State Spotlight: Nevada’s Partnership Network

Inspired in part by Louisiana’s School Redesign Summit, Nevada’s then-Superintendent of Public Instruction, Steve Canavero, created the Nevada Partnership Network. The Network is a collaboration between the Nevada Department of Education, Clark County (the state’s largest district) and a set of national organizations with expertise in school turnaround. The Network operates independently from the state’s Achievement School District (ASD) through which the Nevada Department of Education authorizes charter management organizations to transform a subset of the state’s persistently lowest-performing schools.

Ongoing Engagement with Multiple Partners

To begin its work, the Nevada Partnership Network included 30 Clark County schools identified as CSI under ESSA. Each school then partners with a set of organizations selected for participation in the Network, based on their program’s track record of success through a rigorous RFI process. For example, each partnership school is matched with a nonprofit specializing in professional development and also given access to funding to provide before- and after-school learning opportunities for their students. The schools also partner with the College Board to expand course offerings and prepare more teachers to teach Advanced Placement (AP) courses. Further, the schools partner with the University of Nevada to ensure every school has a social worker on campus and access to a community health center. 

Members of the Network convene regularly to problem solve and share practices, with the goal of creating a sustainable community of practice that can continue to support Network schools for years to come.

Use of State and Federal Funds

To participate in the Network, schools must be eligible for state improvement funds and for ESSA’s 7 percent school improvement funds. Schools use these funds to buy into the Network.

State Spotlight: Texas Partnerships

In Texas, both the legislative and executive branches have acted to reduce the number of low-performing schools by leveraging high-quality turnaround partners. Through the Texas Partnerships initiative, districts authorize a partner to operate a low-performing school, giving the partner authority over personnel (hiring, firing and management), curriculum, calendar and assessments. The district then holds the partner accountable via an academic and financial performance contract.

Incentivizing Partnerships

In 2017, the Texas legislature enacted SB 1882, making districts eligible to apply for additional state funding if they are partnering with organizations to turn around their lowest-performing schools. These schools may also receive a two-year exemption from other potential state interventions.

A Different Approach to Vetting

Non-profits (including state-authorized charter schools), institutions of higher education and other government entities are eligible to be partner organizations. However, unlike in Louisiana and Nevada, Texas does not play a significant

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7 For additional detail on Texas Partnerships, see Texas Partnership Guide (2018-2019).