improve their instruction.

Staff at all three schools we visited agreed that guidance about restructuring would be beneficial. "It would be nice to know, if we're not measuring up does that mean reconstitution? Nobody's come forward to tell us," said Principal Dale Laux of East Technical High School.

Staff at Marshall High said raising awareness about the possibility that their school will have to implement a restructuring plan next year and perhaps replace staff might spur some teachers to a greater sense of urgency about working to raise student achievement. "I really believe a lot of teachers just don't know about it; if they did it would affect some of them differently," said Robert Fast, math department chair and union representative at Marshall. "Not all of them, but some of them. A lot of people who are here at the school don't want to leave it."

**Table 6. Percentage of Students Scoring At or Above Proficient in Three Cleveland High Schools**

School	Grade	2005-06		2006-07	
		Reading	Math	Reading	Math
East Technical	10	52%	31%	52%	28%
	11	75%	58%	84%	59%
John Marshall	10	77%	60%	84%	64%
	11	87%	76%	94%	86%
East	10	51%	39%	50%	29%
	11	72%	52%	83%	62%

Table reads: At East Technical High School in Cleveland, 52% of 10<sup>th</sup> graders scored at or above the proficient level on the state reading test administered in 2005-06, and 31% scored at or above the proficient level in math.

Note: High school students must score at or above the proficient level on the Ohio Graduation Tests (OGT) to graduate. Students who fail to meet proficiency in 10<sup>th</sup> grade retake the test in 11<sup>th</sup> grade.

Source: Ohio Department of Education, 2008b.

At East High School, which currently houses three small learning communities, administrators said the threat of restaffing might give them more power to force weak faculty to work harder on their own practice and collaborate with other teachers to improve the school. “I believe what would work at this juncture would be at least conversation regarding replacing some of the staff members based on their lack of teaching,” said Carol Lockhart, the campus administrator for East High School who arrived at the beginning of the school year. So far, she said, she has observed “pockets” of the faculty who perform well, while others are ineffective.

### Restructuring in Mansfield

The Mansfield City Schools district is located in Mansfield, Ohio, about 66 miles northeast of Columbus. The largest city in north-central Ohio, with a population of about 50,000, Mansfield sits in the foothills of the Allegheny Plateau. Once a manufacturing center, the town’s economy now depends on a mix of industrial and service-sector jobs. The district serves 4,855 students, of whom 57% are white, 34% African American, and 7% multiracial; in addition,

72% are low-income. Some interviewees noted that a significant number of students are related to inmates in the nearby Mansfield Correctional Center, a state prison. This situation can result in students moving when their relatives’ sentences begin and end.

In 2007, the Mansfield district, in year 4 of district improvement, went through a complete change of leadership and a full restaffing of all its schools, regardless of their improvement status. In January a new superintendent, Lloyd Martin, arrived from Jacksonville, Florida. To plug a \$9 million budget hole, Martin closed four schools in the summer of 2007. At the same time, Martin brought in new faces from Jacksonville and elsewhere to staff the district’s central office and serve as principals. By September, principals new to the district had taken charge of three schools and one alternative program, and every remaining veteran principal had been reassigned to a new school. To restaff in the wake of the building closures, all teachers in the district bid for jobs on the basis of seniority, as specified in the local bargaining agreement. Martin has held monthly “20-questions” community meetings throughout Mansfield since the beginning of school year 2007-08 to address concerns about the transition. Although the district restructuring has been controver-

sial, voters passed a levy in November, which district leaders took as a vote of confidence.

The state is watching developments in Mansfield closely. “It was like restructuring the whole district,” said ODE’s Barr. “They’re a district in turmoil. We want to help them stabilize and bring some focus to what they are doing.” To that end, Mansfield was one of the test sites for the state’s new diagnostic teams, one of which came to Mansfield in November 2007, observed classes, and interviewed teachers, principals, and district officials. Yet, by early March 2008, Shannah Kosek, executive director of Mansfield’s office of school improvement, reported she had not received feedback from the visit.

In a followup discussion, Barr said the state did not provide a written report back to the district after the visit because there was a discrepancy between the “too forgiving” text of the written report and the “more accurate” numerical scores the team assigned based on its observations. Team members received additional training to correct for this inconsistency in the future. ODE has had continuing conversations with the district about the 2007–08 school year, and the state support team has supported school improvement efforts in Mansfield, Barr added.

Although the recent reorganization affected every school in the district, our research focused on the

schools now in restructuring planning under NCLB. While the Mansfield district as a whole is now in year 4 of improvement for failure to make AYP, only two of its current nine schools have also reached that point: Malabar Middle School and Newman Elementary. Both schools mirror the district’s racial demographics, although Newman has a higher proportion of low-income students, 90%. **Table 7** shows recent test results for the two case study schools.

### REPLACING STAFF IN MANSFIELD

An unintended consequence of the reduction in force and subsequent seniority-based restaffing was that teachers who were the last to bid for jobs often found themselves in grade levels for which they were not highly qualified. Others found themselves teaching very different students from those they had taught in the past. For example, Beverly Whaley, the current math department chair and 8<sup>th</sup>-grade math teacher at Malabar Middle School, had been teaching kindergarten and 1<sup>st</sup> grade for eight years. Though she has a minor in math, the challenges of adolescent students are new to her. “We weren’t really given much development on how to handle middle school age. This is my first year teaching 8<sup>th</sup> grade, so I’m overwhelmed.” The district hopes to resolve this problem through upcoming contract negotiations with the teachers’ union.

**Table 7. Percentage of Students Scoring At or Above the Proficient Level in Two Mansfield Schools**

School	Grade	2005-06		2006-07	
		Reading	Math	Reading	Math
Malabar Middle School	6	61%	36%	54%	46%
	7	60%	37%	59%	49%
	8	60%	51%	56%	48%
Newman Elementary	3	54%	54%	44%	65%
	4	30%	39%	40%	43%

Table reads: At Malabar Middle School in the Mansfield district, 61% of 6<sup>th</sup> graders scored at or above the proficient level on the state reading test administered in 2005-06, and 36% scored at or above the proficient level in math.

Source: Ohio Department of Education, 2008b.

Even some veterans struggled in new positions of their own choosing. At Newman Elementary, 19-year teacher Susan McMillen chose to switch back to the regular 2<sup>nd</sup>-grade classroom after nine years of teaching 2<sup>nd</sup> through 5<sup>th</sup> graders with learning and cognitive disabilities. “The transition has been harder than I expected,” she said. However, McMillen reported that other district- and school-sponsored improvement strategies, such as the literacy coach and reading tutors, have helped ease the transition to a degree.

Some interviewees criticized the restaffing, especially the revamping of the central office, for overlooking local talent in hiring. More broadly, interviewees said top-down communication from district leadership had ignored the viewpoints and insights of those in the schools. “I have colleagues who are very, very veteran whose experience is being discounted. I don’t think that’s effective for the district,” said Sean Sheldon, a social studies teacher and union representative at Malabar.

At Newman Elementary, only four teachers were on staff in 2006-07, and the principal, Alicia Hinson, arrived from Florida last June. Winning her new faculty’s trust has not been easy. “There’s resistance,” she acknowledged, but said she is determined to persevere. “I can’t hold grudges. The work must continue.”

“It’s been tough,” acknowledged Kosek, a central office administrator. A history of mistrust with the previous administration carried over as the new leadership began its work, she said. “They’re leery of us.” She also acknowledged that some in the district would prefer a state takeover to the current reorganization. “They trust the state, [but] they don’t understand all of the repercussions” a state takeover would entail, she said.

### **NEW CURRICULA AND FORMATIVE ASSESSMENTS IN MANSFIELD**

This fall, district leadership mandated new curricula in math and reading at the elementary and middle school levels. The district is now using Michigan State’s Connected Mathematics curriculum and a Houghton Mifflin reading series for grades 1-6 developed by Irene Fountas of Lesley University in Massachusetts. According to Kosek, this marks the first time all the district’s elementary schools have used the same reading curriculum. The district is now creating curriculum maps and pacing guides to complement the new curriculum.

The existing climate of distrust between leadership and school staff is interfering somewhat with implementing the new reading curriculum, Kosek said. Some school personnel are resisting the new curriculum solely because they perceive it as an initiative from district leadership, not as a strategy to improve student achievement. “They’re not understanding this whole school improvement process,” she observed. “Federal and state mandates are driving what we do.”

School staff interviewed had a different view; some said the biggest challenges to implementing the new curricula were lack of time and training to master the new materials. “A lot of the materials didn’t arrive until extremely late in the summer. Not much training took place,” said Newman’s Hinson.

“We have teachers right now who are teaching with their manuals on their laps,” said Newman kindergarten teacher Carter Townsend.

Ironically, the district’s curriculum committee had recommended Connected Mathematics a few years ago, Malabar math chair Whaley said, but district leadership overruled the committee and chose a different curriculum, MathLand, that was discontinued by its publisher in 2007. “Finally, we get what we should have gotten to begin with,” she said. Whaley said her 8<sup>th</sup> graders have struggled with Connected Mathematics because “they are really behind in the foundation,” but she has used materials from earlier grades to help fill in the gaps. She expects 6<sup>th</sup> graders to master the curriculum more gradually and successfully.

With the new curricula came a schedule of benchmark assessments to help teachers track student progress and adjust instruction as needed before state accountability tests. In elementary reading, the district chose to use AIMSWeb, a Harcourt-produced system to track student data from both DIBELS (an early literacy assessment) and curriculum-based tests. With multiple subjects involved, elementary teachers are responsible for administering more than 20 formative assessments in a year. “We don’t really teach anymore. I’ve heard that from every teacher lately, that all we’re doing is testing,” said Newman’s Townsend. “We know what [students] don’t know, but we’re not able to do anything about it because as soon as you turn around, you’ve got to test again.”

At Malabar Middle, teachers said the biggest challenge is getting students to take practice tests seriously.

Yet district leaders and teachers also said the assessments are showing student progress. “My kids came up quite a bit” from fall to winter quarterly assessments, noted Newman’s McMillen. “Everybody came up in my class. I think that’s amazing, especially since it’s my first year in this.” Others in the district noted that the assessments have shown increases in student achievement across the elementary schools. Benchmark assessment data for Malabar Middle was unavailable as of mid-January.

### BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT SYSTEM IN MANSFIELD

In 2006-07, some schools in Mansfield began using the Ohio Integrated Systems Model for Academic and Behavior Supports (OISM), a schoolwide program to address student behavior and academic performance. Schools using OISM create a building leadership team and begin implementing schoolwide practices, such as common expectations and rewards for good behavior. (Recently, the state has retooled the OISM model. Key strategies are still available to schools through the Ohio Improvement Process, but the program has become less prescriptive and more focused on data analysis to drive solutions.)

Newman teachers said that OISM’s strengths are that it provides consistent standards of behavior in classrooms, hallways, and public areas and focuses on rewards for good behavior. However, many staff and students have recently arrived at Newman from other district schools where OISM had not taken hold as deeply, forcing Newman to reestablish OISM rules and procedures with the newcomers. For this reason, McMillen suggested waiting another year before reaching any conclusions about the effectiveness of OISM. Meanwhile, Malabar Middle was not slated to implement OISM until spring of 2008.

Teachers noted that the lack of a transition program to build trust among students suddenly mixed together has led to behavior problems. Although Newman is implementing the OISM program, “we haven’t addressed the changes for the students,” said McMillen.

Meanwhile, at Malabar Middle, staff agreed that teachers need help managing classrooms and addressing stu-

dent behavior. This past school year has been an unusually difficult year to manage student behavior due to the large number of staff new to the behavioral challenges of middle school students and the consolidation of two middle schools into one. “When the Simpson kids came here, there should have been some way to integrate them with the Malabar kids. There wasn’t, and there’s big tension there with the students,” said Whaley.

“We needed [behavior management] at the beginning,” said Malabar Principal Antonio Banks. He added that he hopes the district can pay for some additional teacher training time during the summer so the program will get off to a strong start next fall.

### TRAINING AND COACHING IN MANSFIELD

Though everyone interviewed agreed that Mansfield teachers have not had enough training time to master the new curriculum and new classroom demands, Mansfield has made strides in providing professional development and coaching. Through the district’s “Tyger Time” program, students are dismissed early on Wednesdays to make time for all district schools to have 90 minutes of weekly professional development for teachers. Some of this time, as well as dedicated professional development days, has been used to train teachers on the new curricula in math and reading. Kosek said the state’s support team has visited Mansfield regularly to conduct training. She meets with the team nearly once a week. The team has been to Newman to train teachers in OISM.

Every school also has a literacy coach who trains teachers on literacy techniques and helps set up supports for struggling readers. “She and I basically work together to provide professional development,” Hinson said. Newman has three teachers who use techniques from the nationally known Reading Recovery tutoring model to work intensively with the most challenged readers. Trained substitutes tutor struggling readers. Hinson has also recruited volunteers from Gorman-Rupp, a leading local business, to read to students.

McMillen credited these supports, especially Reading Recovery and the literacy coach, with helping her students make gains on the quarterly assessments. She would like more training in the new curriculum and more time to plan. However, the literacy coach has worked one-on-one with her, helping her create learn-

ing centers and sift through the many supplemental activities the new reading curriculum offers to find the ones with “the most bang for the buck,” she said.

The district has also hired outside consultant Frank DeSensi to consult with its schools on how to use data to inform instruction and how to build a positive school climate. DeSensi and his team visit monthly to conduct large-group training, and then fan out to visit schools, work with staff, and observe the climate. Principals and district officials said they found this work helpful. “The trainers are very, very competent,” said Malabar’s Banks, who sometimes seeks advice from a former principal on DeSensi’s team. “He’s always giving me strategies.”

Classroom teachers were less familiar with DeSensi. As math department chair, Malabar’s Whaley had attended one training session and was scheduled for more. At Newman, Townsend expressed some reservations about DeSensi’s recommended intervention strategy as it related to the school’s student population. The DeSensi method of data analysis encourages schools to intervene intensively, down to one-on-one tutoring, with students in the “red zone” based on test scores and demographics. Townsend questioned whether the school and district have the resources to support that level of intervention, given the high numbers of needy students at Newman. “You’re supposed to have the most kids in the green, a few kids in the yellow and 1 to 5% in the red,” she said. “Here at Newman, most of our kids are red coming in. A few of ours are in the yellow, and a very few in the green coming in, which is completely upside down. You can’t intervene with 60% of your kids, right?”

### CUMULATIVE EFFECTS OF DISTRICT RESTRUCTURING IN MANSFIELD

Teachers and principals unanimously described the experience of essentially restructuring the entire Mansfield district at once as overwhelming and exhausting. Some speculated that the district is in for another staffing upheaval at the end of the current school year, when teachers exhausted by the experience may look elsewhere for jobs. “This [past school] year has really pushed us over the edge,” said Newman’s Townsend. “We have teachers in tears pretty much every evening. That’s a shame, because this district had lots of excellent teachers ... and they’re going to lose more.”

Yet elementary gains may be inspiring some teachers to stay the course. Since seeing her students’ gains, McMillen said she has begun to feel more hopeful about the future in Mansfield and her place in it. “At one point I thought, ‘I can’t do this again. Next year, I’m going to have to look for something else.’ But since I’ve seen the kids are moving up and things are being effective, it makes me feel better,” McMillen said. Although she acknowledged feeling “worn out,” she added, “I’ve expanded my skills. I think next year will be better, because I’ll be more familiar with the curriculum and assessments, provided we don’t change them.”

### Restructuring in Mount Vernon

The Mount Vernon City Schools district is located in the town of Mount Vernon, Ohio, which lies about 45 miles northeast of Columbus and has a population of about 15,000. Though the district’s borders stay within the town of Mount Vernon, some families from surrounding Knox County cycle in and out of the district, sometimes within a single year, due to housing instability, district officials said. The district is 95% white, and about one-third of its students are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch. Students with disabilities make up 17% of enrollment.

Mount Vernon is in the first year of district improvement. The only district school currently facing restructuring is Mount Vernon Middle, the district’s sole middle school, which serves about 1,000 students drawn from the district’s six elementary schools. Mount Vernon Middle is currently in year 4 of school improvement, restructuring planning. Test results from Mount Vernon Middle are shown in **table 8**. The subgroup of low-income students fell short of AYP targets in reading, and students with disabilities fell short of AYP targets in reading and math. Also, the school’s 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup>-grade math performance failed to meet the state’s stricter accountability targets. The school’s continuing failure to make AYP is beginning to affect the district’s accountability status. In 2006-07, Mount Vernon district entered school improvement after failing to make AYP for two years in a row.

A new principal, Bill White, joined the staff in school year 2007-08. School and district efforts to raise student achievement at Mount Vernon Middle focus on improving math instruction and implementing inclu-

**Table 8. Percentage of Students Scoring At or Above Proficient in Mount Vernon Middle School**

Grade	2005-06		2006-07	
	Reading	Math	Reading	Math
6	93%	69%	82%	78%
7	83%	65%	83%	66%
8	82%	76%	84%	72%

Table reads: At Mount Vernon Middle School, 93% of 6<sup>th</sup> graders scored at or above the proficient level on the state reading test administered in 2005-06, and 69% scored at or above the proficient level in math.

Source: Ohio Department of Education, 2008b.

sion for students with disabilities. Superintendent Steven Short said the state has provided more support for these efforts than originally anticipated “because they don’t want to see us added to the [restructuring] list.” As of late winter 2008, neither the district nor the school had formally begun planning for restructuring. “We’re not at that place right now,” said Short. “That’s why we are getting some [state] support.”

As of mid-January 2008, Mount Vernon Middle was receiving funds from Ohio’s area 7 regional school improvement team to release a classroom teacher with expertise in both math and special education to coach her peers on “intervention strategies,” instructional techniques geared to help special education students master material within the regular classroom. Team member Patti Miller and Achievement Coordinator Debra Strouse also organized a professional development opportunity for district math teachers, led by consultant Sally Duncan. This training focused on helping teachers learn how to use short-cycle assessments to guide instruction. In early March, Mount Vernon Middle was planning a follow-up session on site, where Duncan would model the use of short-cycle assessments with students. “We will get teachers to actually see her work with [their] students,” said Lynda Weston, director of teaching and learning for the district.

In mid-January, the state improvement team led a workshop on how the state tests are scored, so teachers could work with their students on how to answer the questions to their maximum benefit. Over teachers’ objections, Principal White required the entire middle school math department to attend.

Interestingly, comments on evaluation forms indicated that many teachers were surprised to find the training more useful than they anticipated, said Short. “Here’s a group of people who almost went down in revolt and said ‘we’re not going,’ then this is the response we get. That’s part of it, changing that mentality.”

Even more ambitious has been the district’s effort to move toward a full-inclusion model for educating students with disabilities. Four years ago, said Short, “we were total pullout. In the last two years we’ve gone to an inclusion-type model for our students. Our pullout now is extremely limited.” Students with significant cognitive disabilities are being included in regular classrooms for the first time, with support from a co-teacher versed in special education. Short described the goal of co-teaching as, “you walk in and you don’t know who’s the math teacher and who’s the special education teacher.”

To gain insight into inclusion, Mount Vernon district personnel researched other comparable districts and schools where achievement among students with disabilities was higher. They visited schools in Tiffin and Dover, demographically comparable Ohio districts, to refine their inclusion planning. “There’s a lot of things we took from those visits,” said White. Next year, the middle school schedule will be tweaked to accommodate a half-hour “intervention block,” time for intensive tutoring for remediation or enrichment, depending upon students’ needs.

Getting teachers, including special educators, to embrace inclusion has been a challenge, but some initially reluctant teachers have found the experience of teaching students with disabilities transformative. In



spring 2007, at the end of the first school year of implementation, “several of the staff members said to me it was the most rewarding experience they had had,” recalled Strouse, a veteran teacher who left the classroom to lead school efforts to increase test scores. “They didn’t realize the students could do what they did.”

Despite these signs of progress, district officials were reluctant to predict how the new strategies would play out in state achievement test results. “I wish I knew. That’s what’s so difficult,” said Weston.

Over the long haul, officials speculated, slow progress in raising the community’s expectations to include college for all will probably have a greater impact on student academic performance than their efforts to retool instruction. A new community college just opened in the area. “I think that’s going to change some of the attitudes of our students, when they see they could be successful and it’s local where they could attend,” Weston predicted.

## Conclusion

Although Ohio has yet to see large numbers of its schools enter restructuring, state officials readily admit their capacity to support district and school restructuring efforts is already stretched thin. At the same time, federal restructuring strategies have very rarely helped schools improve student achievement enough to make AYP or exit restructuring. Our analysis shows no federal restructuring strategy was more likely than the others to be associated with schools meeting AYP targets. Even Cincinnati, which had the longest-running and best-coordinated system of support for restructuring schools among the districts in our study, continues to struggle to find strategies that will raise student achievement across the board in its restructuring schools.

Our findings in Ohio point to the need to rethink restructuring across the nation. The federal options for restructuring far from guarantee that a school will meet AYP targets, so restructuring is challenging. Ohio has already begun to rethink restructuring through its new accountability plan. In July 2008, Ohio was one of six states approved by the U.S. Department of Education to pilot a system of differentiated accountability. Under Ohio’s new accountability plan, districts will be classified as low-, medium- or high-support based on the number and percentage of students missing AYP

targets. The state has developed sets of required and optional intervention strategies for districts based on the level of support they require. While most schools in restructuring are in high-support districts, a small group are in low- or medium-support districts. Under the new plan, those restructuring schools will all be placed in the category of medium-support, requiring them to develop district and building leadership teams.

Under the Ohio plan, NCLB’s menu of actions from which restructuring schools are required to choose become optional strategies that medium- and high-support districts could undertake on top of a list of required strategies. Medium-support districts and schools could choose to replace staff relevant to the failure to make AYP, but they are not required to do so. Ohio has also refined the “any other major restructuring of the school’s governance” option into choices from which medium-support districts may select one or more, such as reducing management authority at the school level, internally reorganizing the school, or appointing an outside expert to advise the school leadership team. High-support districts could choose to reopen a school as a charter school, contract with another entity to operate the school, or replace staff, including the principal.

While the state has been revamping its accountability and support systems for schools in restructuring, district and school officials expressed the need for more guidance, not only about their restructuring options under the law, but also about how to raise student achievement amid the challenging internal and external conditions faced by restructuring schools. Both state and district officials warned the emphasis on replacing staff in the federal options may be misguided. Urban school systems, where the vast majority of Ohio’s restructuring schools are located, routinely struggle to fill positions with qualified teachers and administrators. Without a deep bench of teachers and principals to take on the challenge of raising student achievement, replacing staff in restructuring schools is likely to result in a revolving door of staff without improved outcomes for students. As the number of schools in corrective action and restructuring grows, the problem worsens, warned Stephen Barr of the state Center for School Improvement. “If you have one school in your district [in restructuring], fine. Get your hero and enjoy yourself. If you have quite a few schools or you’re looking at a state, you don’t have enough heroes to go around.”

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