



School Improvement Taxonomy			
Category	Strategy	Definition	Examples
Investing in People	Restructure or Replace Leadership	Districts hire new principals to replace existing leadership or move current principals to different schools that suit their strengths.	After Massachusetts took control of Lawrence Public Schools in 2011 due to prolonged poor performance and ineffective leadership, the district, under receiver Jeff Riley, restructured leadership by replacing a significant portion of principals and teachers.
	Leader Professional Development	Principals are trained to identify school needs and implement strategies to improve performance. School and district leaders engage in school improvement programs together and share strategies that have been successful.	To foster self-sustaining schools, IDEA trains school leaders as “principals in residence” at other schools for up to three years and implements leadership changes to address performance issues and improve outcomes.
	Teacher Professional Development	Teachers receive professional development and training on a variety of topics, depending on what their school needs: instructional strategies, curriculum alignment, and data collection and analysis. Some districts also hire additional instructional coaches to help teachers implement new strategies.	Rocky Mountain Prep’s high academic proficiency in 2023 is attributed to its focus on teacher professional development, including intensive summer training, ongoing coaching, and frequent feedback. These enable teachers to effectively implement high-quality curricula, data-driven interventions, and instructional improvements.



	Teacher Salary and Financial Incentives	Districts implement a performance-based compensation system, offering bonuses and salary increases to teachers who show high performance and also return to their classrooms.	Under receivership, Lawrence Public Schools introduced a performance-based salary ladder with financial incentives to reward effective teachers, promote them into leadership roles, and drive instructional improvement.
	Teacher Evaluation Systems	Teacher evaluation systems are refined or new ones are implemented in order to recognize high-performing teachers and identify growth areas for lower-performing teachers.	D.C. Public Schools introduced a new teacher evaluation model that featured the IMPACT system to assess performance, the IMPACTplus system for performance-based compensation and retention bonuses, and the LIFT career ladder for recognizing and promoting high-performing teachers. This model provides principals with flexibility in hiring, allows for dismissing ineffective teachers, and includes weekly meetings with peers and instructional coaches for continuous professional development.
Improving Instructional Quality	Curriculum-based Professional Learning	Districts and schools adopt structures and systems that enable teachers and leaders to implement curriculum effectively, including coaching and time for data analysis.	Following a decline in standardized test scores after adopting Common Core standards, Achievement First revised its curriculum to align with higher standards, reduced scaffolding to foster independent thinking and enhanced professional development to address instructional gaps and improve teaching quality.



	Assessment	Districts develop more robust assessment systems, including an emphasis on data teams and more frequent assessment cycles.	Aurora Public Schools District enhanced student outcomes by introducing new assessment systems aligned with UnBounded standards and utilizing the Illuminate Education platform to administer interim assessments every six weeks.
	Intervention	Districts and schools implement robust intervention models (e.g., high-impact tutoring, MTSS, extended learning programs) to address academic need areas and improve student learning outcomes.	Conservatory Lab Charter in Boston emphasizes a strong intervention model. It uses data-driven strategies to identify learning gaps and implement targeted interventions throughout the school year, continuously adjusting curricula based on student performance.
	Opportunities for Advanced Programming	Schools offer advanced courses in middle school to expand access to academic opportunities and increase achievement standards.	IDEA's "College for All" mission includes offering advanced courses in middle school through its "AP for All" model, starting Advanced Placement testing in eighth grade to prepare students for college.
	Addressing Student Learning Differences	Schools address the needs of the bottom quartile of students, particularly students with learning differences, with specific academic interventions based on data, e.g. providing specialized instruction for students with language-based learning disabilities; targeting tutoring	All Means All Fellows identify goals to improve student academic outcomes based on data—such as improving reading outcomes for 3rd-grade SwDs—and, with coaching and support, take steps to improve those outcomes over the course of a year.



		support for struggling readers, etc.	<u>Special Education Leader Fellowship (SELF)</u> partners with schools and leaders to improve student outcomes through fellowships and teacher professional development. <u>The Oakland REACH</u> partners with schools and networks to upskill parents and caregivers to provide high-dosage tutoring in low-performing schools, improving literacy outcomes for all students. <u>Center for Learner Equity</u> partners with regional education organizations to assess ecosystem conditions and address barriers to improving outcomes for students with disabilities in a region.
Cultivating School Culture	School Climate	District and school leaders prioritize creating a welcoming and safe environment for students, teachers, and administrators. This includes redefining disciplinary systems and resetting schoolwide norms and beliefs around student and teacher capabilities.	<u>IDEA</u> charter schools cultivate a school climate where all stakeholders – from educators to community members – prioritize academic excellence, using a “No Excuses” model to uphold high standards and expand only where there is strong community support.



	Wraparound Support	Districts and/or schools provide “wraparound services,” or services that support the whole child, not just their academic performance. These services may address student needs involving housing insecurity, food insecurity, and counseling.	In 2015, Fulton County School District transformed Banneker High School and its nine feeder schools by establishing an Achievement Zone and creating a Student and Family Engagement (SAFE) center to provide wraparound services addressing the “whole child,” alongside offering social-emotional and mental health support for teachers to improve student achievement.
	Family and Community Engagement	Before and during the school improvement process, district and school leaders engage and collaborate with families and community members to create buy-in for turnaround or transformation practices.	D.C. Public Schools launched a five-year improvement plan that prioritized family and community engagement. This included public hearings, community meetings, and the creation of resources like “Parent Roadmaps” to support student learning.
Implementing Structural Changes	School Closures	Districts permanently shut down schools due to persistently low performance, declining enrollment, or financial challenges.	Indianapolis Public Schools (IPS) has leveraged a strategy of school closures, mergers, and takeovers through its Innovation Network Schools initiative to drive significant improvements in student proficiency and address financial challenges. This hybrid model, combining district oversight with charter-like autonomy, demonstrates a successful approach to transforming underperforming schools and optimizing resources.



	School Mergers	Districts combine two or more schools into one entity to consolidate resources, address under-enrollment, and improve education offerings.	The merger of Milwaukee School of Excellence and Fuller Academy aims to consolidate resources and improve academics amid declining enrollment and fluctuating student performance, though the long-term impact on test scores and graduation rates remains to be seen.
	School Takeovers	States or districts initiate a school takeover by transferring control of a struggling school to an external organization, such as a charter operator or nonprofit.	In 2013, New Jersey took over Camden's school district and, under the Urban Hope Act of 2012, transformed it by closing several schools and opening "renaissance schools," which were managed by charter networks with local approval, increased funding, and geographically-based enrollment.