



Partnership for Leaders in Education

Darden School of Business
Curry School of Education

The University of Virginia School Turnaround Program (UVA-STP)

A powerful educational system that inspires all students to achieve their full potential is possible. We believe a systemic effort to turn around persistently underperforming schools and build leadership capacity presents the best opportunity to move towards this vision. The UVA School Turnaround Program empowers courageous system and school leaders to pursue what's possible. Through three years of integrated work, the lessons learned through redesigning environmental conditions and pursuing intensive school change inform what it will take to expand and sustain success across the school system.

As there is not a single formula for turnaround, we expose leaders to transformational thinking necessary to develop strategies based on their unique context. Drawing upon the most innovating thinking from the Darden School of Business, the Curry School of Education and successful turnaround practitioners from fifteen states, we create environments where leaders solve their most pressing challenges and can rethink, reignite and transform their organizations.

Rethink (Planning Year) — We believe transformative change is most effective when led from the district level. During the Planning Year, our team partners with district leadership (or alternative types of school systems such as zones or CMOs) to assess current processes and capacity, create a customized Turnaround Plan that prioritizes support for turnaround schools and assist selecting the high-impact school leaders vital for success. In this phase, the focus is on understanding root cause needs and rethinking the district's design to ensure transformative conditions are in place across four critical levers:

- #1: Leadership will and capacity to do what is necessary to fundamentally change practice
- #2: Support and accountability for needed urgency, capacity-building and flexibility
- #3: Instructional infrastructure that informs truly data-driven practice
- #4: Talent management that emboldens expectations and prioritizes turnaround needs

Reignite (Summer Programs) — With people and structures in place ready to inspire performance, we help system and school leaders build trusting, accountable relationships to co-create a vision of success. Through immersive experiences for two consecutive summers at UVA, we deliver world-class executive education focused on igniting change in organizations and leadership practice. We expose leaders to data-driven techniques and system redesign opportunities to ignite a mind-shift in what is possible.

Redesign (Year 1) — Following summer and winter executive education retreats, each partner system and school develops context-based 90-Day Plans detailing how they will continually redesign their organization to address critical needs. To help leaders stay urgently on course, our team makes embedded visits, builds capacity to change school practice through customized support and remains fully engaged throughout the year.

Transform (Year 2) — With leadership fully engaging teachers in the change effort, remarkable results begin to emerge for students. In fact, deeper implementation in year two ensures turnaround schools become a learning lab for what's possible as successful approaches are identified that can transform system-wide practice and inform further district redesign. Ongoing executive education, follow-up and support from our experienced staff, faculty and partners help ingrain a culture of continuous improvement.

Results — Our work has impacted over 250 schools across 75 districts and 15 states. Our first 100 schools averaged over 35% gains in reading and math and over half of our recent partners have already achieved over double-digit proficiency gains in two years or less. More difficult to measure is the new sense of hope and possibilities that leaders, teachers and students are experiencing—many for the first time.

To learn more about the UVA-STP, please contact Deborah Harriman (harrimand@arden.virginia.edu)