



## NEWS RELEASE

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# **Number of Schools in Restructuring under No Child Left Behind Increases by More than Half in 2007-08; Many Schools Stay on List**

## ***States Urged to Step up Efforts to Monitor Schools in Restructuring***

WASHINGTON — Sept. 23, 2008 — The Center on Education Policy (CEP) released its most comprehensive report to date on how states and school districts implement school restructuring, the ultimate sanction for chronically low-performing schools under the federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). The report finds that the number of Title I schools in restructuring during last school year, 2007-08, increased by 56 percent to an estimated 3,599 schools, or about 7 percent of all Title I schools in the nation. This total is up from the 2,302 schools, or 4 percent in 2006-07.

The report, *A Call to Restructure Restructuring: Lessons from the No Child Left Behind Act in Five States*, is a culmination of CEP's study of NCLB restructuring in California, Georgia, Maryland, Michigan, and Ohio, and reviews other state and national data. These five states were chosen because they have relatively large numbers of schools in restructuring and well-established accountability systems, and represent a variety of geographic areas. To gather data for the study, CEP conducted interviews with state officials and district and school staff in 19 districts and 42 restructuring schools within these states.

The report finds that many schools have remained in restructuring for multiple years, with little guidance from the federal government on what to do about persistently struggling schools. In the five states studied, only 19 percent of the schools implementing restructuring made adequate yearly progress based on 2006-07 tests.

"This report shows that current restructuring policies and practices are flawed," said Jack Jennings, CEP's president and CEO. "Many restructuring schools have done everything the law requires but they still haven't raised achievement enough to exit restructuring. It's time to revamp the sanctions and supports for these struggling schools."

### **State-Level Findings**

While the results of restructuring varied significantly among the five states in this study, the results did not vary by federal restructuring strategy. Significantly larger percentages of restructuring schools in Michigan and Georgia made AYP than in the other states, but it was not possible to determine the precise reasons for these variations. CEP's analysis showed that none of the five federal restructuring options were associated with a greater likelihood of a school making AYP overall or in reading or math alone.

“We can’t say which strategies do the most for schools in restructuring, but we can say that Michigan and Georgia had the largest percentage of schools make AYP based on 2006-07 testing,” Jennings added.

Most restructuring schools in the five states (86 to 96 percent) used the “any-other” restructuring option in the NCLB law, which allows schools and districts to take any major action, aside from the four more specific options, to change school governance. However, state interpretations of this option varied widely. Michigan and Ohio encouraged schools to employ “turnaround” specialists, while Maryland has barred schools entering restructuring after 2006-07 from choosing a turnaround specialist.

The five states also varied in the supports they offered restructuring schools. Four sponsored extra professional development events, and three provided on-site technical assistance and gave more intense support and monitoring to schools that have been implementing restructuring plans for multiple years. States also have very different methods of distributing the 4 percent of funds from Title I that are specifically set aside for school improvement. The amount of funding available to each school also varies widely since it largely depends on the number of low-income children in the state, not on the number of Title I schools in improvement.

### **District- and School-Level Findings**

Regardless of the federal restructuring option they chose, schools used some common strategies to raise student achievement. All of the 42 case-study schools reported using data for instructional decision-making. Most schools provided tutoring to struggling students and employed an instructional or leadership coach.

Many schools that missed AYP targets solely because of the performance of student subgroups still directed considerable resources to all students. Principals and teachers at schools that have raised student achievement enough to exit restructuring remained concerned about maintaining progress, particularly as AYP targets will keep rising until they reach the ultimate goal of 100 percent proficiency. Meanwhile, some principals at schools that replaced staff reported unintended negative consequences, such as being unable to fill positions with qualified teachers and having little time to plan for the new school year after spending the summer hiring.

### **Recommendations**

The report makes several recommendations to improve the current restructuring process. First, policymakers should expand and define the federal options based on strategies that have been cited as effective in school improvement research. States can then create state-specific options for restructuring. States also need to better monitor schools to ensure adequate implementation and to determine which strategies work.

In addition, federal and state officials need to consider policies to address schools that remain in restructuring. While these policies should not require schools to make changes every year, they should require monitoring implementation of school plans, giving promising strategies time to work, and changing course when strategies are clearly ineffective.

Restructuring schools should only choose to replace staff if districts have the capacity to help schools advertise and interview for open positions, the region around the schools has enough qualified candidates who may apply, and the district can negotiate with the teachers’ union to remove potential obstacles. Finally, states and districts need to help maintain student

achievement in schools that exit restructuring and continue to funnel funds and services to these schools until they maintain achievement.

The Center on Education Policy has conducted a series of analyses of the school restructuring efforts in California, Georgia, Maryland, Michigan, and Ohio as part of its comprehensive, multiyear study of the No Child Left Behind Act. *A Call to Restructure Restructuring: Lessons from the No Child Left Behind Act in Five States*, individual state restructuring reports, and other CEP publications on NCLB are available at [www.cep-dc.org](http://www.cep-dc.org).

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*Based in Washington, D.C., and founded in 1995, by Jack Jennings, the Center on Education Policy is a national independent advocate for public education and for more effective public schools. The Center works to help Americans better understand the role of public education in a democracy and the need to improve the academic quality of public schools. The Center does not represent special interests. Instead, it helps citizens make sense of conflicting opinions and perceptions about public education and create conditions that will lead to better public schools.*