1

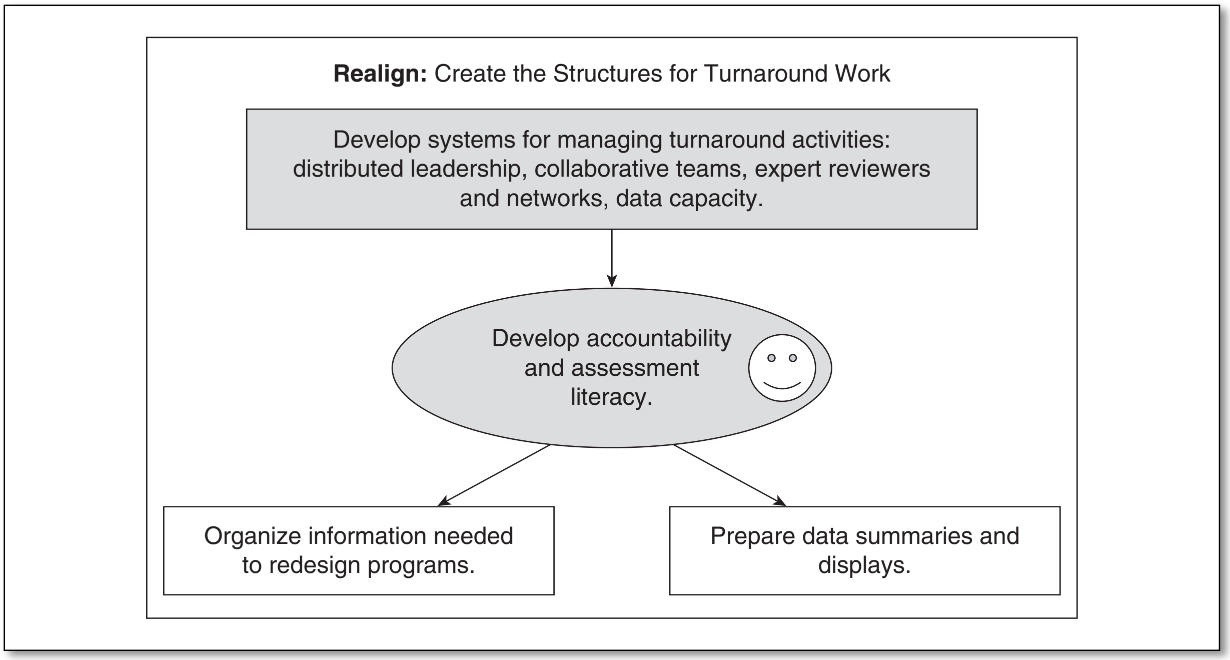
Develop Systems for Managing Turnaround Activities

Distributed Leadership, Collaborative Teams, Expert Reviewers and Networks, Data Capacity

People will support that which they help to create.

—Mary Kay Ash

PROGRESS MAP



POCKET SUMMARY

Task	Major Activities	Purpose
System 1. Establish a system of shared leadership.	• Create a new vision of school leadership. • Identify leaders for turnaround work. • Work with de facto leaders to establish collaborative groups or professional learning communities. • Conduct leadership development with collaborative group leaders. • Establish a system for school positional leaders to participate in, monitor, and support work.	• Build capacity to institutionalize the work. • Create staff and stakeholder support. • Develop skills and knowledge.
System 2. Develop a collaborative work process.	• Provide time for collaboration. • Develop guidelines for "safe" and productive participation of all members. **Tool 1.1 Collaborative Considerations Protocol** **Tool 1.2 Focused-Discussion Guidelines Protocol** • Spend time team building. **Tool 1.3 My Posse Protocol**	• Shift initiative from independent contractor to collaborative colleagues.
System 3. Create expert review groups or networks to leverage learning.	• Recruit an expert group. • Identify benchmark sites at which you can observe best practices. • Establish connections with stakeholder groups.	• Ensure your efforts will be informed by the best available information and expertise. • Support change by identifying benchmark schools.
System 4. Develop capacity for data collection, integration, and reporting.	**Tool 1.4 Guidelines for Selecting Software for Data-Guided Decision Making** • Train a data team to manage data collection, summarization, and reporting. • Develop accountability and assessment literacy. • Realign available systems. **Tool 1.5 Toolkit Tutorial: Key Accountability Concepts** **Tool 1.6 Toolkit Tutorial: Key Assessment Concepts** **Tool 1.7 Toolkit Tutorial: Test Score Interpretation and Reliability**	• Automate reporting for time-efficient meetings and data-informed decision making. • Develop local expertise in data use.

Establish a System of Shared Leadership

The most important systems in a school involve people. How can they best organize to do their work? How can they improve their skills and knowledge and stay current professionally? How can you distribute leadership responsibilities both to share the work and to institutionalize successful practices? The classroom teacher has the biggest direct influence on student learning, school climate, and the quality of curriculum and instruction. How can these classroom skills be leveraged for school turnaround?

Turnaround begins with realignment of traditional ways of doing business so that a more focused, efficient, and self-correcting system can replace school practices that are not improving student achievement. One approach to marshalling the person-power needed for this important work is to share leadership responsibilities among school staff. We refer to *shared* instead of *distributed* leadership, because distributed leadership is a complex concept, one that describes a particular perspective on leadership and specific kinds of interactions in a school. You may or may not be building distributed leadership systems, but you can start with the simpler task of involving more staff in planning, program monitoring, analyzing data for decision making, and staff development responsibilities than you have in the past.

The management tasks and challenges in realignment are summarized in the **Leader's Guide for Chapter 1**. The Guide reproduces the Pocket Summary above to use as you realign the four systems discussed in this chapter. The Guide also suggests readings to deepen your understanding of the kinds of leadership structures required to change the trajectory of student achievement.

Create a New Vision of School Leadership

Schools have natural organizational structures that need remodeling when learning and instruction require improvement. Research on leadership provides strong examples of how low-performing schools improve when staff and administrators share leadership, specifically through collaborative, professional groups—sometimes known as professional learning communities. Shirley Hord[1] of the Southeast Regional Educational Laboratory reviewed leadership practices linked to student achievement and found that effective teacher collaboration or professional learning communities have the following characteristics:

- Involve school principals in a facilitative and collegial role that invites staff input, decision making, and action on school issues
- Maintain an unwavering focus on improved student learning
- Develop shared vision and values
- Facilitate staff learning and application of new knowledge to address problems underlying low student achievement

In short, shared leadership is another way to view leadership of school turnaround. In contrast to positional leadership, which directs the work of school improvement to the principal, shared leadership is collective and yields multiple sources of expertise and vision. Teachers develop expertise by working collaboratively. Still, the hierarchical or formal leaders are essential in such a view of school leadership. Positional leaders are the glue of the organization. They hold organizational structures together and join people in productive relationships. In the words of Alma Harris, the central task of the titular leader is to create a "common culture of expectations around the use of individual skills and abilities."[2] Table 1.1 compares organizations led hierarchically to those with shared leadership.

Table 1.1 Creating a New Vision of School Leadership

Leadership Roles	Hierarchical Leadership	Shared Leadership
Who creates the vision?	District office, principal	Grade-level lead teachers, department heads, "champions," de facto leaders
Who leads the work?	Principal	Grade-level lead teachers, department heads, "champions," de facto leaders
Who selects and provides relevant resources (training, technology, funding, time)?	District office or principal	Selects—Principal in conjunction with other site leaders and district (if necessary) Provides—District, principal, community, parents, teachers
Who monitors the work?	District office or principal	Collaborative groups
Who evaluates the work?	District office or principal	Collaborative groups
Who revises the vision/plan and begins next steps?	District office or principal	Collaborative groups

Putting into place the structures and processes for shared leadership is one essential step in turnaround. Instilling the processes for reflective practice is a second ingredient for success. Reflective practice recognizes the power of continuous improvement and uses formative evaluation to accomplish it. The major tasks of formative evaluation—gathering data to assess student needs, using data to create program changes, gathering new data to check on implementation of program changes and resulting student progress, and revision of program changes based on new data—occur in collaborative groups (professional learning communities). Research conducted by Harris and Portin[3] has linked improvements in student achievement to the implementation of a continuous improvement process. Thus, prior to beginning turnaround work, you will need to put structures in place to establish the interpersonal relationships needed for collaboration and the capacity to use data for instructional improvement.

Identify Leaders for Turnaround Work

Leaders are the people who exercise discretion and influence over the direction of schools. All schools have individuals who, regardless of their title or job description, influence school climate, culture, and vision. These de facto leaders can be found helping colleagues identify issues that interfere with student learning, creating a more participatory environment, and bringing resources to bear toward meaningful change and reform. Schools also have de facto leaders who sabotage change, perhaps by invoking the union contract, by encouraging others to refrain from unpaid work, by defending the status quo, or by criticizing data (such as those gathered by the state or district testing system) that identify their schools as low performing. When inviting staff to lead your school's collaborative groups, you should be aware that change agents and resistors live in all organizations (and sometimes in the same person!). You will want to create collaborative relationships with your leadership team to create consensus about goals and processes for collaborative work and to address barriers that arise along the way. When identifying members for your leadership team, you will initially think of positional leaders, department heads, assistant principals, and district office specialists. However, search for those de facto leaders who exert influence and personal power at your site; these are essential members of your leadership team.

Work With De Facto Leaders to Establish Collaborative Work Groups or Professional Learning Communities

Given the nature of the work ahead, what kinds of teams are needed? Our first instinct is to think of the naturally occurring groups in our school, such as staff in particular grade levels, departments, or special programs such as special education, art, music, physical education, or education for English learners. However, in bringing about change, you want to create as many opportunities as possible for creative thinking and action. An art teacher or a special education teacher can provide valuable insights on student learning styles and cracking stubborn learning challenges. An English-learner specialist benefits greatly by understanding the mainstream curriculum, and her expertise with English learners will benefit teachers who need to adapt instruction for English learners. Teams with teachers from different grade levels enhance articulation between grades and develop a deeper understanding of grade-level standards. Collaboration among teachers of different grades on formative evaluation might also lead teachers to develop more flexible instructional groupings that involve sending students to different grade-level classrooms. As you work with your leadership team (your de facto leaders and administrative staff) to create working groups, consider the following questions:

- Will we establish a few groups to do the work and report to the rest of the staff, or will we engage everyone at some point in the formative evaluation process? (Think about your resource situation—for

example, do you have adequate release time to free teachers from classroom duties for this process? Are there natural leaders for multiple groups?)
- Do we need specialized "functional" teams for our work, such as a data team, a logic model team, or a learning strategies team?
- Which staff represent important stakeholders (including student groups)?
- Which staff might have useful and different takes on instructional issues?
- Who are natural leaders who inspire confidence or are bridge builders in difficult situations?
- How large should our collaborative groups be?
- Will groups remain together for a long period of time (which increases efficiency) or be rearranged periodically (which increases the opportunity to establish relationships among a larger group)?

Composing effective collaborative groups requires difficult trade-offs and careful consideration. But don't get too bogged down, and remember the real tasks here: Involve others, and create working groups that will be able to quickly address student learning problems at your school and yield rapid increases in student achievement.

Conduct Leadership Development With Collaborative Group Leaders

Staff you have identified as being natural or de facto leaders will play an important role in turnaround work. They will facilitate collaborative group meetings, they might initiate research on their own to inform their group's work, and their interactions with team members will determine whether participants feel valued, are developing skills, and have results to show for their efforts. Given the importance of de facto leaders, you will want to spend some time in leadership development. You will want to model the leadership behavior you expect from your leadership team, mentor and monitor them, and then have them reflect on their growth. One resource you could use in leadership development is *Leading Every Day* by Joyce Kaser, Susan Mundry, Katherine E. Stiles, and Susan Loucks-Horsely.[4] This reference contains 124 actions and reflections for leaders. An entire section of 31 activities is dedicated to leading effective groups. There are 4 activities dedicated to formative evaluation. One of our favorite activities to use with leadership groups is Capitalizing on Resistance, which identifies sources of resistance and asks participants to think of "antidotes." This activity is especially useful in helping leaders look beyond negative stances from team members to see important underlying reasons for resistance. It can shift the leader's attitude from exasperation to proactive identification of a teachable moment.

Your leadership development approach will match your staff's talent and working style. However, the leadership team should have some understanding of and ability to demonstrate the following skills:

- Listening
- Facilitating

- Dealing with, capitalizing on, and resolving conflict, resistance, and the actions of disruptive people
- Questioning, giving feedback, summarizing, and moving the group forward to the next steps

Establish a System for School Positional Leaders to Participate in, Monitor, and Support Work

The school leader or the consultant leading turnaround work would ideally attend all meetings of the collaborative groups, but this is often impossible. Instead, collaborative group members could file online minutes for review and comment. You could arrange for a weekly briefing and response session, or you could engage staff in informal conversations about their improvement work as a way to keep all up to date.

The goal here is to enable collaborative group members to hold themselves accountable for their work, individually and collectively. How do the principal and community provide needed resources and support? How does staff stay on task, complete their work, and report efforts? Again, involving staff in generating solutions to the communication/support issues will reveal viable solutions.

Develop a Collaborative Work Process

Teaching is a lonely activity. It shouldn't be. The synergy created by professional collaboration keeps teachers energized, leverages knowledge and skills in your staff, and provides emotional support through tough times. However, collaboration doesn't always come naturally. It is a skill. It can be learned, and it's essential if you wish to maximize your chances for improving student outcomes. Collaborative work requires that you set aside time for teachers to work together.

Provide Time for Collaboration

Principals often have little time to visit classrooms or lead instruction, but they are masters at creating schedules. Meetings have opportunity costs and sometimes also direct "costs." You may have a union contract that requires you to pay teachers for after-school, weekend, or evening meetings. You may need to hire substitutes so that teacher teams can meet. And when staff members meet to collaborate, their individual work is not getting done.

Your leadership team should consider the cost issues associated with collaborative group meeting schedules. Table 1.2 presents some typical approaches to paying the costs of collaborative work, both direct and opportunity. Your site might have different cost categories and a different proportion of direct to opportunity costs, but increasing staff time for collaboration does have costs. A fair economic analysis also considers the benefits associated with changes in costs. Since research finds that professional collaboration increases student achievement, morale, and teacher capacity, the return on investment must be considered.

Table 1.2 Offsetting Meeting Costs

Approaches to Direct Costs (salaries)	Approaches to Opportunity Costs (to offset what is not done in class while meetings occur)
Education foundation pays for substitutes.	District or community content specialists provide special activities for students.
School "banks" instructional time to have occasional shortened student days so teachers can meet.	Students do homework after school instead of in class.
Title I, Title II, or special teacher professional development funds can pay for meetings.	Supplemental service providers provide additional instruction for struggling students.
Collaborative groups meet on staggered schedules, so that colleagues can cover classes or combine classes for instruction.	Students meet in peer tutoring groups.

When resources are scarce but curriculum demands remain high, finding time to meet can seem impossible. You might want to consider how you can use technology to leverage meeting time. Online conferencing or chat rooms (of the instructional kind) might create additional collaboration opportunities. As your work progresses and benefits individual teachers, you might find that some of the barriers to collaboration will be less daunting.

Develop Guidelines for "Safe" and Productive Participation of All Members

Making the shift from a principal-directed (top down) workplace to a collaborative workplace will take some time. It begins with relationships: How will we talk with one another about our work and what will help us understand each other better? The first meeting, or even the first few meetings, of the collaborative groups should focus on developing norms for group participation and helping people develop productive working relationships.

A helpful strategy for team building is to engage your staff in developing guidelines for their work and in a few activities that will reveal similarities and differences in their work styles and beliefs. You've heard of protocols. In the world of computers, protocols describe how computers communicate with each other. In research, we develop protocols to guide data collection; for researchers, a protocol is a set of directions and a list of questions that governs and standardizes personal interviews with informants. In the world of education, we use the term *protocols* to describe the rules by which we teachers will communicate about an educational issue or a topic of professional practice. Specifically, we use protocols to manage group discussions. Protocols used to run collaborative sessions resemble a formal lesson plan. They are built around questions the group will be tackling but have guidelines to govern all aspects of the discussion. Some protocols contain a stated purpose for the discussion, a set of resources needed during the discussion (chart paper, an overhead projector, a time allotment), and finally, the steps that will occur during the discussion and the order in which they will occur.

While using protocols for teacher collaboration at first appears overly formal and artificial, consider why they have become a tool associated with effective collaborative groups. First, protocols provide necessary focus so that the teacher's most precious resource, time, is used effectively. Less-structured discussions may lead to staff venting or wandering off topic, excessive time spent on one or two topics, and perhaps hurt feelings. Protocols keep staff both on track and on time. Even a collegial and experienced staff appreciates how emotionally safe and productive meetings run with protocols can be.

We have developed protocols specific to turnaround work focused on formative evaluation. These protocols are evaluation-specific adaptations of two popular norm-setting protocols you may already be familiar with, the Fears and Hopes protocol[5] and the Setting Norms protocol developed by the Center for Collaborative Education in Boston.[6] The Fears and Hopes protocol is used to develop group ownership for each participant's expectations and concerns. We have shifted its focus slightly to reveal group versus individual working style preferences. Our **Tool 1.1, Collaborative Considerations Protocol,** asks participants to consider in which setting they are most comfortable tackling problems where they initially may not have much experience. Common examples include understanding data, diagnosing learning problems in an unfamiliar curricular area, and identifying strategies for effective parent involvement.

Tool 1.1

The Setting Norms protocol creates the rules for civil discourse guiding collaborative group work. It was designed to guide the discussion that sets the rules of engagement for collaborative meetings. Participants set norms for such areas as logistics, timelines, courtesy, decision-making process (hint: try to avoid a 2/3 majority norm), workload, and setting and enforcement of priorities. Our formative evaluation–themed protocol for norm setting is **Tool 1.2, Focused-Discussion Guidelines Protocol.** The protocol requires participants to generate participation norms for very goal-oriented discussions that have the potential to reveal staff insecurities and differences in styles and beliefs.

Tool 1.2

Table 1.3 summarizes the two turnaround-specific protocols for revealing participant reservations about group work and norm setting. Should you wish to use the more general Fears and Hopes or Setting Norms protocol, citations appear in the tables below, and full reference information may be found in the Reference section at the end of this book.

Table 1.3 A Comparison of the Collaborative Considerations and Focused-Discussions Guidelines Protocols for Identifying Group Concerns to be Addressed in Norm Setting

	Tool 1.1, Collaborative Considerations Protocol	**Tool 1.2, Focused-Discussion Guidelines Protocol**
Purpose	To help group members identify their own preferences during group work and to develop group respect for different styles	To engage participants in developing behavioral guidelines for their group work
Time	15–25 minutes	25–35 minutes
Resources Needed	Writing materials, chart paper and markers, handout with list of four questions about group work preferences, handout with formative evaluation questions	Chart paper, handout with list of six norms areas, handout with formative evaluation questions
Steps	Facilitator tells group they will be working on difficult issues of school improvement and asks them to consider four questions about working individually and in groups. Participants summarize group responses on charts. Facilitator asks for a gallery walk.	Participants work in groups of five to seven to develop guidelines for each of six areas: • Scheduling • Expectations • Consensus process • Responsibilities • Accommodating diverse styles • Group accountability Groups record suggested guidelines on six blank charts posted in the room.
Debriefing	Facilitator asks for advantages and disadvantages of individual versus group preference in style and focuses on how these can be accommodated in the group discussion guidelines.	Guidelines are consolidated and refined by the group and each approved before being accepted for group work.
Evaluating the Session: Formative Evaluation Questions	1. Did this activity remove any hesitations you might have about collaborative work? If so, can you pinpoint what caused this change? If not, what further concerns do you have?	1. Do you think the group-generated guidelines established conditions for quality group work? If not, what further concerns do you have? 2. Which guidelines might you challenge or find difficult to uphold?

	Tool 1.1, Collaborative Considerations Protocol	**Tool 1.2, Focused-Discussion Guidelines Protocol**
	2. What did you learn about your colleagues that you didn't already know? 3. Is this an activity you might use in your classroom? 4. Would you rate the activity a success or something less than useful? What suggestions do you have for improving it?	3. Which guidelines do you feel will be most valuable in creating focused, productive, respectful discussions? 4. Is this an activity you might use in your classroom? 5. Would you rate the activity a success or something less than useful? What suggestions do you have for improving it?

Sources: Tool 1.1 is adapted from Fears and Hopes protocol (McDonald, Mohr, Dichter, & McDonald, 2007, p. 24); Tool 1.2 is adapted from "Setting Norms for Collaborative Work," Center for Collaborative Education (n.d.).

Spend Time Team Building

Even faculties who have worked together for a long time may be unaware of professional perspectives or work styles that could surface during collaborative group work. We endorse allocating time for staff to get to know each other better when it comes to thinking and problem-solving styles.

We have developed three activities that introduce three different work-related perspectives of teachers (and others) as they relate to issues of teaching and learning. These activities help participants explore their diverse views of important components of teaching and learning, problem-solving styles, and preferred research methods.

Tool 1.3

The first activity, **Tool 1.3, My Posse Protocol,** asks teachers to explore their similarities and differences on issues of student learning and to consider how their stances impact their work. My Posse is adapted from the Diversity Rounds protocol.[7] My Posse asks participants to physically join others who are alike in their attitudes in three professional categories: educational outcomes, at-risk students, and favorite subject to teach. Participants define what constitutes membership in each category and physically sort themselves into groups. Groups then discuss how their selection affects their teaching. My Posse provides a general framework for organizing this sort-select process and can be adapted to any situation, focusing on cultural, experience, and other background factors that affect professional practice.

Problem-solving style activities are built upon theories of personality, such as those represented by the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, by the Keirsey Temperament Sorter, or by creativity and problem-solving research grounded in cognitive psychology. Because these are theory-based approaches, we recommend you review our recommendations and others and select one that best fits with your team-building goals. In Table 1.4, we have provided references for activities to reveal problem-solving styles that you can use with your staff.

One style assessment we like is called simply Problem-Solving Styles Test. It has been used in inservice sessions with the Canadian Literacy

Project and has been published as a problem-solving guide by Linda K. Hite-Mills in *The Art and Science of Problem Solving*.[8] Another is the Problem-Solving Style Identifier, a short inventory of five categories followed by four statements that participants rank in order of preference. Based on their responses, participants are identified as preferring one of four styles: Diplomat, Professor, Detective, or Champion. The Diplomat is the mediator and consensus builder, the Professor is information driven, the Detective seeks causes and relevant explanations, and the Champion is results focused but often a lone wolf. Our description does not do justice to the complexity of each style, which is explained well in the activity. The approaches have advantages and disadvantages, and no individual prefers purely one style. However, teachers benefit from awareness of their own preferred problem-solving style as well as of those of others. This awareness can increase tolerance for team differences.

A third problem-solving style activity is inspired by Myers-Briggs classifications, which identifies problem-solving style more as a personality disposition than as a cognitive approach. The well-known Compass protocol exists in many versions. We reference two of these versions in Table 1.4; they share a classification strategy but have different debriefing questions. The short-debrief version appears on the National School Reform Faculty website www.nsrfharmony.org. The version with a more extensive set of debriefing questions was developed by the Center for Collaborative Learning in Boston and appears on www.turningpts.org. The Compass Points protocol asks participants to physically place themselves in one of four directions—North, South, East, and West—each of which represents a personal style in a *group* setting. The four styles are Acting, Speculating, Caring, and Paying Attention to Detail. Once sorted and in physically different parts of the room, groups answer a series of questions designed to assess their strengths and weaknesses and to explain themselves to other groups with different styles. When we've used this protocol, some participants asked to create compass points between the four major directions. People sometimes resist being classified broadly, so allowing groups to choose points such as Northeast or Southwest to describe themselves resulted in more detailed revelations about working style and better buy-in from the group.

The final activity you could consider is directly related to the collaborative work the staff will be doing. The Paradigms Exposed activity[9] asks teachers to choose the one statement from each of 15 pairs that best describes their beliefs. It was developed by the evaluation theorist Robert Stake at the University of Illinois to serve as a discussion protocol rather than to identify real differences in style or preference. His brief survey covering beliefs about inquiry asks respondents to consider their stances on such topics as conducting observations, interpreting results, relationships between variables, the meaning of facts, trajectories of change, which data are most useful, and other aspects of research. Respondents receive a profile that identifies the extent to which their worldviews are positivistic or naturalistic. They are asked to consider how their inquiry worldview might affect their work in evaluating programs. Identifying inquiry orientation helps team members understand that underlying worldviews diverge and can influence what kinds of questions people ask and what kinds of data they value. We hope this knowledge causes participants to value and solicit input from others with different beliefs about inquiry.

We have presented a small sample of the kinds of team-building activities you might use to prepare your staff for school turnaround work. Table 1.4 summarizes their purposes and shows where you can find the protocols or assessments to use with your staff.

Table 1.4 Team-Building Resource Summary

Purpose	Useful Protocols
To identify diversity affecting teaching	Tool 1.3, My Posse Protocol Diversity Rounds (McDonald, Mohr, Dichter, & McDonald, 2007, p. 25)
To allow team members to learn more about personal cognitive styles that influence how they approach tasks	Compass Points www.turningpts.org (long version) www.nsrfharmony.org (short version)
To have participants learn more about their own preferences for naturalistic or positivistic inquiry and be aware of these as they react to how formative evaluations are designed	Paradigms Exposed (Preskill & Russ-Eft, 2005, pp. 150–153)

Create Expert Review Groups or Networks to Leverage Learning

As you work with the collaborative groups at your site, you will soon identify areas where "inside" knowledge is not enough to address the problems you wish to solve. After all, if you knew how to hit your accountability targets every year, or reduce the achievement gap, or increase the percentage of graduates going to college, you would have done it! People with other experiences and perspectives can support your staff at each step of the formative evaluation process. The support might be informal, such as sitting in meetings or reviewing agendas, survey items, and plans; or it might be more formal, such as providing written critiques of the strengths and weaknesses of your written documents.

Recruit an Expert Group

One of the most efficient ways to access expertise outside your school is to establish an advisory board or expert panel, different members of which may review your work or participate in your collaborative group meetings at crucial times. Expert groups leverage your work by bringing ideas and knowledge and by offering opportunities to join other professional networks that enhance skills and knowledge at your site. Your group could consist of experts only, but it could also include other people whose perspectives will improve your work and provide information you wouldn't find at your site. For example, perhaps you are focused on improving mathematics for African American males. Your expert group might have some math teaching experts and some experts on African American educational issues, but it also might have a math teacher from another school or district who has been successful with your target group.

Who qualifies as an expert? Experts are people identified by others as being especially thoughtful and knowledgeable. Experts have reputations, but not the kind that get them into trouble! Look for referrals from positional leaders such as your district curriculum director. District and state curriculum or accountability staff can also direct you to commercial programs, such as Safe and Civil Schools or the University of Chicago School Mathematics Project, that have staff with experience and success in addressing instructional issues and that might have consultants willing to help (for a fee).

You can identify an expert by finding out who is writing about the problems you wish to solve and whether other people are citing their work. The What Works Clearinghouse (http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/aboutus/investigators.asp#pi03), a website of the U.S. Department of Education's Institute for Education Sciences (IES), lists principal investigators who can refer you to experts in your region who may have worked on important IES studies. The websites of subject-matter professional organizations, such as the National Council for Mathematics Education or the International Reading Association, can also help you find people who are writing about or doing the work of reforming curriculum. Check the publications from leadership organizations such as the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (www.ascd.org) or American Association of School Administrators to find articles related to your school's problems. Who wrote them? Do you like what they said? Would that person act as a reviewer for your work?

You can define an expert as someone who has special experience or success with the problem you are tackling. The math teacher in the example above qualifies as an expert. A social worker or psychologist who provides support to dropout programs would be an expert. You might even consider your local education reporter as an expert in identifying what is wrong with the schools and one who holds high standards for certifying school success.

You can recruit your advisors and experts from many sources. Most will be quite willing to participate if you limit their time commitment and structure their input so that it is easy for them to support your collaborative group work. When you invite them to provide feedback about your work, you will want to be specific about

- the amount of time they will have to spend;
- when you will be asking them to respond;
- which topics they are to review;
- what you expect in the response—insightful suggestions, a critique, affirmation, or all of these; and
- whether you will be paying them a stipend for their work.

You will also need to tell them whether they are to be reviewing and responding to documents or to be observing your work and making comments. This group can be quite helpful in the early stages of your work as well. You might ask them to act as an advisory board for your planning meetings. Table 1.5 suggests sources of expertise and what perspectives you gain by including people from these sources.

Table 1.5 The Expert Field Guide

Where to Find Critical Friends	Type of Expertise
Central Office Staff	Curriculum Staff—Program description information; standards for correct program implementation; logic models underlying programs for reading, math, science, and so forth Testing Staff—How to understand what is tested; interpreting scores; appropriate test preparation; customized test reports to address school-specific needs Research Staff—Training in formative evaluation; development of logic models; data analysis, display, and interpretation Directors of Gifted Students, Special Education, and English Learner Programs—Instructional strategies; learning issues; testable solutions to learning problems Psychologists and Social Workers—Identification of student variables affecting learning; identification of programs to address behavioral issues and other special challenges
Local University	Research-based curriculum, instructional strategies, methods for including special needs populations, knowledge of standards students must meet to be college ready Connections to other experts nationally who could help
Community Experts: Activists, Journalists	Knowledge of student needs and resources outside of school to address health, psychological, and vocational issues Commitment to certain issues or groups of students that could translate into a better understanding of group needs Criteria for judging your school and a vision of what the school should be like
Parent Advocates	Ideas about how best to solicit parent input and communicate findings Ideas for improving parent involvement in new initiatives
Student Activists	Assistance in surveying students and summarizing results Student perspectives on innovations and current problems Review of measures, surveys, and communication for clear, understandable language

Identify Benchmark Sites at Which You Can Observe Best Practices

A central aspect of turnaround work is helping staff at struggling schools see what success with a comparable student population looks like. Educators often give more credibility to practitioner experience than policy mandates or research findings. Practitioners are creative and great at adapting ideas, practices, and curriculums to their local context. Comparable schools provide models for improvement and collegial networks that can support your team during planning and implementation. A second reason to identify and create a relationship with one or more benchmark schools is that benchmarking is simply good practice. Your visits to benchmark schools will provide staff with strategies to consider when creating an improvement plan, and you may find that colleagues in the benchmark schools wish to become part of your advisory board or expert group.

What is benchmarking? The term comes to education from business and was first used by Rank Xerox. Benchmarking is a Total Quality Management (TQM) tool. TQM is a continuous improvement process, and benchmarking is the step in the process during which leaders in the field are studied to identify their best practices. Benchmarking methodology can have many goals and many steps, but a short version can easily be incorporated into your turnaround work:

1. *Conduct a needs assessment* to identify priority areas for improvement and to determine what kind of program you wish to learn from.
2. *Identify similar or comparable schools* using demographic, achievement, and other key data that define your school.
3. *Identify the outstanding schools* among the comparable schools. Criteria should include outstanding results in your priority areas for improvement but could also include climate, parent involvement, safety, community service, and other valued outcomes.
4. *Obtain initial information* about how your comparable benchmark school has obtained outstanding results. You could send an advance team to interview key leaders, read about the school in published case studies, or examine public data available on the Internet. The purpose of this preliminary study is to identify questions to ask about how they did it when you visit.
5. *Visit the comparable school* to identify practices they say caused their success.
6. *Implement best practices:* Get needed training, try the strategies, and . . .
7. *Evaluate them!*

Establish Connections With Stakeholder Groups

Finally, your external review system could include representatives of important, supportive, and creative people from your student body (if they are old enough), parent groups, foundations, community organizations, and perhaps even activist groups. For example, if your school is located near Washington, D.C., and is working to close the achievement gap, you might want to include someone from the Education Trust on your advisory board. You might have a local chapter of the National Conference for Community and Justice who can provide skilled observers for your collaborative groups and assess human relations at your site. Your local education foundation or a large national foundation might have expertise to help you view your work creatively.

Develop Capacity for Data Collection, Integration, and Reporting

We conclude our overview of the major systems and processes you need with a discussion of the technological support and technical capacity essential to any data-guided continuous improvement system: These include hardware and software for data collection, integration, analysis, and reporting and staff able to summarize, analyze, and interpret data.

Up to this point, we have focused on the "people" issues associated with school turnaround work. And for us, it's always "people first." However, the people engaged in solving instructional problems need useful information and tools to easily access and analyze data. The important issues to consider in creating systems at your site for data collection, integration, analysis, and reporting are as follows:

- What kinds of data and what kinds of reports will we need?
- What kinds of data are available already in electronic form?
- What other, potentially important data are already available or could be easily collected?
- How can data collected locally or already available in nonelectronic form—such as student portfolios, behavioral information, lesson plans, and other nonstandardized test information—be entered into an electronic storage system?
- How will data from different sources—such as attendance records, individual course-taking, test scores, survey responses, grades, and demographic data—be assembled for analysis and reporting?
- Who will create data summaries—the central office, a school team, or individual teachers? What technology will they use?

The good news is that there are many vendors of add-on data systems (added to your district's data warehouse or student information system) designed to provide individual schools or teachers with the ability to create custom reports. Most of the add-on systems created for mining school district data have test-generation capabilities, and some even link test results to curriculum or individual student remediation work. These products "sit atop" your district's student information system and integrate data on student demographics, course-taking, and test scores stored in the central system or individual classrooms into a single system, so teachers can create custom reports whenever they need to. The bad news is that creating a system that will enable principals or teachers to create their own reports may require additional purchases your school cannot afford. Many systems have a per-pupil per-year pricing plan and house the data with the vendor. These requirements are difficult for districts, because their budgets are generally built one year at a time, and student confidentiality laws often make offsite storage unfeasible. But you can often negotiate with vendors to run the system in-house with district staff and pay a yearly licensing fee, which can both reduce the per-pupil cost and reduce fears about violating student and teacher confidentiality.

Your district's information systems (IS) department could have "business intelligence" tools that can generate reports for your school. Perhaps you could create a list of useful reports you will be requesting each quarter, semester, and year, and have your IS department program the report templates so that you can access them when needed. Generally, creating reports using business intelligence tools requires some programming experience and is not a task teachers can perform from their desktops. However, after you have been through a few cycles of formative evaluation to help you identify the kind of data you need and in what format, centrally designed reports can provide a cost-effective reporting solution.

Tool 1.4

Tool 1.4, Guidelines for Selecting Software for Data-Guided Decision Making, highlights some major decisions in selecting a data integration and reporting system for teacher use. The answers to these questions can be quite technical and require working closely with central office IS staff. In fact, setting up systems for data collection, integration, and reporting could be the focus of one of your collaborative groups. Your data collaborative group could use this tool (which appears in the Toolkit) to interview vendors or to have an intelligent conversation with the district IS department.

Train a Data Team to Manage Data Collection, Analysis, Summarization, and Reporting

Much of your systems realignment will be focused on creating capacity to do turnaround work, specifically to collect, analyze, and use relevant data to identify needed program changes, to monitor those changes, and to use the monitoring data for program revision. Continuous improvement and review of data requires that data be collected, analyzed, and summarized frequently and in a timely fashion. Traditional reporting periods, such as the yearly release of state and federal accountability reports, do not provide information quickly enough for schools to revise programs and make needed changes. Accountability data certainly are of little use for diagnosing classroom or individual problems of teaching and learning.

The most efficient approach to assuring more frequent data collection throughout the year is to create a school-level data team to be responsible for the regular collection, summarization, and interpretation of data. Data team members need not have formal training in statistics, but they should have some training in research methods, especially in identifying threats to internal and external validity of "experiments," in asking questions about data, in graphic conventions, and in interpreting descriptive statistics (including regression), as well as practice in communicating numerical information to others.

We conducted a focus group with school administrators who supervise principals and work as advisors to underperforming schools to identify the kinds of skills and knowledge a data team would need. Their responses are summarized in Table 1.6, Data Team Competencies.

Table 1.6 Data Team Competencies

Knowledge/Dispositions	Skills
Understand the details and calculations behind state and federal accountability system reports for the school	Organizing data
Understand key concepts in measurement, data analysis, and interpretation: reliability, validity, standard error, item difficulty, score distributions, correlation, scale score, raw score, percentile	Data analysis Graphing data
Understand what assessment results really "say," what they don't say, and what threats there might be to validity of results (alternate interpretations)	Leading discussions about data to get beyond superficial findings
Understand how assessments are tied to purpose and use and are developed to address specific questions	Asking probing questions about how students acquire content knowledge
Able to develop theories of action that explain the relationship between teaching events and what students learn (outcomes)	Ability to "unpack" or operationalize standards
Understand the importance of formative assessments and using the results in the classroom to immediately revise instruction	Extracting data from the district's information system and creating reports

Ideally, you will have three to five teachers and/or administrators interested in developing expertise in this area and willing to do the tedious work of collecting, organizing, summarizing, and presenting data and even reviewing classroom or district assessments. If you are graced with such courageous staff members, you can arrange to have them do a book study group led by one of your expert reviewers or a local university professor of research methods, or arrange to have the district office or local service provider, such as a county education office, organize training for the data team. In addition to the knowledge and skills noted above, data-team training could include the following topics:

- Using protocols for team building and collaboration
- Understanding the details of the state and federal accountability systems, including special rules, and the technical manual for the state assessment
- Understanding how to align to standards assessments created by the district or individual teachers
- Identifying student learning problems and teaching issues related to these problems
- Developing theories of action or logic models to link changes in curriculum or instruction to student outcomes

- Creating management plans for the administration of accountability, district, and common assessments in the school, and creating timelines for data collection and data sharing

While data team training may seem highly technical, we have found that when it is anchored to a book study group and supported by direct practice of the needed skills and some targeted technical information, 30 hours can prepare teachers interested in data to lead your school's data use efforts. Advisors can also be used to fill in any gaps in your data team's knowledge and skills.

Develop Accountability and Assessment Literacy

The data team will need a thorough understanding of the state and federal accountability systems and the technical characteristics of the assessments used in each. You might also decide that accountability and assessment literacy would help all of the teaching staff to use data better. Knowing how tests are developed, what their technical strengths and weaknesses are, and how the school's accountability standing is calculated, although these issues seem incomprehensible on the surface, tends to empower educators. Accountability and assessment results are used to vilify and praise schools, to select promising and lagging students, and to measure the impact of teaching. Once teachers see what is under the hood of these vehicles, they tend to be less defensive about results and more creative about how they can augment test results with other information to make more accurate decisions. They are also able to communicate student and school results more clearly to parents and help them to put into perspective the hyperbole about school performance that often accompanies the public reporting of scores.

We have included in the Toolkit for Chapter 1 three key tutorials that can serve as a primer for accountability and assessment literacy:

Tools 1.5–1.7

Tool 1.5, Toolkit Tutorial: Key Accountability Concepts

Tool 1.6, Toolkit Tutorial: Key Assessment Concepts

Tool 1.7, Toolkit Tutorial: Test Score Interpretation and Reliability

The literacy tutorials provide an introduction to the concepts needed for interpreting tests and are easy to understand. We hope the tutorials entice some staff to develop more in-depth understanding of the educational policies and assessments that are driving teaching practice today. It's time to take the clothes off the emperor (and perhaps buy him a whole new wardrobe!).

Realign Available Systems

This chapter focused on realigning people and practices in the school prior to designing the turnaround plan. It was lengthy, because changing behavior, attitudes, roles, and responsibilities takes both time and patience. The focus in our first realignment task is on processes, attitudes, and developing knowledge. It involves helping people responsible for turning around student achievement—teachers and other staff, parents, and community—buy into the mission and develop a passion for getting better results. Once structures for turnaround work are in place, we can begin realigning our available information to make it more useful and accessible for program redesign. Specifically, in the next chapter we will catalog programs already in place and inventory data to identify student needs.

CHAPTER 1 TOOLKIT

DEVELOP SYSTEMS FOR MANAGING TURNAROUND ACTIVITIES

Distributed Leadership, Collaborative Teams,
Expert Reviewers and Networks, Data Capacity

The Tools for Chapter 1 can be found on the companion website for *The TurnAround ToolKit* at http://www.corwin.com/turnaroundtoolkit.

Tool 1.1 Collaborative Considerations Protocol

Tool 1.2 Focused-Discussion Guidelines Protocol

Tool 1.3 My Posse Protocol

Tool 1.4 Guidelines for Selecting Software for Data-Guided Decision Making

Tool 1.5 Toolkit Tutorial: Key Accountability Concepts

Tool 1.6 Toolkit Tutorial: Key Assessment Concepts

Tool 1.7 Toolkit Tutorial: Test Score Interpretation and Reliability