

School Turnaround Leaders: *Selection Toolkit*

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.

This is an update of an original, 2008 version prepared by Public Impact for the Chicago Public Education Fund and the District of Columbia Public Schools. The following people contributed to and reviewed the original version: Kathleen St. Louis and Tracy Martin.

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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Other Resources

For more help understanding the competencies of turnaround principals, see *School Turnaround Leaders: Competencies for Success*.

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, using teacher-leaders/multi-classroom leaders, see OpportunityCulture.org.

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

Competencies in all of these materials are aligned. Some principal competencies have an additional, sixth level, while all teacher and teacher-leader competencies have five levels.

Contents

Selection Preparation Guide	5
Day-of Interview Tools	14
Candidate Rating Tools	22
Candidate Comparison and Decision Tools	27
Appendix A: Complete Competency Rating Levels	31
Appendix B: Turnaround Actions: Consistent Cross-Sector Findings	48

Printing Instructions

This toolkit includes six separate sections, listed above, each of which is designed to be used at different stages of the selection process. For your convenience when printing is needed, each section has its own cover so that you may print, copy and use the sections separately. You also will need to make additional copies of some tools if working on paper, and this is indicated where we think you will find copies most helpful (in the interview and candidate rating steps). Every member of the interview team should have one complete copy of this toolkit, as well.

School Turnaround Leaders: Selection Preparation Guide

By Public Impact

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Selection Preparation Guide

Introduction

The selection process for choosing great principals includes several steps (see following page). This guide focuses on one very important advanced screening step: behavioral event interviews (BEIs). BEIs are especially important for a role like school turnaround principal, in which far too few candidates will have tried and succeeded previously. BEIs allow interviewers to identify promising candidates from a much larger pool: teacher-leaders, assistant principals, principals of more typical schools, and others, not just those who have been turnaround principals.

The school turnaround leader competencies—or consistent patterns of thinking, feeling, acting, and speaking—included here are the best currently known, measurable distinguishers between very high performers and more typical or lower-performing leaders in a turnaround setting. The competency list does not include all capabilities needed—just those likely to distinguish between very successful potential leaders and the rest in a school turnaround situation.

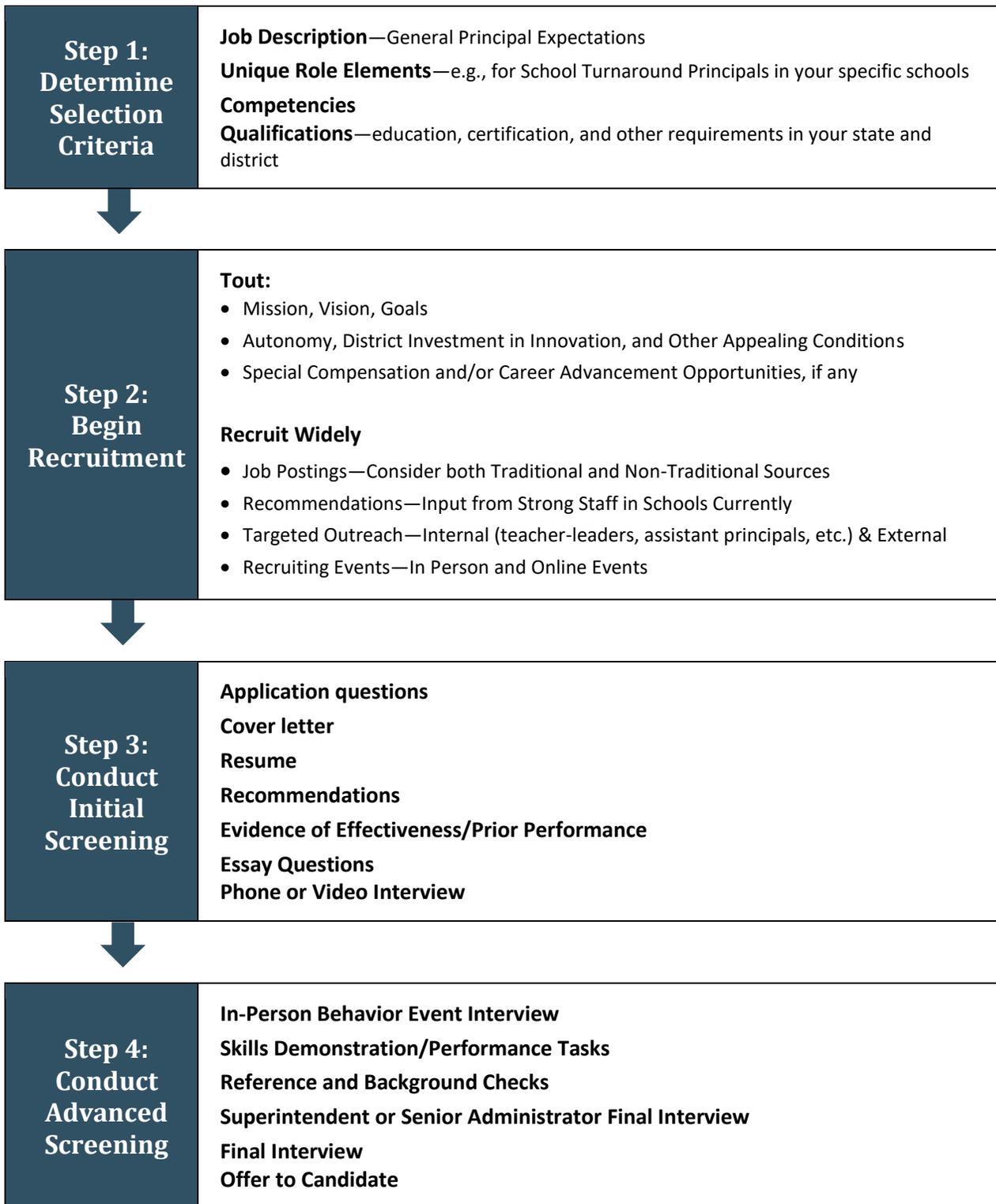
The competencies were derived by “mapping” the cross-sector research on turnaround leader actions (see Appendix B) to high-quality competency studies of successful entrepreneurs and leaders in large organizations.¹ The competencies fit the activities that turnaround leaders share with leaders in these contexts. Validation, refinement, and further customization of these competencies will be possible as the number of successful school turnarounds grows. These competencies are arranged into four clusters of related capabilities.

For more information about turnaround principal and teacher competencies and selection, see the [Competencies for Success](#) series.

These documents provide background information about effective bad-to-great turnarounds, turnaround teacher and leader competency definitions with school examples, and a bibliography of helpful sources. See [OpportunityCulture.org](#) for more on teacher-leaders or “multi-classroom leaders,” who have become increasingly important for fast, sustained turnarounds.

¹ 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>; 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>

Steps of a Teacher Selection Process



Background on the BEI Interview Process²

Competencies, or habitual patterns of behaving and thinking, are key predictors of how someone will perform at work, especially when they have not had the exact same job in a very similar organization. Two leaders of schools with similar students may have the same training and level of experience, but lead schools with very different student learning outcomes. Why? Research suggests that competencies make the difference. Setting high goals, taking initiative, and leading through others are examples. People who have already exhibited high levels of leadership competencies are more likely to lead well.

Unfortunately, research indicates that traditional interview techniques rarely uncover competencies that predict future performance differences. Too often, job candidates speak in generalities about what they think they should or would do, not about what they actually do at work. Fortunately, interviewers can learn what people actually do through a specialized interview technique—the behavior event interview (BEI). In a BEI, candidates are asked to describe their detailed actions and thinking in past work events. What candidates have done to achieve success at work is a strong predictor of how they will seek success at work in the future.

Most hirers screen leader candidates for knowledge or skills, too (such as the ability to interpret school data, or mastery of elements of instructional excellence). The BEI is just **one part** of an application process. In addition to the BEI, you might assess writing samples, observe principals or teacher-leaders in their schools, and ask candidates to perform job-related tasks such as giving feedback to a staff member with a performance challenge; these are all common techniques used to screen candidates. (See [Steps of a Principal Selection Process](#), page 7).

Overview of the BEI Interview Process

In a BEI, the interviewer aims to understand in detail how candidates perform various aspects of their work. Interviewer(s) asks candidates to recall past events when they have felt successful or have dealt with specific situations at work (for example, a time when he or she influenced another person or participated in a group activity).

- The interviewer asks for a brief (1 minute) summary of what led up to each situation and the critical milestones or “headlines” in the story that the person will tell, such as key conversations or meetings, key steps, turning points, and how the situation ended.
- Then the interviewers ask the candidate to walk through the story step by step, recounting exactly what the candidate did, said, thought, and felt at the time, and how others responded.
- The interviewer *must* interrupt the candidate to probe for detail needed to understand exactly what the person was doing and thinking at the time.
- Only responses about what the person was doing, saying, feeling, or thinking at that past time are valid. Current thoughts about the event and hypotheses about what the person would do next time are not as accurate at predicting future performance.
- Following these rules of thumb and using the rest of the instructions provided here will help you make the most valid comparison among candidates using BEIs.

Step 1: Before the interview

All members of the Interview Team should read this [Selection Preparation Guide](#). This guide provides detailed, concise information about how to conduct a BEI interview, including how to introduce the BEI to the interviewee, how to select and ask initial questions, and what types of follow-up questions are effective.

² For a detailed description of BEI techniques, see: Spencer, L. M., & Spencer, S. M. (1993). *Competence at work: Models for superior performance*. New York, NY: John Wiley and Sons.

- Determine which interview questions you want to ask from the [Choosing Questions to Ask in Interviews](#) section of this guide.
- Decide who will ask questions and follow-up probes, and who will take detailed notes during the interview. Ideally, two or three people should interview each candidate.

Step 2: During the interview

- Use the [Script for Introducing BEI Questions](#) provided in this guide.
- Establish an informal, friendly tone and explain the interview objectives and format (different from most interviews, asks candidates to replay key events in great detail so you can understand exactly how they do their work).
- Explain that interviewer may interrupt to probe for more detail (“Sorry in advance for interrupting”).
- Reward candidates when they provide appropriate level of detail (such as, “Thanks, that is just the level of detail I am looking for ...”).
- Interrupt candidates to probe for *step-by-step details* of what they did, said, and thought at the time (such as, “Let’s go back. What did you say to him?”).
- Examples of effective probes:
 - What did you say?
 - What did you do next?
 - Take me through that incident, step by step.
 - What was going through your mind at that point?
- Don’t waste time by allowing answers that you can’t score—interrupting and probing ensures that each candidate has the best possible chance to score highly.
- Avoid asking “why” a person did or said something in the past, since this leads most people to speculate rather than recount past thoughts. Instead, ask “What were you thinking at the time?” to find out what was in the person’s mind at the time.
- Take notes on what the candidate says—*scorable* interview responses must be:
 - in first person,
 - descriptive of real rather than hypothetical events or thoughts,
 - set in the past, and
 - precise (not: “I usually...,” “Typically I....” etc.).

Step 3: After the interview

- Read your interview notes and highlight scorable interview responses.
- If working as an interview team, you might schedule time after each interview to determine the final scores for each candidate immediately, while the story is fresh in your heads.
- Use the [Candidate Rating Tools](#) to determine if a particular candidate has the turnaround competencies at a level high enough to be successful in this demanding environment. On these tools, note the highest level—Red Flag, Neutral, Threshold, or Superior—of each target competency that the candidate demonstrated.
- Make a note of any other “red flag” responses, or concerns you have from the interview about other competencies.
- Use the [Candidate Comparison and Decision Tools](#) to make hiring decisions.
- **Induction:** Immediately following the interview process is an ideal time to begin the larger induction process, because the candidate’s strengths and weaknesses are fresh in everyone’s mind. Consider spending a few minutes as an interview team taking initial notes on the types of support and guidance each candidate would need to be successful in his or her new position. Are there particular supports, guidance, and/or resources that

would help the candidate prepare to hit the ground running? Take note of these immediately. (Candidates not chosen, especially internal applicants, may benefit from feedback you might provide from the interview, as well.)

Script for Introducing BEI Questions

Because the BEI is different from some interview techniques, it is important to give candidates good initial instructions about how you would like them to respond during this part of the interview. The following is a script that outlines what the interviewer might say at the beginning of the interview. You will want to adapt this to your own context and use words that you feel comfortable with, but this gives you a starting point.

Lead interviewer says:

“We want to understand in detail how you do your work, especially when you have felt successful or challenged. So, we are going to ask a different type of interview question from the usual. We are going to ask you to describe past events in great detail—almost as if you have a video camera on your shoulder and are showing us exactly what happened. At different points, I or my teammates here will interrupt you to ask for more detail. Sorry in advance for that!”

[Ask the question.]

“Take a minute to think of a story you have to tell that matches the question. We want you to give us a “headline version” first. Take a minute to think, and then give me the headlines of key events, or most critical parts of your story...the beginning, middle and end. Next we’ll go back and get you to walk us through it step by step.”

[Take notes on the highlights of their story, perhaps drawing little boxes or a list of the key milestones at the top of your notes page (see the [Interview Notes](#) in [Day-of-Interview Tools](#).)

[Once the candidate has given you the headlines:]

“OK, great. Now, take me back to the beginning. Walk me through step by step what you did, said, and thought at the time. And how others responded.”

Choosing Questions to Ask in Interviews

Instructions. Interview team members will need to determine beforehand which competencies they particularly want to address, and how long they plan to spend on the BEI portion of the interview. Some may decide to focus entirely on BEI questions, while others may have additional questions they would like to ask.

Steps:

1. Decide when you are going to use BEI questions in your interview process. Many interview teams find it more effective to ask other questions before launching into the BEI portion of the interview.
2. Decide which BEI questions your interviewer(s) will ask.
3. Mark or record your selected questions in advance of interviews on the [Interview Notes](#) in [Day-of-Interview Tools](#).

Screening for Critical Competencies

As part of your selection process, you should consider screening all candidates for the five critical competencies. The critical competencies were identified because they are:

- Particularly important for success in the turnaround leader role,
- Harder than other competencies to develop quickly (so that selecting for them is important), and

- Predictive of other competencies, because a leader can reach the higher levels of these competencies only by using other important competencies (for example, high levels of the Achievement competency require the competencies Analytical Thinking and Planning Ahead).

Two of the critical competencies are designated as primary:

- Achievement
- Impact and Influence

Without high levels of these two competencies from the start, strength in other competencies likely will not be sufficient for success as a turnaround leader. Assessing for these two is the most important part of the selection process. Hiring processes with limited time or resources will benefit from assessing candidates for these two competencies alone.

The secondary critical competencies include:

- Monitoring and Directiveness
- Team Leadership
- Developing Others—include this especially if the principal will be leading teacher-leaders who are accountable for leading instructional change within the school. They will need this competency immediately, especially if some teacher-leaders are relatively new to the role.

These also very directly support the proven actions of highly successful turnaround leaders in cross-sector case studies and are difficult to develop quickly. They may show up during assessment of the primary critical competencies, but direct assessment of these may distinguish among some candidates.

The remaining competencies also are important. Each one has shown up in numerous, high-quality, cross-sector leader competency studies and support turnaround leader actions. This toolkit includes behavior event interview questions for each of these.

We suggest one of three routes for choosing interview questions:

Quickest Version: Ask Questions #1 and #2 only from the [Recommended Questions for Critical Competencies](#) (see next page). Then, rate interviewee responses against the other competencies on this list *or* against your own list of high-priority competencies from the [Complete Question Menu](#). *Estimated Time: 30–45 minutes*

Quick Version: Ask Questions #1 and #2 plus one more. Select the two additional questions from the [Recommended Questions for Critical Competencies](#) *or* from the [Complete Question Menu](#). *Estimated Time: 1 hour for three questions.*

Long Version: Ask all five [Recommended Questions for Critical Competencies](#) *or* select your own five questions from the [Complete Question Menu](#). We suggest always asking Question #1 (Achievement), as it often elicits information both about people’s standards for “success” and other competencies they use when they are most successful. *Estimated Time: 1½–2 hours for five questions.*

Other considerations:

Time required: Response time per question can vary from 15 minutes to an hour. Highly competent people often have longer, richer stories to tell. Most people can provide responses with enough detail in 15–30 minutes in lower-level jobs, but successful leaders often need 45 minutes or more per story to explain their steps.

Altering questions: If you alter questions, avoid changing them to “leading” questions that indicate the desired responses. Leading questions (such as: So you decided at that point to meet with parents because you thought this would ease the tension?) reduce distinctions in responses of more and less competent people, limiting their usefulness for selection decisions.

Recommended Questions for Critical Competencies

These five questions were selected to cover competencies that:

- are likely to be most predictive of success for turnaround leaders,
- require use of other critical leader competencies (and so will help you assess multiple competencies), and/or
- distinguish candidates who would perform well in a *turnaround* effort versus other school situations, including one in which teacher-leaders play a critical role in change.

Cluster	Competency	Question*
Driving for Results	Achievement (ACH)	Think about a time when you felt very successful or proud of something you accomplished at work. Tell me the story.
Influencing for Results	Impact and Influence (I&I)	Think about a time when you influenced another person or people in a way that was satisfying to you. Tell me the story.
Driving for Results	Monitoring and Directiveness (M&D)	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.
Influencing for Results	Team Leadership (TL)	Think about a time when you led a group or team of people to accomplish work that was satisfying to you. Tell me the story.
Influencing for Results	Developing Others (DO)	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.

Complete Question Menu

The complete question menu includes questions for the critical competencies as well as the other competencies that have shown up in numerous cross-sector leader competency studies.

Competency	Question
<i>Driving for Results Cluster</i>	
Achievement (ACH)	Think about a time when you felt very successful or proud of something you accomplished at work. Tell me the story.
Initiative and Persistence (I&P)	Think about a time when you accomplished something satisfying at work despite one or more obstacles. Tell me the story.
Monitoring and Directiveness (M&D)	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.
Planning Ahead (PLA)	Think about a time when you had to think ahead to accomplish something satisfying at work. Tell me the story. <i>(Clarify time frame: When did the thinking ahead occur in relation to the anticipated events in the future? How far in advance?)</i>
<i>Influencing for Results Cluster</i>	
Impact and Influence (I&I)	Think about a time when you influenced another person or people in a way that was satisfying to you. Tell me the story.
Team Leadership (TL)	Think about a time when you led a group or team of people to accomplish work that was satisfying to you. Tell me the story.
Developing Others (DO)	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.
<i>Problem-Solving Cluster</i>	
Analytical Thinking (AT)	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.
Conceptual Thinking (CT)	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.
<i>Showing Confidence to Lead</i>	
Self-Confidence (SCF)	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.

School Turnaround Leaders: Day-of-Interview Tools

By Public Impact

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Day-of-Interview Tools

Instructions for Interview Team

The following tools are designed for use during the leader candidate interview. These tools are designed to be used in tandem with the [Selection Preparation Guide](#), which provides an overview of the selection process. They include questions as well as structured note-taking pages to use during the interview.

Prior to the interview

- All members of the interview team should read the [Selection Preparation Guide](#). This guide provides detailed, concise information about how to conduct a BEI interview, including how to introduce the BEI to the interviewee, how to select and ask initial questions, and what types of follow-up questions are effective.
- In addition, all members of the interview team should familiarize themselves with the leader competencies that are needed for success in a turnaround school.³ Detailed descriptions of these competencies as well as the rating levels within each competency can be found in [School Turnaround Leaders: Competencies for Success](#).
- Decide which questions you are going to ask and check or circle those on the following pages. For more help, see the [Choosing Questions to Ask in Interviews](#) section of the Selection Preparation Guide.
- Each member of the interview team should have a copy of [Day-of-Interview Tools](#).
- Make additional copies of the [Interview Notes](#) pages, or have them open on your laptops. At the top of the page, indicate the questions for which you are taking notes. Every member of the interview team should have one copy of the two-page [Interview Notes](#) pages for *each* question that the team plans to ask.
- Decide who will ask questions and follow-up probes, and who will take detailed notes during the interview. Ideally, at least two or more people should interview each candidate.

During the Interview

Each team member should have the [Interview Notes](#) pages in front of them or on a laptop or similar device. There should be one copy for **each** BEI question you plan to ask.

- The space for “Notes” includes a section to write down a brief overview of the incident the candidate chooses to describe as well as additional space to write detailed notes about what the candidate says. These notes will later be used to determine if the candidate has the competencies at high enough levels to be successful, so detailed notes are important.
- For the detailed notes, write down anything you hear about:
 - what the candidate actually said, did, or was thinking or feeling at the time of the incident, and
 - responses they got from other people at the time.
- Tips for the *questioner*—Examples of effective probes:
 - What did you say?
 - What did you do next?
 - Take me through that incident, step by step.
 - What was going through your mind at that point?
- Tips for the *note taker*—Scorable interview responses must be:
 - First person (“I did this,” *not* “We did this”)

³ The competencies provided here are derived from the following, which are recommended as companion guides: Spencer, L. M., & Spencer, S. M. (1993). *Competence at work: Models for superior performance*. New York, NY: John Wiley and Sons; Hobby, R., Crabtree, S., and Ibbetson, J. (2004). *The school recruitment handbook: A guide to attracting, selecting and keeping outstanding teachers*. London and New York: Routledge; Haberman, M. (2005). *Star teachers: The ideology and best practice of effective teachers of diverse children and youth in poverty*. Houston, TX: Haberman Educational Foundation.

- Real rather than hypothetical actions and feelings (“I said...” *not* “I would say...”)
- Volunteered by candidate, not suggested by interviewer (“What was your role?” “I led the meeting,” *not* “Did you lead the meeting?” “Yes”)
- About the past rather than present feelings or behavior (“I felt hopeful...”)
- Precise, not general (not “I usually...,” “Typically I ...,” etc.)

After the interview

- Use the **Candidate Rating Tools** to determine whether candidates have the competencies at high enough levels to be successful.
- Use the **Candidate Comparison and Decision Tools** to compare and rank candidates for selection.

Script for Introducing BEI Questions

Because the BEI is different from some interview techniques, it is important to give candidates good initial instructions about how you would like them to respond during this part of the interview. The following is a script that outlines what the interviewer might say at the beginning of the interview. You will want to adapt this to your own context and use words that you feel comfortable with, but this gives you a starting point.

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[Ask the question.]

“Take a minute to think of a story you have to tell that matches the question. We want you to give us a “headline version” first. Take a minute to think, and then give me the headlines of key events, or most critical parts of your story...the beginning, middle and end. Next we’ll go back and get you to walk us through it step by step.”

[Take notes on the highlights of their story, perhaps drawing little boxes or a list of the key milestones at the top of your notes page (see the [Interview Notes](#)).]

[Once the candidate has given you the headlines:]

“OK, great. Now, take me back to the beginning. Walk me through step by step what you did, said, and thought at the time. And how others responded.”

Recommended Questions for Critical Competencies

These five questions were selected to cover competencies that:

- are likely to be most predictive of success for turnaround leaders,
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Cluster	Competency	Question*
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Influencing for Results	Team Leadership (TL)	Think about a time when you led a group or team of people to accomplish work that was satisfying to you. Tell me the story.
Influencing for Results	Developing Others (DO)	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.

Complete Question Menu

The complete question menu includes questions for the critical competencies as well as the other competencies that have shown up in numerous cross-sector leader competency studies.

Competency	Question
<i>Driving for Results Cluster</i>	
Achievement (ACH)	Think about a time when you felt very successful or proud of something you accomplished at work. Tell me the story.
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<i>Problem-Solving Cluster</i>	
Analytical Thinking (AT)	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.
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<i>Showing Confidence to Lead</i>	
Self-Confidence (SCF)	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.

Interview Notes (Page 2 of 2)

Candidate Name	Interviewer	Date
Notes		
<i>Details about Incident</i>		

School Turnaround Leaders: Candidate Rating Tools

By Public Impact

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Candidate Rating Tools

Instructions for Interview Team

The scoring sheet is designed to help you select school leaders who will be successful in a turnaround school—a school that needs to move from very low performance to high performance quickly. By analyzing the candidate’s comments during the interview and comparing these comments to what is known about people who have high levels of particular competencies,⁴ you will be able to determine if a particular candidate has a competency at a level high enough to be successful in this demanding environment.

In order to complete this scoring sheet, you will need:

- **Interview Notes** pages (completed by your team during interviews)
- **Leader Competency Rating Levels (Appendix A)**

Quick List of Action Steps:

- Step 1: List competencies on scoring sheet
- Step 2: Highlight scorable data
- Step 3: Determine competencies
- Step 4: Assign competency zones and levels
- Step 5: Take notes

Action Steps In Detail:

Step 1: List competencies on scoring sheet

List or mark the competencies that you are assessing in the “Competency List” column on the scoring sheet. Start with the competencies for which you have asked specific interview questions. You may decide to list all of the most critical competencies (see **Selection Preparation Guide** for more information about critical competencies), or you may decide to assess candidates for additional or different turnaround leader competencies that you have chosen.

Step 2: Highlight scorable data

Read through interview notes and underline scorable data for competencies you have listed on the scoring sheet. Use the **Leader Competency Rating Levels (Appendix A)** to help you think about what kinds of data are relevant to the competencies you wish to score.

Scorable data is:

- First person (“I did this” *not* “We did this”). Real rather than hypothetical actions and feelings (“I said...” *not* “I would say...”)
- Volunteered by candidate, not suggested by interviewer
- About the past rather than present feelings or behavior (“I felt hopeful...”)
- Precise, not general (not “I usually...,” “Typically I ...,” etc.)

Example:

⁴ Spencer, L. M., & Spencer, S. M. (1993). *Competence at work: Models for superior performance*. New York, NY: John Wiley and Sons.

Interviewer: What thoughts went through your mind at that point?

Candidate: I suddenly realized that I needed to devote an entire staff meeting to sharing data. I had been going about things in the wrong way. I had been talking to teachers individually, but I decided then that it would be much more persuasive if I could get everyone together and look at overall school trends as well as individual classroom scores.

Step 3: Determine competencies

Compare your underlined statements with the competency definitions in the **Leader Competency Rating Levels (Appendix A)**. Note in the margins of the interview notes the competencies that are demonstrated in the underlined statements.

Example: I decided then that it would be much more persuasive if I could get everyone together and look at overall school trends as well as individual classroom scores. (Impact and Influence)

Step 4: Assign competency zones and levels

- Compare the underlined statements with the competency levels in the **Leader Competency Rating Levels (Appendix A)**.
- Determine whether the candidate's comments suggest they have demonstrated the Red Flag, Neutral, Threshold, or Superior zone for each of the competencies you are assessing. Circle the appropriate rating in the "Zone" column.
- You also may assign a numerical level to each of the competencies you are assessing. Enter the number of the highest level you see in the interview notes in the "Level" column. Members of the interview committee may want to collaborate during this process and discuss zone and level assignments.
- **Note:** Note any Red Flag on any turnaround leader competency, whether or not it is one you intended to assess.

Step 5: Take notes

- Take brief notes on interview details that will help you remember why you gave the candidate a particular rating.
- Also make a note of any other "Red Flag" responses, or concerns you have from the interview about a particular competency.
- Note if you do not have enough information to rate a competency of concern to you.
- If you are producing one score as an interview team, now is the time to determine how you will rate each candidate on each competency. Alternatively, you may reserve this step for later.

Individual Scoring Sheet—Critical Competencies

Candidate Name	Interviewer										Date	
Critical Competency List	Zone				Level						Notes	
Achievement (ACH)	RF	N	TH	SU	1	2	3	4	5	6		
Impact and Influence (I&I)	RF	N	TH	SU	1	2	3	4	5	6		
Monitoring and Directiveness (M&D)	RF	N	TH	SU	1	2	3	4	5	6		
Team Leadership (TL)	RF	N	TH	SU	1	2	3	4	5	6		
Developing Others (DO)	RF	N	TH	SU	1	2	3	4	5	6		
<p>RF = Red Flag Zone: Red flag behaviors indicate a severe mismatch for this role.</p> <p>N = Neutral Zone: These levels do not indicate a match if they are the highest levels of behavior shown.</p> <p>TH = Threshold Zone: Threshold behaviors are needed for moderate success (excellence likely <i>only</i> with significant leadership and support).</p> <p>SU = Superior Zone: Superior performers use these behaviors when the situation requires (even without significant leadership and support).</p>												

Individual Scoring Sheet—Additional Competencies

Candidate Name	Interviewer										Date	
Additional Competencies List	Zone				Level						Notes	
	RF	N	TH	SU	1	2	3	4	5	6		
	RF	N	TH	SU	1	2	3	4	5	6		
	RF	N	TH	SU	1	2	3	4	5	6		
	RF	N	TH	SU	1	2	3	4	5	6		
	RF	N	TH	SU	1	2	3	4	5	6		
<p>RF = Red Flag Zone: Red flag behaviors indicate a severe mismatch for this role.</p> <p>N = Neutral Zone: These levels do not indicate a match if they are the highest levels of behavior shown.</p> <p>TH = Threshold Zone: Threshold behaviors are needed for moderate success (excellence likely <i>only</i> with significant leadership and support).</p> <p>SU = Superior Zone: Superior performers use these behaviors when the situation requires (even without significant leadership and support).</p>												

School Turnaround Leaders: Candidate Comparison and Decision Tools

By Public Impact

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Candidate Comparison and Decision Tools

Guidelines for Choosing Among Candidates

Once you have conducted your interviews, the process of selecting candidates will depend on a number of variables, many of which are unique to your school. The following guidelines are offered for your consideration, with the understanding that each interview team will determine what works best given their circumstances.

Step 1: Determine What Competencies Have Been Assessed and Score

As an interview team, look over your notes and rating sheets and determine whether you have enough data to assess each of the competencies.⁵ In cases where you **do not** have enough data, note this on the **Candidate Comparison Scoring Sheet**. In cases where you **do** have enough information, note each candidate's zone (and level, if available) for each competency.

Step 2: Compare and Select Candidates

- Compare the strengths of the candidates, particularly in the critical competencies.
- If you differ in your ratings, now is the time to reconcile and determine the final rating on each competency. Discuss differences using evidence in your interview notes, not memory.
- Highlight top-tier candidates.
- Compare extreme weaknesses (Red Flags on any competency, Neutrals on critical competencies) that might keep a candidate from succeeding despite other strengths.
- Few candidates will have all of the competencies and skills needed at the highest levels.
- Make a note of the top candidate. Select a second or third choice, if possible, for specific positions.

Other considerations:

- If someone appears to be in the Superior Zone on all or most high-priority competencies with no obvious red flags, a rapid, personal recruiting effort is appropriate.
- If someone is a mix of Threshold and Superior Zones, consider the candidate for second-tier recruiting.
- A red flag on any competency is a "no hire" even if the person has other great strengths.
- If you have only candidates who score consistently in the Threshold Zone, give priority to those who score at higher levels within that.

Step 3: Plan for Induction

Immediately following the interview process is an ideal time to begin the larger induction process, because the candidate's strengths and weaknesses are fresh in everyone's mind.

Consider spending a few minutes as an interview team taking initial notes on the types of support and guidance each candidate would need to be successful in his or her new position. Are there particular supports, guidance, and/or resources that would help the candidate prepare to hit the ground running? Take note of these immediately. In addition to induction of selected candidates, consider providing developmental feedback to internal candidates who are not selected at this time.

⁵ Spencer, L. M., & Spencer, S. M. (1993). *Competence at work: Models for superior performance*. New York, NY: John Wiley and Sons.

Candidate Comparison Scoring Sheet (Page 1 of 2)

	Candidate 1		2	3	4	5
Name						
<i>Driving for Results Cluster</i>						
Competencies	Zone	Level	Zone	Level	Zone	Level
Achievement (ACH)						
Initiative and Persistence (I&P)						
Monitoring and Directiveness (M&D)						
Planning Ahead (PLA)						
<i>Influencing for Results Cluster</i>						
Competencies	Zone	Level	Zone	Level	Zone	Level
Impact and Influence (I&I)						
Team Leadership (TL)						
Developing Others (DO)						

Candidate Comparison Scoring Sheet (Page 2 of 2)

	Candidate 1		2		3		4		5	
Name										
<i>Problem-Solving Cluster</i>										
Competencies	Zone	Level								
Analytical Thinking (AT)										
Conceptual Thinking (CT)										
<i>Showing Confidence to Lead</i>										
Competencies	Zone	Level								
Self-Confidence (SCF)										

School Turnaround Leaders: Appendix A

Leader Competency Rating Levels

By Public Impact

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Complete Turnaround Leader Competency List and Definitions

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.

They were derived by “mapping” the cross-sector research on turnaround leader actions (see Appendix B) to high-quality competency studies of successful entrepreneurs and leaders in large organizations.⁶ The competencies chosen fit the activities that turnaround leaders share with leaders in these other contexts. These competencies are arranged into four clusters of related capabilities.

Note: The competency language and levels were updated and improved in 2016 and now align with teacher selection materials on PublicImpact.com and teacher and teacher-leader materials OpportunityCulture.org.

Driving for Results Cluster—This cluster of competencies is concerned with the turnaround leader’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.

⁶ 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.

Turnaround Leader 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				
<i>The drive and actions to set challenging goals and reach a high standard of performance despite barriers.</i>				
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	Prioritizes Challenging Goals and Tasks	Carefully chooses <u>challenging</u> goals (difficult but not unrealistic) for self, students, and other adults. Monitors progress, And chooses actions based on <u>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>
<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>				

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.

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.

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).

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.

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	
	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.

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

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
		3	Ensures Team Has Opportunity to Perform
		4	Leads Team to Results
	Superior	5	Communicates a Compelling Vision to Motivate 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.

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).
	Neutral Zone	1	Gives Explicit Instructions	Tells others how to do their work when needed, makes helpful suggestions.
		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.
Potential Hire Zone	Threshold	3	Gives Basic Feedback	Provides specific feedback, both positive and negative, to help others improve.
		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.
	Superior	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.
		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.

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	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.

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

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.

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			
<i>A personal belief in one's ability to accomplish tasks and the actions that reflect that belief.</i>			
<i>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.</i>			
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>			

School Turnaround Leaders: Appendix B

Turnaround Actions: Consistent Cross-Sector Findings

By Public Impact

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Turnaround Leader Actions: Consistent Cross-Sector Findings

The actions in this section are those found consistently in cross-sector studies of turnarounds, or successful bad-to-great transformations.⁷ This research documented and analyzed cases in which failing organizations made rapid, dramatic performance improvements. (This stands in contrast to slower, incremental improvements in already strong organizations.)

In nearly all cases, these leaders identify and focus on a few early wins with big payoffs, and they use that early success to gain momentum. These new tactics often break organization norms or rules. The actions occur in a fast cycle of trying new tactics, discarding failed tactics, and doing more of what works. Most turnaround efforts fail, because they are tried in very challenging situations. Repeated attempts—with a new leader, or significant changes to initial efforts, for example—may be critical to turnaround success in a large portion of schools.

Turnaround Leader Actions

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.

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.

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>

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.

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.

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.

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.