



Since beginning its work with the New York City Department of Education in 2001, Turnaround has worked in 56 of the city's high-need schools and school sites (such as long-term suspension centers). Both the model and Turnaround's capacity to collect data have evolved over the course of this work. The most representative iteration of Turnaround's early model was implemented in the three-year *Safe Schools, Successful Students* initiative, a unique public/private partnership funded by the United Way of New York City, the New York City Departments of Education and Health & Mental Hygiene, the State Office of Mental Health, and Agenda for Children Tomorrow.

Turnaround's work and the impact of the *Safe Schools* initiative as a whole were evaluated by the American Institutes for Research (AIR). While, the final report is forthcoming, it is nevertheless possible to summarize certain key aspects of it.

Evaluation Design

AIR employed a time series design for this evaluation, using each school as its own control and examining how the school changed over time. Further, in an attempt to minimize the burden on school personnel and service providers, AIR restricted the data elements to already-reported metrics. Data on school-level outcomes was compiled through:

- Annual collection of school record data, including school-wide achievement, attendance, suspensions, 911 calls, corporal punishment allegations, and teacher absences.
- Annual key informant interviews with staff from each school as well as selected members of the Initiative team.
- Annual online surveys of the quality and effectiveness of school problem-solving teams.
- Gathering publicly reported data on schools, including results on New York City Department of Education accountability measures, such as the Learning Environment Survey and Progress Report.

AIR used a visual analysis of individual growth curves to detect within-school change across targeted outcomes over time. The school-level findings of this three-year evaluation are described below.

Summary of School-Level Results

At the school level, results for schools that participated in the *Safe Schools* initiative were overwhelmingly positive. Both quantitative and qualitative data showed that schools that had been in states of profound crisis were functioning better across multiple key outcome areas, specifically:

- Problem-solving teams worked effectively in schools to identify students in need of services and supports and to provide those services.
- Each school demonstrated significant progress in increasing access to mental health services. In 2007–08, SSSWs and social work interns worked with 710 students across the six schools,

an increase of 39 percent over the 2006–07 school year and more than twice the number served in the 2005–06 school year.

- Each school for which there was data had fewer suspensions in the 2007-08 school year than it had in 2004–05, prior to the Safe Schools initiative (an average of 9.5 across schools).
- Each school had fewer police-reported incidents in the 2007-08 school year than it had in 2004–05 (an average of 11.75 across schools).
- All five schools showed fewer teacher absences the longer they participated in the Initiative. (An average 4.39 days across schools).
- Except for one school, trends in school-wide student attendance showed marked improvement from 2005–06 to 2007–08 (an average 1.20 percent across four schools).
- The percentage of students scoring at the proficient or advanced levels on state achievement tests increased for all schools from 2004–05 through 2007–08, especially for mathematics.
 - An 11.16 point decrease in the percentage of students scoring far below standards on state exams in English (from an average of 19.2 percent to 8.07 percent across schools);
 - A 7.19 point increase in the percentage of students meeting or exceeding standards on state exams in English (from an average of 27.93 percent to 35.12 percent across schools);
 - A 22.6 point decrease in the percentage of students scoring far below standards on state exams in math (from an average of 34.98 percent to 12.38 percent across schools);
 - A 22.07 point increase in the percentage of students meeting or exceeding standards on state exams in math (from an average of 26.18 percent to 48.12 percent across schools).
- The teachers, parents and students in these school communities rated the schools more favorably on the 2007-08 Department of Education Learning Environment Surveys. The total score increased by an average of 2.35 points across schools as compared to the 2006-07 school year.
- The chart below shows the relationship between the academic gains in these schools in relation to the districts and city schools. In all cases, students in these schools outpaced the city as a whole in moving out of the lowest category and into the two highest; and in all but one case they also outpaced schools in the same two districts.

Change in:	Safe Schools	Districts 9 and 10	Citywide
% of students scoring far below standards on ELA exams	-11.16	-6.7	-5.7
% of students meeting or exceeding standards on ELA exams	7.19	3.7	5.8
% of students scoring far below standards on Math exams	-22.60	-15.9	-11.7
% of students meeting or exceeding standards on Math exams	22.07	25.1	21.4

Program Strengths

Evaluators identified the following key strengths of the Initiative:

- High-quality, experienced Turnaround/*Safe Schools* initiative staff, who were perceived by school leadership and staff as credible experts.
- A deep understanding of the dynamics of school change combined with the ability to respond to the differing developmental stages of each school. Turnaround/*Safe Schools* initiative staff provided a steady application of effort over time to achieve change.

- Implementation of effective structures and practices in schools. The problem-solving team structures and professional development helped schools more effectively address the needs of their high-need students and create a more stable, calmer school climate.
- The capacity to deliver focused professional development and coaching that were closely tailored to a school's individual needs.
- The development of attitudes and beliefs in school staff—positive morale—that “fertilized the soil”¹ and made schools more amenable to additional, sustainable change.
- The successful establishment of mental health services that integrated with schools for effective communication, referral, and follow-up. Despite many disciplinary and cultural barriers, the *Safe Schools* partners, led by Turnaround, worked through a multitude of issues to establish functioning mental health services in schools.
- A problem-solving approach and a willingness to use data and consultation for continuous quality and program improvement.

Turnaround's Current Quality Improvement Plan

Since the *Safe Schools* initiative, Turnaround's model has continued to evolve and is most fully reflected in the Study and Demonstration Project currently underway in six high-need Bronx schools (three elementary and three middle schools). Based on past learning, Turnaround has strengthened the levers for whole-school change, particularly the initial engagement and orientation training with school leaders and teachers and the intervention's reach into all classrooms to foster productive learning environments and instructional efficacy.

Turnaround has also adopted a more comprehensive quality improvement plan as part of the Study and Demonstration Project, to better track and improve project implementation and the efficacy of the model. Over time, as schools develop their own capacity to sustain the work independently, Turnaround helps transfer key metrics and evaluation tools (e.g., self-assessments and data collections forms and protocols) into the school culture.

Turnaround's quality improvement work is being conducted as an internal evaluation with the support of an outside consultant. The Quality Improvement Plan incorporates a pre/post design, tracking change over time in the cohort of six schools, with each school acting as its own control. Data collection and analysis tracks the implementation process as well as progress toward desired outcomes at the student, classroom and school levels, with qualitative and quantitative measures. As in the AIR evaluation, there is data that comes from public sources, but Turnaround is also developing additional methods that are more sensitive to its intervention, e.g. Student Progress Tracking Forms and Classroom Observation Checklists. To evaluate annual progress, Turnaround's plan will include year-end comparisons between our intervention schools and matched comparison schools in the district on trends in publicly available metrics (e.g. disciplinary incidents, attendance, test scores, New York City Report Card ratings, Learning Environment Surveys, and Quality Reviews). Matching will be done on the basis of factors such as student performance, eligibility for free and reduced price lunch, English Language Learners and race/ethnicity. In the longer-term, we will seek opportunities to engage in an experimental study with random assignment of schools to control and treatment conditions and to work with an outside evaluator to document the effects of the model as it has evolved.

¹Kendziora, xxi.