

Evaluation Update – Spring 2021

School Turnaround Network and School Turnaround Leadership Development Support Programs



COLORADO
Department of Education

Evaluation Goals

The Colorado Department of Education (CDE) is committed to providing targeted support to the lowest-performing schools and districts in the state. The School Turnaround Network (STN) and School Turnaround Leadership Development (STLD) are two support programs CDE provides to schools and districts identified by the state or federal accountability systems. To provide the highest quality service, CDE has prioritized continuous improvement through an external evaluation.

This document highlights results of the recently completed quantitative evaluation of these two support programs, as well as outlines the upcoming qualitative evaluation to be performed during the 2021-22 school year.

Overview

In the Fall of 2020, CDE partnered with the Center for Assessment, Design, Research and Evaluation (CADRE) at the University of Colorado Boulder to perform an evaluation of the STN and STLD support programs. Participation in these programs is funded through state school improvement funds and federal school improvement funds (i.e., School Transformation Grant and Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) funds, respectively). Funding for this evaluation was made available through H.B. 18-1355.

Evaluation of the STN and STLD support programs is performed in two stages. CADRE completed the first stage, a quantitative analysis of STN and STLD, aimed to answer the following evaluation questions:

- Which schools receive STLD or STN supports and how do they compare to the population of all schools statewide and to other schools that were eligible to receive supports in terms of student demographic characteristics, prior student achievement, and SPF ratings?
- What type of changes are observed in SPF ratings, student achievement, and student growth metrics for schools participating in STLD and STN support programs?
- How do the trends in student achievement and growth metrics at schools participating in the STLD and STN programs compare to these same metrics at other eligible, demographically comparable schools that did not participate in either program?

The full quantitative analysis report published by CADRE is available here:

[Evaluation of Colorado School Turnaround Network and School Turnaround Leadership Development Grants: Descriptive Analysis of 2015-2020 Cohorts.](#)

The remainder of this document will highlight some of CADRE's quantitative analysis findings.

Academic Performance Trends

When looking at the year-to-year academic performance of schools that participated in STN and STLD, CADRE found that participating schools experienced small positive effects on academic performance for years during and after participation in these programs. These positive effects reversed negative trends in academic performance that existed before participation.

“On average, we found trends in student achievement consistent with small positive effects for each cohort of STN and STLD schools for years during and after participating in the programs. To put these findings into context, these small positive changes are consistent with the average magnitude of positive effects found in other recent studies of school turnaround interventions.”



Additionally, these small positive effects reversing negative trends were consistent with the average magnitude of positive effects found in other recent studies of school turnaround interventions.¹

CDE is encouraged by the results showing the positive impact of the STN and STLD support programs. These results reflect years of strategic work by school and district staff who have participated in these programs. CDE staff will use these positive results as a launching point for further evaluation to continue to improve these supports.

School Demographics

Schools participating in the STN and STLD support programs are some of the lowest performing schools in the state. These schools are often in communities that serve historically disadvantaged students. CDE asked CADRE to examine differences between schools that participated in STN and STLD, schools that were eligible to participate (via federal or state identification) but did not, and all schools across the state.

CADRE found that schools that participated in the STN and STLD programs tended to serve higher proportions of students eligible for free and reduced-price lunch (FRL) and minority (non-white) students relative to schools that were eligible to participate. Both participating and eligible schools had higher English-language learner (ELL) populations than the state-wide average. Participating schools were also less likely to be in rural communities. These differences in demographics between participating schools, eligible schools who did not participate, and all schools across the state are represented in the table below.

<i>Variable</i>	School Turnaround Network		School Turnaround Leadership Development		Statewide (2018-19)
	<i>Participants</i>	<i>Eligible</i>	<i>Participants</i>	<i>Eligible</i>	<i>All Schools</i>
% FRL	75.6%	64.0%	76.5%	63.8%	45.1%
% Minority	68.5%	61.8%	75.4%	61.9%	44.9%
% ELL	26.7%	27.6%	33.6%	26.7%	16.1%
% IEP	13.4%	11.7%	13.3%	12.1%	11.3%
% Rural	14.1%	25.4%	11.4%	24.3%	27.6%
Avg. Enrollment	441	460	512	472	489

¹ Shear, B.R., Diaz-Bilello, E., Student, S.R., and Pierre-Louis, M. (2021). Evaluation of Colorado School Turnaround Network and School Turnaround Leadership Development Grants: Descriptive analysis of 2015-2020 cohorts. Boulder, CO: The Center for Assessment, Design, Research and Evaluation (CADRE).

Further Evaluation Work

CDE will continue to partner with CADRE for the second stage of the evaluation of the STN and STLD support programs during the 2021-22 school year. This stage will consist of a qualitative evaluation aimed to answer the following evaluation questions:

- What conditions lead to better outcomes for participating schools?
- What differentiates schools participating in these support programs that make progress from those that do not make progress?
- What improvements could CDE make to the supports provided to low-performing schools?

This stage of the evaluation will be performed during the 2021-22 school year and will be published in 2022. CDE will release a similar results-sharing document upon the completion of the qualitative evaluation.

Acknowledgements

CDE would like to thank the school and district staff who participated in the School Turnaround Network and School Turnaround Leadership Development support programs. The improvements seen in participating schools would not be possible without the dedication and determination of these staff members.

CDE would also like to thank Benjamin Shear, Elena Diaz-Bilello, Sanford Student, and Medjy Pierre-Louis of the evaluation team at CADRE for providing their expertise and assisting in the CDE's evaluation process.

WHERE CAN I LEARN MORE?

- [Learn more about STN at the School Turnaround Network website](#)
- [Learn more about STLD at the School Turnaround Leadership Development Program website](#)

For more information about the evaluation of the School Turnaround Network and School Turnaround Leadership Development Programs, please contact Nate Goss, Turnaround Program Coordinator, at Goss_N@cde.state.co.us, or Lindsey Jaeckel, Executive Director of School & District Transformation, at Jaeckel_L@cde.state.co.us.