

School Turnaround Leaders

Competencies for Success

Part of the School Turnaround Collection from Public Impact
Fall 2016 Update

Now Includes Links To:

- ☑ *More on Instructional Leadership, the Heart of a Successful School Turnaround*
- ☑ *Free “Opportunity Culture” Tools*
- ☑ *Competencies Aligned with Career Paths for Teachers, Teacher-Leaders, and Principals*

Acknowledgements

This updated document incorporates links to materials for instructional leadership, teacher-leaders, and Opportunity Culture roles for teacher-leaders. In addition, the competencies have been aligned with the matching competency and selection materials for teachers: *School Turnaround Teachers: Competencies for Success* and *School Turnaround Teachers: Selection Toolkit*, and *teacher-leaders*, so that educators and districts may use all in seamless career paths.

These updates are heavily informed by the experience of high-poverty schools in the **Opportunity Culture** national network that have achieved swift, dramatic improvement in student growth and achievement. We are grateful to the teachers and principals who have led that work and shared their lessons, providing examples of how principals and a team of teacher-leaders can effect rapid student learning gains in the most challenging circumstances.

All competencies derived from: Spencer, L. M., & Spencer, S. M. (1993). *Competence at work: Models for superior performance*. New York, NY: John Wiley and Sons.

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Prior Version

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Other Resources

For more help selecting principals in turnaround schools, see the [*School Turnaround Leaders: Selection Toolkit*](#).

For help selecting and developing teachers and teacher-leaders in turnaround schools, see the [*School Turnaround Teachers: Selection Toolkit*](#) and [*School Turnaround Teachers: Competencies for Success*](#).

For help selecting and developing teacher-leaders/multi-classroom leaders for turnarounds (and more detail on teachers), see the [*Opportunity Culture Selection Toolkit*](#) and [*Evaluation, Accountability and Professional Development in an Opportunity Culture*](#).

For more help redesigning schools for successful turnarounds, see OpportunityCulture.org.

For additional tools and materials to help with school turnarounds, see the Public Impact website's [Turnarounds](#) page.

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Making the Most of This Guide: What You Need to Know

Why Are Leaders So Important in a Turnaround?

Evidence collected over 40 years suggests that effective school leaders significantly influence student learning and other aspects of school performance.¹ Documented cases also indicate that individual leaders in failing organizations in many sectors, including education, can effect rapid, dramatic improvements.²

School turnarounds are possible, but they take a concerted effort with bold leadership and persistent, achievement-oriented collaboration among staff. Emerging examples indicate that skilled teacher-leaders, not just principals, are critical for helping teachers throughout a school change instruction and school culture. Public Impact's work in multiple states with Opportunity Culture schools, most of which are high-poverty and face persistent challenges, provides many examples of schools producing high growth in student learning and double-digit proficiency gains. In the most successful of these, principals deploy a schoolwide team of teacher-leaders to help turn schools around.

This guide aims to help districts attempting turnarounds understand the underlying characteristics of principals likely to succeed in a turnaround, based on the best available research and experience. This update provides the missing link in earlier work: Teacher-leaders who help principals achieve change in every classroom, year after year. Turnaround principals do not have to turn schools around alone. Instead, educators can achieve dramatic change together.

What Does This Guide Include?

This guide provides a summary of turnaround principal actions, definitions of competencies, and detailed descriptions of increasing levels of effective competence. We also provide principal examples of actions and competencies, including ones gathered from successful Opportunity Culture turnarounds-in-progress and other school turnarounds. Competencies are strong predictors of work performance and can be very effective guideposts for selection, development, and promotion.

Find more free tools to help with turnarounds and leading excellent schools on PublicImpact.com/school-turnarounds and OpportunityCulture.org. Of special note for readers is the [*School Turnaround Leaders: Selection Toolkit*](#).

¹ Leithwood, K., Louis, K. S., Anderson, S., & Wahlstrom, K. (2004). *How leadership influences student learning*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota; Leithwood, K., & Riehl, C. (2003). *What we know about successful school leadership*. Philadelphia, PA: Laboratory for Student Success, Temple University; Waters, J. T., Marzano, R. J., & McNulty, B. A. (2003) *Balanced leadership: What 30 years of research tells us about the effect of leadership on student achievement*. Aurora, CO: Mid-continental Research for Education and Learning; Davis, S., Darling-Hammond, L., LaPointe, M., & Meyerson, D. (2005). *School leadership study: Developing successful principals*. Stanford, CA: Stanford Educational Leadership Institute.

² Public Impact: Kowal, J., & Hassel, E. A. (2005). *Turnarounds with new leaders and staff*. Washington, DC: Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement. Retrieved from <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED502903.pdf>; Public Impact. (2007). *School turnarounds: A review of the cross-sector evidence on dramatic organization improvement*. Center on Innovation and Improvement. Retrieved from <http://www.centerii.org/survey/downloads/turnarounds-color.pdf>

Using Competencies and Actions for School Turnaround Principal Success

What Is a “Competency”?

A competency is a pattern of thinking, feeling, acting, or speaking that causes a person to be successful in a job or role. Competencies may be developed, but they are most powerful when used to select people who are already a good fit for the job. The competencies included here stem primarily from in-depth studies of highly successful leaders in analogous leadership roles, such as entrepreneurs and managers in complex organizations. These studies have strong statistical grounding and quantify the competency differences between typical and highly successful people in these roles.³

The specific competencies used here were selected to match the turnaround actions found in cross-sector literature, more recently supported by school turnaround experience.

How Is a “Competency” Different from “Actions” That Lead to Success in a Job?

The “actions” in this set of turnaround principal materials appear consistently in the large body of cross-sector literature about successful bad-to-great turnarounds.⁴ Examples of these actions come from actual school turnarounds. Actions primarily describe *what* leaders do in turnaround organizations, while competencies describe *how* they carry out those actions for positive results. Since some competencies include patterns of action, the competencies and leader actions can overlap. The *what vs. how* contrast can be a useful construct to help principals take the right actions, with an understanding of how their own competency strengths and challenges may affect success. Principals can complement their strengths and offset their weaknesses by engaging a teacher-leader team—an assistant principal and others—in the effort, all of whom have also been selected for their competencies.

What Is the Benefit of Using Competencies for Selection?

People with a strong pattern of past behavior are more likely to bring that behavior to a new setting. Ideally, school districts could choose people who have been successful previously in the same job—leaders who have already led very successful school turnarounds. But the nation does not have enough successful turnaround principals to meet the need. The competencies included here are phrased to be general enough that they can be used to select leaders who have shown the right combination of competencies in other jobs, but who have not yet turned around a school. The emerging cadre of accountable teacher-leaders, or multi-classroom leaders, may soon provide a new source for school turnaround principals.

³ The competency-related definitions and major underlying competency research used here come from the ideas of David McClelland and related research documented in Spencer, L. M., & Spencer, S. M. (1993). *Competence at work: Models for superior performance*. New York, NY: John Wiley and Sons.

⁴ Public Impact: Kowal, J., & Hassel, E. A. (2005). *Turnarounds with new leaders and staff*. Washington, DC: Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement. Retrieved from <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED502903.pdf>; Public Impact. (2007). *School turnarounds: A review of the cross-sector evidence on dramatic organization improvement*. Center on Innovation and Improvement. Retrieved from <http://www.centerii.org/survey/downloads/turnarounds-color.pdf>

Turnaround Leader Actions: Consistent Cross-Sector Findings

The actions in this section are found consistently in cross-sector studies of turnarounds.⁵ This research documented and analyzed cases in which failing organizations made rapid, dramatic performance improvements.

The steps toward turnaround success are very consistent across sectors and in schools. A few actions were present in all or nearly all turnarounds documented, including:

- focusing on a few early wins that build momentum,
- breaking organizations norms or rules to get new results, and
- learning quickly what works, and not—and making changes fast.

The other actions also appeared in most of the successful turnarounds. Not every turnaround requires every action, depending on the existing strengths of the school.

We also provide brief examples of actions. For these, we draw in part on the experience with school turnarounds, including Opportunity Culture schools in which a team of **multi-classroom leaders** helped a principal achieve high growth in schools and classrooms where even target growth had been elusive for years.

For a step-by-step quarterly checklist that incorporates both turnaround actions and instructional leadership actions for schools, use the **Principal Action Planner—Turnaround Version**.

- The **Multi-Classroom Leader Action Planner** provides a similar list for teacher-leaders.
- See **vignettes and videos about successful turnaround principals and teacher-leaders and columns by teacher-leaders** on OpportunityCulture.org for more specific examples of actions.
- For many more tools, see **PublicImpact.com/school-turnarounds** and **OpportunityCulture.org**.

Turnaround Leader Actions & Brief Examples⁶

1. Focus on a Few Early Wins; Use the Momentum

- **Collect & Analyze Data:** Successful turnaround leaders are focused, fearless data hounds. Initially, turnaround leaders personally analyze data about the organization's performance to identify high-priority problems that can be fixed quickly.
- **Make Action Plan Based on Data:** Turnaround leaders make an action plan that includes annual goals and major steps, with enough detail that each group in the school knows specifically what to do differently. This allows people to focus on changing what they do, rather than just worrying about impending change. Plan should cover years 1–3, with more detail for year 1.
- **Focus on a Few Early Wins for Year 1:** Successful turnaround leaders choose a few high-priority goals with visible payoffs and use early success to gain momentum. Although limited in scope, these “wins” are high-priority, not peripheral, elements of organization performance, and they are bold in their speed and magnitude of change. Early wins are critical for motivating staff and disempowering naysayers.

In a School Turnaround: School turnaround principals identify the academic areas, school conditions, and instructional practices that need improvement. They review data about teachers' strengths and weaknesses that affect instruction and school culture. They analyze data personally, so they really know what needs to change for students, and their teachers, to achieve greater success.

⁶ These actions come from: Public Impact: Kowal, J., & Hassel, E. A. (2005). *Turnarounds with new leaders and staff*. Washington, DC: Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement. Retrieved from <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED502903.pdf>

Academic areas may include certain grades, subjects (such as reading or math), or student groups (such as students with disabilities or English language learners) that have been identified as needing to make substantial improvement fast.

School conditions are ones that are essential preconditions for learning, such as attendance, schoolwide behavior, and the safety and adequacy of the facilities and materials. These things, along with instructional practices, form a school's culture.

Instructional practices include planning and executing steps that affect whether students achieve high growth, so they can catch up and leap ahead: detailed learning goals (quarterly, unit, lesson), assessments that align with each goal in content and timing, lesson plans that fit assessments, classroom management, and teaching that engages and inspires critical thinking, among other steps.

Many successful turnaround principals work with a team of accountable teacher-leaders, or multi-classroom leaders, to make a specific plan for achieving interim academic goals, positive school culture, and improvements in how teachers teach and students learn (instructional practice).

They look for the highest-priority changes that would affect annual student outcomes rapidly. Visible, early wins are critical. Principals, assistant principals, and teacher-leaders in a successful school turnaround often focus on one or two grades, one or two core subjects, or a combination—according to the turnaround plan they have made together. Sometimes the decision is based on where they have the teacher-leaders needed to help all teachers make changes.

School learning goals are not just annual testing goals. Turnaround principals, with teacher-leaders, set goals through the year—quarterly, unit, even weekly or daily. That way, students and teachers can *quickly* see that new actions get new results, and teachers can make changes fast if students aren't on track. The whole school celebrates when evidence emerges that students are on a path to high growth for the year.

Some examples of early wins that appear to have produced momentum toward further success: formation of accountable teacher-leader roles, weekly time for teaching team collaboration, immediate attendance improvements, reduced behavior problems, new lesson plans written or edited by top teachers, new assessments aligned with annual goals, and—perhaps most importantly—interim assessment results that show students are on track for high growth for the year. Some schools began with facilities improvements, and then quickly added instruction, behavioral, and other changes that directly affect learning.

2. Lead a Turnaround Campaign

- **Communicate a Positive Vision:** Turnaround leaders start their turnaround campaign by communicating a clear picture of success and its benefits. This motivates others to contribute their discretionary effort.
- **Gain Support of Key Influencers:** Turnaround leaders gain support of trusted influencers among staff and the community, then work through these people to influence others.
- **Silence Critics with Speedy Success:** Turnaround leaders use early wins not just for successes in their own right, but to cast vocal naysayers as champions of failure. This reduces the leader's time spent addressing "politics" and increases time spent managing for results.
- **Help Staff Personally Feel Problems:** Turnaround leaders use various tactics to help staff empathize with—or "put themselves in the shoes of"—those whom they serve, to truly feel the problems that the status quo causes and feel motivated to change.

In a School Turnaround: School turnaround principals use specific examples and stories to convey how wrong and unnecessary continued failure is for students to endure. They share stories and data from successful schools using similar turnaround methods to show teachers, parents, and students that change is not only possible, it's likely with the right actions. They call for unified action, an "all hands on deck" approach across the school.

Great school turnaround leaders tap respected, high-growth-producing teachers for leadership roles. Leadership may include serving on a team to redesign the school for the turnaround and/or leading a teaching team after the redesign.

Principals also gain the backing of community leaders willing to support big changes publicly—financially and in other ways.

Some school community members resist change, even when they care about students. They may be tired of change efforts, they may be afraid they won't succeed with changes, or they may worry that power will be lost when roles change. Speedy success shows everyone that the changes in teaching and school culture result in better learning outcomes. Skeptical veteran teachers report changing their minds after they got help from skilled teacher-leaders, or after they saw the learning results when they tried new assessments for lessons. Some teachers who were powerful and vocally negative about changes stopped their opposition to change after learning results were demonstrated.

Opposition has been limited in some schools when principals helped teachers understand the challenges that students in a high-poverty school may face, for example by requiring home visits. They compared the opportunities available to a student who makes high growth year after year to the outcomes of students who stay behind. Principals use a combination of facts, data, and stories to make communication believable, personal, and hopeful.

3. *Get the Right Staff, Right the Remainder*

- **Require All Staff to Change:** When turnaround leaders implement an action plan, change is mandatory, not optional, beginning with accountable team leaders in the organization.
- **Make Necessary Staff and Leader Replacements:** Successful turnaround leaders typically do not replace all or most staff, but often replace or carefully select new team leaders who organize and drive change. After initial turnaround success, staff who do not make needed changes either leave or are removed by the leader.

In a School Turnaround: School turnaround principals prioritize excellent teaching in every classroom, recruiting highly effective teachers and making difficult staffing decisions, including dismissing teachers when necessary. Teacher-leaders have been critical to many successful turnaround principals. These teacher-leaders were typically chosen for prior student growth results *and* leadership qualities, not just experience; this upsets the experience-driven culture in some schools. Teachers are recruited for leadership positions both from within and outside the schools. Early wins in student learning outcomes prove essential to show that changes in how teachers are organized are good for everyone, even very experienced teachers.

Breaking one-teacher-one-classroom routines, and insisting that all teachers use the methods and tools of highly successful teacher-leaders, are common changes, too. Multi-classroom leaders commonly write or edit lesson plans, and assessments, for teachers on their teams, and they lead data review and improvement week in and week out, to ensure change. A timid pace of making instructional change mandatory appears to reduce the speed of student learning improvements.

Teachers uncomfortable with the pace of change and intensive focus on instructional planning and improvement often choose to leave or are encouraged to switch schools at the end of the year.

4. *Drive Decisions with Open-Air Data*

- **Measure and Report Progress Frequently:** Turnaround leaders set up systems to measure and report interim results often. This enables them to rapidly discard failing tactics and increase the successful tactics that are essential for fast results.
- **Require Decision-Makers to Share Data and Solve Problems:** Turnaround leaders share key staff results visibly and often. All key staff, starting with team leaders, must share periodic results in open sessions, shifting discussions from excuse-making to problem-solving.

In a School Turnaround: School turnaround principals transparently and relentlessly measure and monitor progress and make adjustments to increase the rate of success. Data about each high-priority change—instructional, behavioral, and others—are tracked openly, so that teacher-leaders and teachers can air and solve problems fast. School turnarounds include a heightened focus on measuring students' progress very often, in particular.

In many successful turnarounds, a team of teacher-leaders works closely with the principal and/or assistant principal to coordinate instructional improvements and behavior changes schoolwide. Each teacher-leader (or multi-classroom leader) in turn leads a team of teachers and is accountable for all the team's student outcomes. More limited interventions—fewer team leaders or roles with less authority—are unlikely to produce the same odds of high growth in a high-poverty school where students schoolwide are struggling.

In most schools, teacher-leaders must share data about their teams with their peers and the principal and/or assistant principal(s). Teachers on their teams must share data about students they teach with teammates and team leaders.

Time for sharing data and collaboratively solving problems schoolwide and within each teaching team is regularly scheduled—weekly or even more often—and mandatory.

5. Break Organization Norms

- **Break Organization Norms:** In a failing organization, existing practices often contribute to failure. Successful turnaround leaders break rules and norms to achieve success. Deviating to achieve early wins shows that new action gets new results.

In a School Turnaround: School turnaround principals make large and notable changes to prior practices to signal change and get different results. Changes to achieve early wins require breaking norms and asking for specific exceptions or broader autonomy and flexibility.

Some roles at the school (such as coaches or facilitators) might be traded in for higher pay for remaining teachers, especially those who step up to lead other teachers and take accountability for a team's student outcomes. Schedule changes for collaborative teaching are common. Some principals request that district-mandated professional development be abandoned in favor of on-the-job development by skilled teacher-leaders. Principals insist that administrative meetings sapping the time of top teachers be reduced in number and length. Teachers with strong prior growth are allowed to change what students do in the classroom, focusing more time on in-depth discussion and projects that enhance critical thinking. Teachers are allowed to make substantial changes in teaching methods. Digital learning plays a new role in some schools, not supplanting but complementing face-to-face learning.

The examples of norm-breaking appear to be numerous and very focused on enabling teachers to excel in instruction quickly.

6. Do What Works; Raise the Bar

- **Focus on Successful Tactics; Halt Others:** Successful turnaround leaders quickly discard tactics that do not work and spend more money and time on tactics that do. This pruning and growing process focuses limited resources where they will best improve results
- **Resist Touting Progress as Ultimate Success:** Turnaround leaders are not satisfied with partial success. They report progress, but keep the organization focused on high goals. When a goal is met, they are likely to raise the bar. Merely better is not good enough.

In a School Turnaround: Turnaround principals try numerous tactics to achieve turnarounds and make changes as they learn. Even when actions are strategically chosen to achieve early wins and longer-term goals, some tactics will not work and must be discarded. New turnaround schools can learn from what has worked in prior successes: Successful turnaround principals often try other tactics but eventually focus primarily on actions directly related to increasing consistent teaching excellence and improving learning conditions (getting students to school, managing behavior). They fill in with other supporting changes, too, and those tactics differ based on each school's needs and conditions.

Successful turnaround principals do not give up, even when early efforts fail. Some thoughtfully chosen tactics, even ones with a strong research base, do not work in chronically failing schools. For example, many schools have committed to low-accountability coach and mentor roles that increased teacher retention but not learning; professional

development programs that relied primarily on short-term training; new assessment programs that were not aligned enough with end-of-year standards; and after-school programs that did not provide enough academic help. One set of schools with which we worked had been trying more than 20 change tactics, most of which were eliminated based on results. They shifted toward tactics directly related to schoolwide teaching quality, and the schools that shifted fastest got the best results.

We do not recommend recreating their struggles, but principals who have been down the path of trying many strategies without success must know that a successful turnaround *is still possible* with the right strategies. Giving up creates 100 percent certainty of continued failure. Trying again with better strategies—focusing primarily on the quality of teaching, getting students to school, and building a culture where student behavior allows for learning excellence—is a better route.

Turnaround principals who achieved results fastest report *quickly* discarding or altering elements that seemed to have no effect or that were conflicting or disruptive. Examples included eliminating low-accountability instructional support roles in favor of high-accountability, better-paid roles; changing schedules midyear to increase teachers' collaboration time within grade and subject teams; removing ineffective team leaders; adopting interim assessments that were more predictive of annual outcomes, and ditching district assessments that were unrelated to outcomes. Many schools grew their number of multi-classroom leader (MCL) roles after the first year, based on the stronger-average-outcomes in classrooms led by MCLs. The examples here are numerous and span all areas of school operations.

Even when schoolwide change is on track, with high growth for one or more years, successful turnaround principals resist implying that continued low proficiency rates are OK. Instead, they call for another year of high growth and the proficiency it brings.

Celebrating success among staff and with students is also common, as is communication of high growth not just to parents and students but via broader media (blogging, local news, and speeches, for example). But leaders temper their communications about positive achievement gains or growth with a reminder about the continued flow of students with challenges entering the school, student transience and poverty, and the continued gaps in proficiency—even after achieving double-digit proficiency gains in a year.

Turnaround Principal Competencies with Competency Levels

What Is a Competency Level?

A “level” of a competency is a behavior (or set of behaviors) that exemplifies the competency in action. The behaviors are presented in increasingly competent levels that appear in studies to be linked to higher levels of success in relevant leadership roles. These levels may be used for selection, development, and performance management, and ideally would be validated in follow-up research on more- and less-successful school turnaround leaders.

How Can Competency Levels Be Used for Selection?

The goal for selection is to determine what levels of critical competencies candidates already use and then to choose people who best match the levels needed for the job. The right person for a job is one who regularly—when needed and without prompting by others—uses the level of competent behavior that leads to success in a particular job. People who are stronger in a competency display that competency:

- more often,
- at higher levels, and
- at the right times to make them successful in work situations.

Individuals do not always use their highest levels of competence. For example, even the highest-achieving people do not set high-risk goals every time any task must be completed. Instead, they do so more often than not when needed for success in meeting an important work objective. That is why it is important to ensure that you are assessing a person’s competence in the context of their efforts to be successful in work. Behavior-oriented interviewing about past work successes and failures, without asking leading questions, is currently the most valid way to assess a broad range of competencies for selection in complex leadership jobs.

As more schools succeed in school turnarounds, and more teacher-leaders lead instructional change, the pool of previously successful change leaders will grow. Districts can increasingly consider job performance among teacher-leaders and assistant principals with experience in school turnarounds, not just existing principals, to assess principal candidates. Districts should not assume that a principal was the driver of a school’s change success; in some cases, an assistant principal or group of informal teacher-leaders rise up to lead instructional change. A competency-based behavioral event interview is the only way to be certain of an individual’s contribution to success and should be coupled with facts about related, prior job performance.

In addition, to achieve a turnaround, instructional leadership will be the centerpiece of change efforts. The principal must be able to lead instructional change or hire and lead those who can.

What Is a Critical Competency?

In this guide, a “critical” competency is one that we recommend for screening candidates before investing in the assessment of other competencies. The primary critical competencies for a turnaround principal are Achievement and Impact and Influence. Without a high level of competence in these two areas, a candidate is very unlikely to succeed in taking the actions of successful turnaround leaders. Displaying high levels of these two competencies requires people to have and use moderate to high levels of many of the other competencies. In a shortcut version of selection, at least assess for these two competencies.

Turnaround Principal Competencies: Four Clusters of Competence

These are the competencies—or consistent patterns of thinking, feeling, acting, and speaking—needed for school turnaround leader success. When we say “turnaround leader,” we mean the principal—the person who is responsible for achieving a turnaround schoolwide. Many of these competencies are also relevant for other leaders, such as multi-classroom leaders, in schools attempting turnarounds. See the *Teacher and Staff Selection Toolkit* for competencies just for multi-classroom leaders and similar teacher-leaders.

The principal competencies were derived by “mapping” the cross-sector research on turnaround leader actions to high-quality competency studies of successful entrepreneurs and leaders in large organizations.⁷ The competencies chosen fit the activities that turnaround leaders share with leaders in these other contexts.

In this update, examples come from *Opportunity Culture* turnarounds that have implemented a schoolwide team of instructional “multi-classroom leaders” to help principals and assistant principals achieve rapid improvement in teaching and learning.

These competencies are arranged into four clusters of related capabilities. See the detailed descriptions following this list for examples of these competencies in school turnarounds.

Driving for Results Cluster—This cluster of competencies is concerned with the school turnaround principal’s strong desire to achieve outstanding results and the task-oriented actions required for success. These enable a relentless focus on learning results.

- **Achievement:** The drive and actions to set challenging goals and reach a high standard of performance despite barriers.
- **Initiative and Persistence:** The drive and actions to do more than is expected or required in order to accomplish a challenging task.
- **Monitoring and Directiveness:** The ability to set clear expectations and to hold others accountable for performance.
- **Planning Ahead:** A bias toward planning in order to derive future benefits or to avoid problems.

Influencing for Results Cluster—This cluster of competencies is concerned with motivating others and influencing their thinking and behavior to obtain results. Turnaround leaders cannot accomplish change alone, but instead must rely on the work of others. These enable working through and with others.

- **Impact and Influence:** Acting with the purpose of affecting the perceptions, thinking, and actions of others.
- **Team Leadership:** Assuming authoritative leadership of a group for the benefit of the organization.
- **Developing Others:** Influence with the specific intent to increase the short- and long-term effectiveness of another person.

Problem-Solving Cluster—This cluster of competencies is concerned with the principal’s thinking as applied to organization goals and challenges. It includes analyzing data to inform decisions; making clear, logical plans that people can follow; and ensuring a strong connection between school learning goals and classroom activity. These enable solving and simplifying complex problems.

⁷ Competencies selected from: Spencer, L. M., & Spencer, S. M. (1993). *Competence at work: Models for superior performance*. New York, NY: John Wiley and Sons. Leader actions from: Public Impact: Kowal, J., & Hassel, E. A. (2005). *Turnarounds with new leaders and staff*. Washington, DC: Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement. Retrieved from <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED502903.pdf>

- **Analytical Thinking:** The ability to break things down in a logical way and to recognize cause and effect.
- **Conceptual Thinking:** The ability to see patterns and links among seemingly unrelated things.

Showing Confidence to Lead—This competency, essentially the public display of self-confidence, stands alone and is concerned with staying visibly focused, committed, and self-assured despite the barrage of personal and professional attacks common during turnarounds.

- **Self-Confidence:** A personal belief in one's ability to accomplish tasks and the actions that reflect that belief.

School Turnaround Principal Competencies: Driving for Results Cluster

This cluster is concerned with a turnaround principal's desire to achieve outstanding results and the task-oriented actions needed for success. Major actions include setting high goals for the school or team and making persistent, well-planned efforts to achieve the goals despite barriers.

Why it matters

Without significant strength in this cluster, a turnaround principal is unlikely to achieve a sharp increase in school performance results, since former practices have not worked. Principals must make multiple, significant changes to improve student learning.

Driving for Results Cluster—These enable a relentless focus on learning results.

- **Achievement:** Achievement is the drive and actions to set high goals and reach a high standard of performance despite barriers. Achievement is often shown by an individual acting alone—the person craves being the best and acts to achieve this. In a leader, by contrast, achievement includes setting high performance goals for the team or organization, prioritizing the group's actions to achieve the highest benefit relative to cost, and working to meet goals directly and through the group.
- **Initiative and Persistence:** Initiative and Persistence include taking personal responsibility and doing more than is required to accomplish a difficult task or reach a challenging goal. It includes both directing action and enlisting the extra help of others, and may include bending the rules, taking personal risks, and acting without authority when needed to meet a goal.
- **Monitoring and Directiveness:** Monitoring and Directiveness is used selectively by the best managers. It includes such behaviors as assertively demanding high performance, issuing specific directives and standards, publicly monitoring work against standards, and exacting consequences for failure to perform. Being able to set clear expectations and hold others accountable for performance is critical.
- **Planning Ahead:** Planning Ahead is a bias toward planning for future benefit or to avoid problems. It includes both anticipating situations and dealing with them in advance. This does not include mere routine or required planning, but is done voluntarily to achieve more success and avoid problems.

Achievement				
The drive and actions to set challenging goals and reach a high standard of performance despite barriers.				
Related interview question: Think about a time when you felt very successful or proud of something you accomplished at work. Tell me the story.				
Zone	Level	General Description	Specific Behaviors	
Red-Flag Zone	0	Low Concern for Work or Quality	Does not express concern for quality of work, Or expresses concern but cannot describe specific actions taken to do good work.	
Neutral Zone	1	Wishes To Do Job Well	Expresses desire to do the job well but does not try to make improvements.	
	2	Works Toward and Improves Others’ Quality Goals	Works to do tasks and meet standards <u>set by supervisor/ managing administrator</u> ; makes only small, voluntary changes.	
	3	Sets Own Modest Standards for Quality	Sets and works toward <u>own modest work goals</u> , likely to be met but important for self, students, or other adults. Monitors progress.	
Potential Hire Zone	Threshold	4	Prioritizes Challenging Goals and Tasks	Carefully chooses <u>challenging</u> goals (difficult but not unrealistic) for self, students, and other adults. Monitors progress, And <u>chooses actions based on cost-benefit analysis</u> : how to spend time and money to produce results at right time.
	Superior	5	Sets High-Risk and Challenging Goals	Carefully chooses <u>very challenging</u> goals (that may seem unrealistic to others) and commits significant resources and time despite the uncertainty of success. Monitors progress. Also: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <u>Chooses actions based on cost-benefit analysis</u>: how to spend time and money to produce results at right time;• Takes <u>multiple actions</u> to reduce risk and ensure success—<u>anticipating barriers and planning far ahead</u>; and• <u>Engages and gets help</u> from other adults. Note: Level 5 goals and actions without results may result from weakness in one or more <i>other</i> competencies.
		6	Sustains Pursuit of High-Risk and Challenging Goals	<u>Sustains Level 5 over years</u> to ensure complete meeting of goals and/or to establish systems to sustain success, <u>Or repeats Level 5 in multiple pursuits.</u>
Red-Flag Zone: Red-flag behaviors indicate a severe mismatch for this role. Neutral Zone: These levels do not indicate a match if they are the highest levels of behavior shown. Potential Hire Zone: These behaviors enable some level of success in this role: Threshold behaviors are needed for moderate success, while Superior performers use these behaviors when the situation requires.				

Achievement: School Examples

The table below presents examples of what threshold and higher levels of this competency may look like in a school context. *These are only illustrations*; individuals could demonstrate these competencies in many other ways in schools. As a result, these examples should in no way be regarded as specific requirements for being rated at a given level. Hirers who screen for this competency may want to keep an ongoing record of how they score candidates from varying backgrounds on their principal interview story examples, and how the scores correlate with student learning, to increase consistency and accuracy over time.

Achievement School Examples				
		Competency Level	General Description	Examples of Actions Demonstrating This Level in a School
Potential Hire Zone	Threshold	4	Prioritizes Challenging Goals and Tasks	Setting high, fast learning improvement goals and prioritizing changes, for example in a <i>core</i> subject (such as reading or math) where students are <i>weakest</i> and/or where instructional specialists are <i>already</i> available, and in a grade level with teachers who are <i>amenable to change</i> ; and reallocating time and money for more frequent student assessment and targeted instruction materials to meet students’ needs. Monitoring effects on student learning of changes made. May include setting turnaround goals without the multiple, longer-term steps at level 5.
	Superior	5	Sets High-Risk and Challenging Goals	<p>Launching a new schoolwide approach that includes galvanizing teacher-leaders to dramatically improve outcomes (for example, launching Opportunity Culture with Multi-Classroom Leadership).</p> <p>Look for complex set of actions including working with others to set, achieve, and raise long-term goals, and anticipating barriers. Such as: setting ambitious goals for schoolwide improvement over years</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">organizing/adding teacher-leaders to co-lead school changesresearching programs for high-potential payoffraising funds for costs of transition to the new approachreallocating school budget to cover new costsmounting a campaign to attract excellent teachersplanning teacher advancement to fill key roles laterobtaining support from district to train teacher-leaders in advanceredoing school schedules in advance to give teams time to improve
		6	Sustains Pursuit of High-Risk and Challenging Goals	Repeated or multiple efforts under Level 5 over time to meet goals, raise goals, expand success, routinize changes for permanency, and sustain student growth and achievement when principal leaves.
Threshold behaviors are needed for moderate success, while Superior performers use these behaviors when the situation requires.				

Initiative and Persistence				
<i>The drive and actions to do more than is expected or required in order to accomplish a challenging task.</i>				
Related interview question: Think about a time when you accomplished something satisfying at work despite one or more obstacles. Tell me the story.				
Zone	Level	General Description	Specific Behaviors	
Red-Flag Zone	0	Avoids Required Work	Does not show up for work reliably or requires extra supervision to get work done.	
Neutral Zone	1	Works Independently	Completes assigned work as required and without extra supervision, Or does not give up without trying one or two steps when a simple obstacle arises.	
Potential Hire Zone	Threshold	2	Invests Extra Effort	Works extra hours to complete work even when not required, Or takes on voluntary work tasks, Or routinely tackles moderate obstacles as they arise in routine work.
		3	Invests Significant Extra Effort	Voluntarily initiates and follows through on new work project (not just a discrete task) that is not assigned by others, and tackles obstacles as they arise.
		4	Invests Extraordinary Effort	Acting without formal or explicit direction, commits significant personal time and bends organization norms or rules to accomplish a work objective (with emphasis on improving organizational outcomes, not on defiant rule-breaking), and persists despite significant obstacles or early failure.
	Superior	5	Engages Others in Extraordinary Effort	Involves others in Level 4 effort, including people over whom the person has no formal authority.
Red-Flag Zone: Red-flag behaviors indicate a severe mismatch for this role. Neutral Zone: These levels do not indicate a match if they are the highest levels of behavior shown. Potential Hire Zone: These behaviors enable some level of success in this role: Threshold behaviors are needed for moderate success, while Superior performers use these behaviors when the situation requires.				

Initiative and Persistence: School Examples

The table below presents examples of what threshold and higher levels of this competency may look like in a school context. *These are only illustrations*; individuals could demonstrate these competencies in many other ways in schools. As a result, these examples should in no way be regarded as specific requirements for being rated at a given level. Hirers who screen for this competency may want to keep an ongoing record of how they score candidates from varying backgrounds on their principal interview story examples, and how the scores correlate with student learning, to increase consistency and accuracy over time.

Initiative and Persistence School Examples				
		Competency Level	General Description	Examples of Actions Demonstrating This Level in a School
Potential Hire Zone	Threshold	2	Invests Extra Effort	Working long hours; consistently staying late in order to finish up work; conscientiously returning phone calls and emails promptly from parents and staff members. Also, volunteering to participate on existing school or district committees.
		3	Invests Significant Extra Effort	Voluntarily and consistently forging personal relationships with community leaders resulting in specific valuable partnerships for the school, despite personal difficulty scheduling around community events or skeptical initial responses to efforts.
		4	Invests Extraordinary Effort	Systematically assessing resources and identifying how to reallocate them to better meet student needs; when initial efforts to carry out the reallocation fail (due to district policies or staff resistance, for example), repeatedly trying new strategies until finding one that works, even if the new allocations do not comply with regulations or norms (for example, reassigning teacher roles to put best teachers in charge of all core subjects, or procuring needed materials by using funds in ways other than is the district norm).
	Superior	5	Engages Others in Extraordinary Effort	Working with school leadership team, and despite opposition, to persuade district and/or parents and staff to support reallocating significant time and money to meet students' learning needs, even though it means giving up something else they value—for example, having excellent teachers lead all grades/subjects, breaking egalitarian norms. With leadership team, regularly discarding failing tactics and increasing successful tactics.
Threshold behaviors are needed for moderate success, while Superior performers use these behaviors when the situation requires.				

Monitoring and Directiveness

The ability to set clear expectations and to hold others accountable for performance.

Note: This competency should be used in combination with Developing Others and Team Leadership to build both skill and will/motivation needed to achieve short- and long-term improvement across the school or team.

Related interview question: *Think about a time when you set a standard for someone else's work and held that person accountable for adhering to that standard. Tell me the story.*

Zone	Level	General Description	Specific Behaviors
Red-Flag Zone	0	Avoids Direction	Gives in to others, even if conflicts with work goals, Or does not give directions or communicate expectations. (May justify by expressing concern with others liking them, hurting people's feelings or making others feel bad.)
Neutral Zone	1	Gives Routine Directions	Gives directions about routine work, Or provides some direction that is not very explicit or detailed.
	2	Gives Detailed Directions	Gives detailed direction needed to communicate to others what needs to be done to accomplish work tasks.
	3	Asserts Needs	Says "no" to obviously unreasonable requests, Or sets limits on others' behavior, Or structures situations so that others must comply.
Potential Hire Zone	Threshold	4	Asserts High Standards Sets high standard explicitly up front, monitors, and communicates performance versus standard (privately or, with adults working together, publicly), Or repeatedly reasserts standard and insists that others, adults and students, comply with high standard.
	Superior	5	Confronts Others About Performance Problems Confronts students, or adults, about performance problems; Or threatens consequences for performance shortfalls.
		6	Dismisses Low Performers Dismisses low performers from organization or team (following appropriate efforts to improve performance and all legal procedures).

Red-Flag Zone: Red-flag behaviors indicate a severe mismatch for this role.

Neutral Zone: These levels do not indicate a match if they are the highest levels of behavior shown.

Potential Hire Zone: These behaviors enable some level of success in this role: **Threshold** behaviors are needed for moderate success, while **Superior** performers use these behaviors when the situation requires.

Monitoring and Directiveness: School Examples

The table below presents examples of what threshold and higher levels of this competency may look like in a school context. *These are only illustrations*; individuals could demonstrate these competencies in many other ways in schools. As a result, these examples should in no way be regarded as specific requirements for being rated at a given level. Hirers who screen for this competency may want to keep an ongoing record of how they score candidates from varying backgrounds on their principal interview story examples, and how the scores correlate with student learning, to increase consistency and accuracy over time.

Monitoring and Directiveness School Examples			
	Competency Level	General Description	Examples of Actions Demonstrating This Level in a School
Potential Hire Zone	Threshold	4 Asserts High Standards	Establishing clear protocols to support school policies (such as frequent assessment schedule and reporting policy); requiring teachers to use protocols; monitoring teachers privately to ensure that they are implementing new protocols; sharing data with teacher-leaders or multi-classroom leaders about each other's team performance, such as student interim growth during the school year and projected student achievement levels; establishing standard and protocol for teaching team leaders/multi-classroom leaders to share interim student data across teachers within each team.
	Superior	5 Confronts Others About Performance Problems	Directly confronting teaching team leaders and teachers who refuse or fail to implement new instructional practices, with the purpose of ensuring intended methods are used; informing teachers that failure to implement new instructional practices will negatively affect future evaluations and result in dismissal; evaluating struggling teachers honestly, and rating them as unsatisfactory on evaluations when they do not improve.
		6 Dismisses Low Performers	Effectively persuading low performers to resign; following appropriate legal procedures to document unsatisfactory performance with the intention of forcing staff members to resign; dismissing low performers who do not resign.

Threshold behaviors are needed for moderate success, while **Superior** performers use these behaviors when the situation requires.

Planning Ahead				
A bias toward planning in order to derive future benefit or to avoid problems.				
Related interview question: Think about a time when you had to think ahead to accomplish something satisfying at work. Tell me the story. (Clarify time frame: When did the thinking ahead occur in relation to the anticipated events in the future? How far in advance?)				
Zone		Level	General Description	Specific Behaviors
Red-Flag Zone		0	Does Not Think Ahead	Fails to see and address current needs and opportunities, Or focuses on immediate needs, tasks, and problems only when forced.
Neutral Zone		1	Addresses Current Needs	Acts quickly, decisively, and completely to address current problems and crises as they arise.
		2	Plans Up To 2 Months Ahead	Voluntarily identifies future needs and potential problems or opportunities, and plans ahead to address these within a 2-month time frame.
Potential Hire Zone	Threshold	3	Plans 3–12 Months Ahead	Voluntarily identifies future needs, potential problems or potential opportunities that will occur 3 to 12 months in the future that are not obvious to others, and takes action to plan or act in advance to address these.
	Superior	4	Plans 1–2 Years Ahead	Voluntarily identifies future needs, potential problems, or potential opportunities that will occur 1 to 2 years in the future that are not obvious to others, and acts in advance to address these (for example, students’ needs at next grade level; future needs of teaching team).
		5	Plans 2+ Years Ahead	Voluntarily identifies future needs, potential problems, or potential opportunities that will occur two or more years in the future that are not obvious to others, and acts in advance to address these (for example, students’ needs at much later grade levels; future teaching team needs.
<p>Red-Flag Zone: Red-flag behaviors indicate a severe mismatch for this role.</p> <p>Neutral Zone: These levels do not indicate a match if they are the highest levels of behavior shown.</p> <p>Potential Hire Zone: These behaviors enable some level of success in this role: Threshold behaviors are needed for moderate success, while Superior performers use these behaviors when the situation requires.</p>				

Planning Ahead: School Examples

The table below presents examples of what threshold and higher levels of this competency may look like in a school context. *These are only illustrations*; individuals could demonstrate these competencies in many other ways in schools. As a result, these examples should in no way be regarded as specific requirements for being rated at a given level. Hirers who screen for this competency may want to keep an ongoing record of how they score candidates from varying backgrounds on their principal interview story examples, and how the scores correlate with student learning, to increase consistency and accuracy over time.

Planning Ahead School Examples				
		Competency Level	General Description	Examples of Actions Demonstrating This Level in a School
Potential Hire Zone	Threshold	3	Plans 3–12 Months Ahead	Having learned in winter that three veteran teachers are planning to retire at year’s end, devises a plan to recruit new faculty to fill the slots starting in late winter, Or plots quarterly student growth goals and assessments to achieve annual learning goals, using the advance time to raise goals and/or improve assessments as needed.
	Superior	4	Plans 1–2 Years Ahead	Anticipating that students will have difficulty with a new state achievement test that is planned for the following year (for example, the state is introducing a new science test or standards), leads grade team leaders in the prior year to develop aligned instruction and lessons in the area, Or plans to reallocate staff or add teacher-leader roles to reach school’s student learning goals one to two years in advance, and communicates with staff about changes far in advance, Or plans annual and quarterly student learning goals and aligned assessments in 2-year sequences.
		5	Plans 2+ Years Ahead	Identifies potential teacher-leaders early in their careers, and develops them for future leadership roles with increasingly advanced roles over 2 or more years, Or plans learning goals over 2 or more years and plots annual and quarterly interim goals to achieve them, and, with the leadership team, plans very specific actions to achieve the goals—what teachers and staff will do differently and how assessments will be used to track progress.
Threshold behaviors are needed for moderate success, while Superior performers use these behaviors when the situation requires.				

School Turnaround Principal Competencies: Influencing for Results Cluster

This cluster is concerned with motivating others and influencing their thinking and behavior to obtain results. Turnaround leaders cannot achieve change alone, but instead must rely on the work of others. They must use a wider variety of influencing tactics than most leaders as each situation requires—being directive with subordinates when urgent action is essential, being inspiring and visionary when the discretionary effort of others is needed, or being able to influence entirely through others rather than directly. They must address a complicated web of powerful stakeholders (staff, parents, unions, community, etc.) and resource providers (district staff, funders, etc.) to ensure support for—and reduce resistance to—change. Successful turnaround leaders lead through a team of leaders.

Why it matters

School turnaround leaders must induce new behaviors from teachers, staff, parents, and students. Obtaining more and different efforts from others is critical to obtaining better learning results. They cannot obtain all of these new and enhanced behaviors by being directive (see *Monitoring and Directiveness*), but instead must identify and tap the needs, wants, and underlying motives of others.

In school turnarounds, this cluster includes forming a schoolwide team of instructional teacher-leaders who are accountable for specific subjects and grades, and developing and working through them to guide and ensure changes in teaching and school culture.

Influencing for Results Cluster—These enable working through and with others.

- **Impact and Influence:** Impact and Influence is acting with the purpose of affecting others' perceptions, thinking, and actions. It is the set of behaviors used most often by successful managers in complex organizations. It includes empathizing with others and anticipating likely responses to situations, tailoring actions and words to create an intended impact, giving and withholding information to obtain specific responses, assembling behind-the-scenes coalitions to gain support, taking multiple steps to obtain a desired response and using others to influence third parties. (It differs from *Directiveness*, which does not consider the perspective of the other party.)
- **Team Leadership:** Team Leadership is assuming authoritative leadership of a group for the benefit of the organization. It includes such behaviors as keeping people on the team informed, promoting the morale and performance of a team, obtaining resources that the team needs to perform, ensuring that the team produces as planned, and motivating the team with a compelling vision and enthusiasm.
- **Developing Others:** Developing Others is influence with the specific intent to increase the short- and long-term effectiveness of another person. It does not include merely sending people to required training, but instead personally providing instruction, expressing positive expectations, providing developmental feedback, selecting training and work assignments to build others' capabilities, and delegating fully so that others may learn from their own successes and mistakes.

Impact and Influence				
Acting with the purpose of affecting the perceptions, thinking, and actions of others.				
Related interview question: Think about a time when you influenced another person or people in a way that was satisfying to you. Tell me the story.				
Zone		Level	General Description	Specific Behaviors
Red-Flag Zone		0	Uses Personal-Gain Tactics, Or Does Not Act	Uses negative behaviors for personal gain, Or does not act to influence others.
Neutral Zone		1	Acts Without Adaptation to Audience	Prepares and presents information to make one or more arguments or points in a discussion, But <u>does not tailor</u> argument to make it appealing or influential to the specific audience.
		2	Takes Single Calculated Action to Influence	Thinks ahead about likely reactions and <u>adapts or tailors communication</u> to appeal to level and interest of audience, But takes only <u>one step or action</u> to obtain desired impact in each situation; common actions include adapting words or appearance.
Potential Hire Zone	Threshold	3	Takes Two Calculated Actions to Influence	Thinks ahead about likely reactions and <u>adapts or tailors communication</u> to appeal to level and interest of audience, And takes <u>two steps or actions</u> to obtain desired impact in each situation; common actions include adapting words or appearance and taking a dramatic step to influence others.
	Superior	4	Takes Multiple Calculated Actions to Influence	Thinks ahead about likely reactions and <u>adapts or tailors communication</u> to appeal to level and interest of audience, And takes <u>three or more steps or actions</u> to obtain desired impact in each situation. Actions at this level may begin to be more varied, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Adapting words and appearance to influence others• Taking dramatic steps to influence others• Using third parties and “experts” to influence• Getting support behind the scenes in advance• Choosing what to share and not (and when)• Changing one’s own role or others’ roles / positions
		5	Uses Complex Influence	Uses level 4 actions with the intention of creating domino effects—engaging in multiple actions to <u>influence chains of people</u> (influencing one person or group for the purpose of influencing another) to obtain wanted behaviors from many parties.
<p>Red-Flag Zone: Red-flag behaviors indicate a severe mismatch for this role.</p> <p>Neutral Zone: These levels do not indicate a match if they are the highest levels of behavior shown.</p> <p>Potential Hire Zone: These behaviors enable some level of success in this role: Threshold behaviors are needed for moderate success, while Superior performers use these behaviors when the situation requires.</p>				

Impact and Influence: School Examples

The table below presents examples of what threshold and higher levels of this competency may look like in a school context. *These are only illustrations*; individuals could demonstrate these competencies in many other ways in schools. As a result, these examples should in no way be regarded as specific requirements for being rated at a given level. Hirers who screen for this competency may want to keep an ongoing record of how they score candidates from varying backgrounds on their principal interview story examples, and how the scores correlate with student learning, to increase consistency and accuracy over time.

Impact and Influence School Examples				
		Competency Level	General Description	Examples of Actions Demonstrating This Level in a School
Potential Hire Zone	Threshold	3	Takes Two Calculated Actions to Influence	Informing staff members about a new school-level policy that they might perceive as being more work, but which will have a dramatic effect on student learning (such as eliminating in-school detention); and describing the change in a way that gets their buy-in (such as describing other ways they will address student misbehavior and the research supporting the changes).
	Superior	4	Takes Multiple Calculated Actions to Influence.	Persuading a small group of trusted teachers or teacher-leaders to become vigorous supporters of a new school behavior-management program; asking a teacher from another school that has implemented this policy to tell the faculty about the positive effects; bringing in an expert to speak to or train teachers; and sharing very personal stories from teachers and students who have benefitted from the program in other schools, contrasting with the school’s current data.
		5	Uses Complex Influence	Forming a design team that includes respected teachers to plan implementation of a new program; empowering excellent, respected, supportive teachers by offering them well-paid, advanced teacher-leader positions; communicating personally with each of the teacher-leaders and guiding them to communicate personally about the change(s) with individual teachers on their teams; tapping teacher-leaders of varying experience levels and backgrounds to ensure respect for the program by all staff; including bonuses, perks, or celebration milestones for all teachers contingent on <i>universal</i> adoption of the new program; in the new-teacher recruiting process, seeking out excellent teachers who want to participate in the new program; persuading a local business to make a grant to the school, contingent on the adoption of the new program; touting early wins with staff. All of this is done to motivate teachers to eagerly adopt the program and encourage the exit of those who do not, and to create strong peer pressure to adopt and implement the program well and on time.
Threshold behaviors are needed for moderate success, while Superior performers use these behaviors when the situation requires.				

Team Leadership

Assuming authoritative leadership of a group for the benefit of the organization.

Related interview question: Think about a time when you led a group of team of people to accomplish work that was satisfying to you. Tell me the story.

Zone	Level	General Description	Specific Behaviors
Red-Flag Zone	0	Does Not Lead	Provides no direction, goals, roles, or meeting clarity when needed or asked, Or has not engaged in any roles, in work or volunteering, that require leadership of a team.
Neutral Zone	1	Manages Logistics and Keeps People Informed	Communicates agendas, time constraints, and work tasks, and ensures that people affected by decisions have the information they need.
Potential Hire Zone	Threshold	2 Acts to Make Team Effective	In addition to treating people with respect and fairness, promotes team morale and enhances performance by taking actions that affect how people feel about the team and how well they perform on it. May include how work is assigned, who is chosen and promoted, and expressions of how these actions affect remaining team members' performance and morale.
		3 Ensures Team Has Opportunity to Perform	Obtains resources and people that the group needs to perform, And protects the group from outside influences that might prevent performance.
		4 Leads Team to Results	"Sells" the team mission, goals, and actions to its members, and then follows up to ensure that the team's work is done well.
	Superior	5 Communicates a Compelling Vision to Motivate Discretionary Effort	Motivates the team—and stakeholders who affect the team's work—with charismatic communications of the vision for the organization, resulting in excitement and large contribution of people's discretionary effort.

Red-Flag Zone: Red-flag behaviors indicate a severe mismatch for this role.

Neutral Zone: These levels do not indicate a match if they are the highest levels of behavior shown.

Potential Hire Zone: These behaviors enable some level of success in this role: **Threshold** behaviors are needed for moderate success, while **Superior** performers use these behaviors when the situation requires.

Team Leadership: School Examples

The table below presents examples of what threshold and higher levels of this competency may look like in a school context. *These are only illustrations*; individuals could demonstrate these competencies in many other ways in schools. As a result, these examples should in no way be regarded as specific requirements for being rated at a given level. Hirers who screen for this competency may want to keep an ongoing record of how they score candidates from varying backgrounds on their principal interview story examples, and how the scores correlate with student learning, to increase consistency and accuracy over time.

Team Leadership School Examples				
		Competency Level	General Description	Examples of Actions Demonstrating This Level in a School
Potential Hire Zone	Threshold	2	Acts to Make Team Effective	Ensuring that a schoolwide instructional team of leaders, and grade or subject teams, are scheduled to meet regularly to improve practices; providing materials to help teams plan and improve instruction; reorganizing teams that are not high-functioning by reassigning teacher-leaders or teachers; being explicit about how these changes are designed to improve instruction and student learning.
		3	Ensures Team Has Opportunity to Perform	Hiring teachers with particular expertise to join a grade or subject team; hiring team leaders with leadership competencies; organizing professional development to meet the identified needs of teachers and team leaders; working vigorously and publicly to obtain permission for teachers to miss district-sponsored professional development activities that do not meet their needs; standing up to parents who want teachers to back off of high standards for their students.
		4	Leads Team to Results	Using multiple strategies and opportunities to reinforce school and team goals for student achievement (such as publicly identifying student achievement gaps and specific goals for improvement, and communicating the school strategies constantly); following up often with teams to evaluate performance; reinforcing actions that lead to improvements (sharing them schoolwide); and responding to lack of results by helping teams diagnose shortcomings and devise and implement new strategies until results are achieved.
	Superior	5	Communicates a Compelling Vision to Motivate Discretionary Effort	Motivating teams of teachers to commit additional, discretionary time and energy to implementing new instructional approaches—for example, positively, consistently communicating results that happen with changes, and career opportunities available for those who excel and help peers; communicating in several ways, such as making inspiring speeches on the power to transform lives with the school's strategies, or posting examples of and leading visits to schools that "beat the odds" with the school's strategy—and contrasting to school's past results, or continually reinforcing hitting high targets and how the school has changed to make it possible, or instantly and decisively countering excuse-making.
Threshold behaviors are needed for moderate success, while Superior performers use these behaviors when the situation requires.				

Developing Others

Influence with the specific intent to increase the short- and long-term effectiveness of another person.

Related interview question: Think about a time when you helped someone else become more successful in carrying out their job or in their career. Tell me the story.

Zone		Level	General Description	Specific Behaviors
Red-Flag Zone		0	Does Not Develop	Discourages others with negative statements of potential and expectation, Or takes no action to develop others (even if expresses belief in others' ability to third parties).
		1	Gives Explicit Instructions	Tells others how to do their work when needed, makes helpful suggestions.
Neutral Zone		2	Explains Reasons for Instructions and Ensures Understanding	Tells others why they need to do work a certain way, Or ensures that others understand the work to be done.
		3	Gives Basic Feedback	Provides specific feedback, both positive and negative, to help others improve.
Potential Hire Zone	Threshold	4	Encourages and Helps After Failures	Expresses positive expectation for future performance after a setback, And provides much more specific advice for tackling challenging assignments, or provides negative feedback in <i>specific</i> terms.
		5	Arranges Assignments and Trainings for Long-Term Development	Ensures that others obtain the experiences and training they need to develop new skills and levels of capability, Or gets others to fix problems and figure out solutions themselves. (Does not include signing off on required training.) Creates a new program or materials to meet a developmental need.
	Superior	6	Fully Delegates, and Promotes for Development	Gives full responsibility for very challenging work to others as "stretch" experiences, with full latitude for choosing work steps and making mistakes from which to learn, And promotes to higher level as reward for development or to provide further development.

Red-Flag Zone: Red-flag behaviors indicate a severe mismatch for this role.

Neutral Zone: These levels do not indicate a match if they are the highest levels of behavior shown.

Potential Hire Zone: These behaviors enable some level of success in this role: **Threshold** behaviors are needed for moderate success, while **Superior** performers use these behaviors when the situation requires.

Developing Others: School Examples

The table below presents examples of what threshold and higher levels of this competency may look like in a school context. *These are only illustrations*; individuals could demonstrate these competencies in many other ways in schools. As a result, these examples should in no way be regarded as specific requirements for being rated at a given level. Hirers who screen for this competency may want to keep an ongoing record of how they score candidates from varying backgrounds on their principal interview story examples, and how the scores correlate with student learning, to increase consistency and accuracy over time.

Developing Others School Examples				
		Competency Level	General Description	Examples of Actions Demonstrating This Level in a School
Potential Hire Zone	Threshold	3	Gives Basic Feedback	Regularly giving positive and negative feedback to teachers on specific instructional strategies that they are implementing (such as a new approach to literacy instruction, new classroom management strategies).
		4	Encourages and Helps After Failures	Meeting with instructional leadership team and/or teachers after benchmark assessment results are tallied to discuss students who are not on track to meet proficiency goals or not making strong growth; recommending specific instructional or support strategies for meeting these students’ needs; providing specific feedback when results are negative by referencing specific students and instructional tactics, recommending alternatives. Positively expressing hope for next assessments and continuing to provide specific ideas to improve.
	Superior	5	Arranges Assignments and Trainings for Long-Term Development	Arranging for team leaders and teachers to have ongoing professional development tailored to their roles and needs; ensuring that each teacher-leader and teacher has frequent (weekly), job-embedded development by an accountable leader, who co-teaches or observes and provides immediate feedback; introducing new job-embedded development or training very specific to the needs of the teacher-leaders, teachers, and students in a school, such as ensuring that new multi-classroom leaders have training in leadership.
		6	Fully Delegates, and Promotes for Development	Delegating full responsibility for student outcomes and team development to multi-classroom leaders or other instructional teacher-leaders, with the intention of fostering their emerging leadership ability, and providing them with ongoing feedback and coaching as they carry out the work; ensuring that multi-classroom leaders do the same for advanced teachers on their teams.
Threshold behaviors are needed for moderate success, while Superior performers use these behaviors when the situation requires.				

School Turnaround Principal Competencies: Problem-Solving Cluster

This cluster of competencies is concerned with thinking applied to the organization's goals and challenges. It includes analyzing data to inform decisions; making clear, logical plans that people can follow; and ensuring a strong connection between school learning goals and classroom activity. The thinking competencies are needed for higher levels of *Driving for Results* competencies and *Influencing for Results* competencies.

Why it matters

Leaders in a turnaround school use these competencies to identify organizational priorities, choose and align early-win targets and longer-term goals, make a turnaround plan that clarifies steps that will result in meeting goals for improved student learning and other areas, analyze data to see which tactics are working, and identify alternative approaches when needed.

Problem Solving Cluster—These enable solving and simplifying complex problems.

- **Analytical Thinking:** Analytical Thinking is breaking a problem into smaller parts or a logical order based on time sequence, cause-effect relationship, or priorities/importance. It is important for school leaders who must grasp data (qualitative and quantitative) about school performance for decision-making and make plans to communicate the steps and roles in a change process. It includes analyzing basic data to understand what is important and how it relates to school goals, recognizing cause-effect relationships of school activities and results, and making plans that logically and sequentially deploy significant resources and involve large numbers of people.
- **Conceptual Thinking:** Conceptual Thinking is understanding how seemingly unrelated things are related, seeing the big picture, and seeing how steps in a process connect to one another. School leaders need this to ensure that school activities and resources support the school's mission and student learning goals, and turnaround leaders need it to quickly grasp and clarify the critical issues in a host of data. It includes recognizing patterns and trends, simplifying and clarifying complex information, identifying critical issue(s) among many, and resolving conflicts among data.

Analytical Thinking					
The ability to break things down in a logical way and to recognize cause and effect.					
Related interview question: Think about a time when you had to solve a problem or figure something out that involved a lot of information, data, or steps. Tell me the story.					
Zone		Level	General Description	Specific Behaviors	
Red-Flag Zone		0	Does Not Analyze or Plan	Responds to tasks as they arise; does not break work into steps or create lists, Or only follows steps created by someone else.	
Neutral Zone		1	Creates Lists	Creates simple lists of tasks or items, without prioritizing importance or timelines.	
		2	Makes Limited Connections	Breaks a problem or task down into a few parts; Or understands that A causes B; Or prioritizes a relatively simple list of tasks.	
Potential Hire Zone		Threshold	3	Makes Multiple Connections	Organizes a complex activity into steps in a logical way (based on time, importance, resources needed, or other factors), Or understands several possible causes of events or results of events, Or anticipates multiple next steps and likely barriers.
		Superior	4	Does Complicated Planning and Analysis	Breaks apart a complex problem or process into categories and subcategories to identify multiple sets of steps or parts, Or analyzes a difficult problem from several perspectives before arriving at a detailed solution.
			5	Does Highly Complex Planning and Analysis	Does Level 4 analysis—uses several approaches to analyze a problem, comes up with multiple solutions—and weighs value of each.
<p>Red-Flag Zone: Red-flag behaviors indicate a severe mismatch for this role.</p> <p>Neutral Zone: These levels do not indicate a match if they are the highest levels of behavior shown.</p> <p>Potential Hire Zone: These behaviors enable some level of success in this role: Threshold behaviors are needed for moderate success, while Superior performers use these behaviors when the situation requires.</p>					

Analytical Thinking: School Examples

The table below presents examples of what threshold and higher levels of this competency may look like in a school context. *These are only illustrations*; individuals could demonstrate these competencies in many other ways in schools. As a result, these examples should in no way be regarded as specific requirements for being rated at a given level. Hirers who screen for this competency may want to keep an ongoing record of how they score candidates from varying backgrounds on their principal interview story examples, and how the scores correlate with student learning, to increase consistency and accuracy over time.

Analytical Thinking School Examples				
		Competency Level	General Description	Examples of Actions Demonstrating This Level in a School
Potential Hire Zone	Threshold	3	Makes Multiple Connections	Analyzing data on student performance to determine where significant learning gaps exist; determining which changes are most likely to lead to increased student achievement in these areas; developing a logical, step-by-step plan that outlines the steps that the principal and other staff members need to take to implement these changes.
	Superior	4	Does Complicated Planning and Analysis	Breaking down overall school performance problems into a few high-priority categories using multiple measures of student performance (such as growth scores, teacher feedback on student learning, examples of student work, direct classroom observations); organizing a planning process for each problem category that includes goal setting, research on possible solutions, and decision-making about the best strategy; assigning teacher-leaders and guiding them to make specific plans for each grade and/or subject; devising a tracking process to monitor progress of each group in order to intervene when needed. Plans include sequences of quarterly targets and annual goals, and steps in key areas (such as instruction, schedule, data) over the years needed to effect a turnaround; plans also include leading indicators of success and failure.
		5	Does Highly Complex Planning and Analysis	As part of detailed analysis at Level 4, also weighing value of each step to outcomes: identifying early wins that are <i>most</i> important to show that student learning progress is possible and to create momentum for additional changes. For example, considering which grades and subjects are best for early focus; which school culture factors need to change first to get the most benefit fast; and which steps could be dropped if teachers are overtaxed, based on which steps affect outcomes the least.
Threshold behaviors are needed for moderate success, while Superior performers use these behaviors when the situation requires.				

Conceptual Thinking					
The ability to see patterns and links among seemingly unrelated things.					
Related interview question: Think about a time when you were confronted with a lot of information and had to figure out what was most important. Tell me the story.					
Zone		Level	General Description	Specific Behaviors	
Red-Flag Zone		0	Thinks Concretely or Uses Others' Concrete Rules	Expresses thinking very literally, Or does not apply past experiences to very similar situations.	
Neutral Zone		1	Applies Basic Rules of Thumb	Uses only common sense or very similar personal experiences to draw conclusions and make decisions about how to approach a new situation or problem.	
		2	Sees Patterns	Notices patterns, similarities, differences, or gaps in information, Or identifies when a current situation is similar to a past situation.	
Potential Hire Zone		Threshold	3	Applies Existing Concepts	Applies past knowledge of similarities, differences, gaps, and trends to analyze new situations, Or uses a known method of categorizing complex data (such as assessment instruments, scoring rubrics), to identify what is most important or how things are related.
		Superior	4	Simplifies Complex Ideas	Can see a pattern within complex information, Or crystallizes the meaning and importance of a lot of complex data into a simple and understandable explanation (but not a new, complete model for others to use), Or sees the most important issue in a complicated situation.
			5	Creates New Concepts	Creates a new and useful explanation for a complex problem, Or organizes information in an original way that is not borrowed from other sources or obvious to others.
Red-Flag Zone: Red-flag behaviors indicate a severe mismatch for this role. Neutral Zone: These levels do not indicate a match if they are the highest levels of behavior shown. Potential Hire Zone: These behaviors enable some level of success in this role: Threshold behaviors are needed for moderate success, while Superior performers use these behaviors when the situation requires.					

Conceptual Thinking: School Examples

The table below presents examples of what threshold and higher levels of this competency may look like in a school context. *These are only illustrations*; individuals could demonstrate these competencies in many other ways in schools. As a result, these examples should in no way be regarded as specific requirements for being rated at a given level. Hirers who screen for this competency may want to keep an ongoing record of how they score candidates from varying backgrounds on their principal interview story examples, and how the scores correlate with student learning, to increase consistency and accuracy over time.

Conceptual Thinking School Examples				
		Competency Level	General Description	Examples of Actions Demonstrating This Level in a School
Potential Hire Zone	Threshold	3	Applies Existing Concepts	Using the district’s data analysis tool to recognize trends in student achievement that suggest that particular subgroups of students need earlier or different instructional approaches; summarizing a recent report to help teachers understand the latest thinking about how to increase graduation rates.
	Superior	4	Simplifies Complex Ideas	Creating a “performance dashboard” system for the school that allows teachers, teacher-team leaders, and administrators to see critical summary measures of performance in an easy-to-understand format; crisply articulating in a speech to staff the three major problems that, if solved, would lead to far higher student learning progress.
		5	Creates New Concepts	Using data to identify a new way of categorizing the root causes of performance challenges for individual students and subgroups; developing a new model through which teachers and teacher teams can analyze their own data in order to categorize their students’ issues and devise more tailored responses, using an if-then algorithm that reduces teacher planning time and increases effectiveness of interventions.
Threshold behaviors are needed for moderate success, while Superior performers use these behaviors when the situation requires.				

School Turnaround Principal Competencies: Showing Confidence to Lead

This competency, essentially the public display of self-confidence, stands alone and is concerned with staying visibly focused, committed, and self-assured despite the barrage of personal and professional attacks common during turnarounds. It includes both presenting oneself to the world with statements of confidence, putting oneself in challenging situations, taking personal responsibility for mistakes, and following up with analysis and corrective action.

Why it matters

School turnaround leaders typically face opposition from many groups, even those who would benefit from school improvement. They must both feel and appear strong and committed during the challenging early turnaround phase, so that the efforts of teacher-leaders, teachers, students, and parents can focus on making the planned changes in teaching, behavior, and learning.

Showing Confidence to Lead—This enables success in a highly challenging situation.

- **Self-Confidence:** Self-Confidence is a personal belief in one's own capability to accomplish tasks and actions that reflect that belief.

Self-Confidence				
A personal belief in one’s ability to accomplish tasks and the actions that reflect that belief.				
Related interview question: Think about a time when another person or people stood in your way to get something done and you addressed the situation to your satisfaction. Tell me the story.				
Zone		Level	General Description	Specific Behaviors
Red-Flag Zone		0	Feels or Acts Powerless	Publicly expresses lack of confidence in self, Or defers to others inappropriately, Or avoids challenges because of fear of failure.
Neutral Zone		1	Conducts Tasks Without Hesitation	Does work independently as needed.
Potential Hire Zone	Threshold	2	Acts Decisively and Forcefully	Makes decisions despite disagreements with peers or subordinates, Or acts outside explicitly granted authority (without breaking rules).
		3	States Confidence in Self, Defends Self	Openly states confidence in own expertise, thinking, or positive qualities compared with others, or importance, Or stands up for self and own positions in conflicts, Or follows statements with actions for the purpose of justifying confident claims.
	Superior	4	Seeks Challenges	Expresses positive feelings about challenging assignments, Or seeks more challenge and responsibility, Or makes decisions and confident statements despite disagreement with those in power (boss, influential people).
		5	Seeks Extreme Challenges	Confronts others in power bluntly when needed, Or seeks extremely challenging situations.
<p>Red-Flag Zone: Red-flag behaviors indicate a severe mismatch for this role.</p> <p>Neutral Zone: These levels do not indicate a match if they are the highest levels of behavior shown.</p> <p>Potential Hire Zone: These behaviors enable some level of success in this role: Threshold behaviors are needed for moderate success, while Superior performers use these behaviors when the situation requires.</p>				

Self-Confidence: School Examples

The table below presents examples of what threshold and higher levels of this competency may look like in a school context. *These are only illustrations*; individuals could demonstrate these competencies in many other ways in schools. As a result, these examples should in no way be regarded as specific requirements for being rated at a given level. Hirers who screen for this competency may want to keep an ongoing record of how they score candidates from varying backgrounds on their principal interview story examples, and how the scores correlate with student learning, to increase consistency and accuracy over time.

Self-Confidence School Examples				
		Competency Level	General Description	Examples of Actions Demonstrating This Level in a School
Potential Hire Zone	Threshold	2	Acts Decisively and Forcefully	Implementing a change that is not popular with a significant number of staff members (such as adding team-leader positions; requiring teachers to submit written lesson plans to team leaders).
		3	States Confidence in Self, Defends Self	Taking credit for signs of school improvement that are a direct result of earlier actions; highlighting favorable comparisons between school and other similar schools; asking to attend district meetings where district officials will be making decisions that affect the school; defending and explaining the rationale behind changes in school operations in public forums when those changes are controversial; following up on claims about school improvement by taking the necessary steps to achieve success in the promised areas.
	Superior	4	Seeks Challenges	Volunteering to be a pilot school for new approaches to bring instructional excellence to schools; asking for a tougher school after success; asking to coach a struggling principal; publicly refusing to join efforts to fight change, despite pressure.
		5	Seeks Extreme Challenges	Organizing other school leaders to form a coalition fighting for more school-level authority over school budgets and schedules; publicly calling for district policy changes to support critical pilot program or other changes needed in turnaround, despite conflict with district leaders; asking to lead multiple turnaround schools at once.
Threshold behaviors are needed for moderate success, while Superior performers use these behaviors when the situation requires.				

What Competencies Support Turnaround Principal Actions?

	Driving for Results Cluster				Influencing for Results Cluster			Problem-Solving Cluster		Showing Confidence to Lead
	ACH	I&P	M&D	PA	I&I	TL	DO	AT	CT	SC
Collect & Analyze Data	✓	✓						✓	✓	
Make Action Plan Based on Data	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		
Focus on a Few Early Wins Year 1	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	
Communicate a Positive Vision					✓	✓			✓	
Gain Support of Key Influencers					✓	✓			✓	✓
Silence Critics with Speedy Success	✓	✓		✓	✓			✓	✓	
Help Staff Personally Feel Problems					✓		✓	✓	✓	
Require All Staff to Change	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓			✓
Make Necessary Staff & Leader Replacements	✓		✓			✓	✓	✓		✓
Measure and Report Progress Frequently	✓		✓	✓				✓	✓	
Require Decision-Makers to Share Data & Solve Problems			✓		✓	✓				✓
Break Organization Norms	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓				✓
Focus on Successful Tactics, Halt Others	✓	✓	✓			✓		✓	✓	✓
Resist Touting Progress as Ultimate Success	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓				✓

ACH: Achievement; **I&P:** Initiative & Persistence; **M&D:** Monitoring & Directiveness; **PA:** Planning Ahead

I&I: Impact & Influence; **TL:** Team Leadership; **DO:** Developing Others

AT: Analytical Thinking; **CT:** Conceptual Thinking

SC: Self-Confidence