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*Strong Leadership Turning Around Low  
Performing Schools*

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# What are the problems we're trying to address?

(Charles Payne, *So Much Reform, So Little Change*)

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- Teachers offer unengaging instruction.
- The school is in chaos.
- Everyone has low expectations of everyone else.
- There is a culture of fear, a lack of trust and a lack of hope.
- All systems are broken

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## Traits of turnaround principals

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- Courage (#1)
- Intelligence
- Emotional intelligence
- Hope and enthusiasm
- Communication skills



# 10 Policy Levers for Turnaround Leadership

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1. Give turnaround jobs to experienced professionals
2. Require (and provide) intensive and extended training
3. Identify leaders with values, beliefs and courage
4. Reduce funding inequities
5. Give principals authority over personnel

## 10 Policy Levers Continued

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6. Improve overall quality of teachers
7. Give turnaround leaders authority to make big changes
8. Set expectations that are high but not impossible
9. Support leader as part of a team
10. Support turnaround for the long-term

## 1. Give turnaround jobs to experienced leaders

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- Experienced is best – why do we think this is a job for amateurs?
- Need greater professionalization, not less
- Malcolm Gladwell and the 10,000 hour rule
  - Bill Gates
  - Wayne Gretzky
  - The Beatles
- The “Quarterback Problem”

## 2. Require (and provide) intensive and extended training

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- 80/20 rule at GE, Eli Lilly, other top companies
- Current school leadership training is exact opposite
- These are specialists – they should have specialized training
  - VA Turnaround Specialists
  - LA Turnaround program
  - NYC Leadership Academy
  - Memphis's Executive Leadership Program
- Licensing implications

### 3. Identify leaders with values, beliefs and courage

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#### Haberman Beliefs Questionnaire

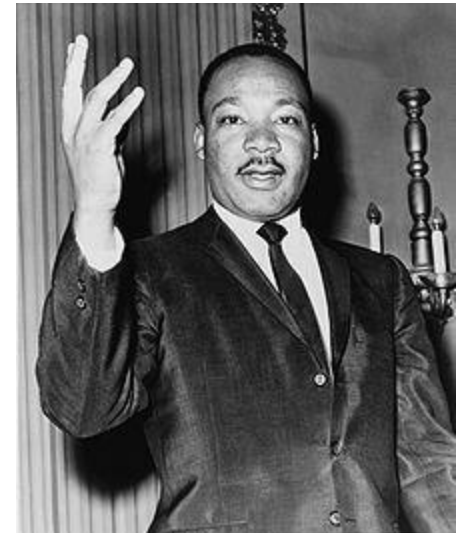
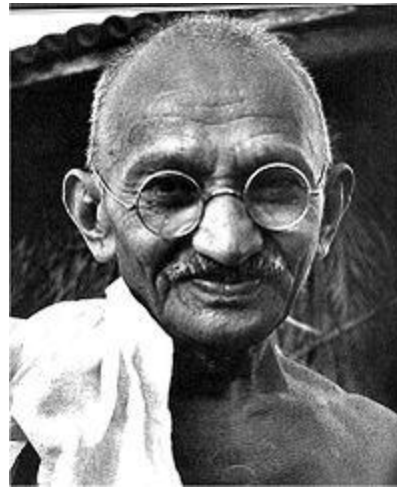
1. Sensitive to diversity / Insensitive to diversity
2. Creates a common vision / Fosters personal preferences
3. Develops positive working climate / Enforces rules
4. Instructional leader / Building manager
5. Data driven / Idiosyncratic
6. Product evaluation / Process evaluation
7. Personal accountability / Other's accountability
8. Responsible leader / Delegator
9. Expanded principal's role / Traditional principal's role
10. Bottom-up representative / Top-down representative
11. Parents with voice / Parents as helpers
12. Client advocate / Staff advocate
13. Problem-solver / Reactor

**Bottom Line: Will this person take ownership of the school?**



# Courage Comes From Convictions

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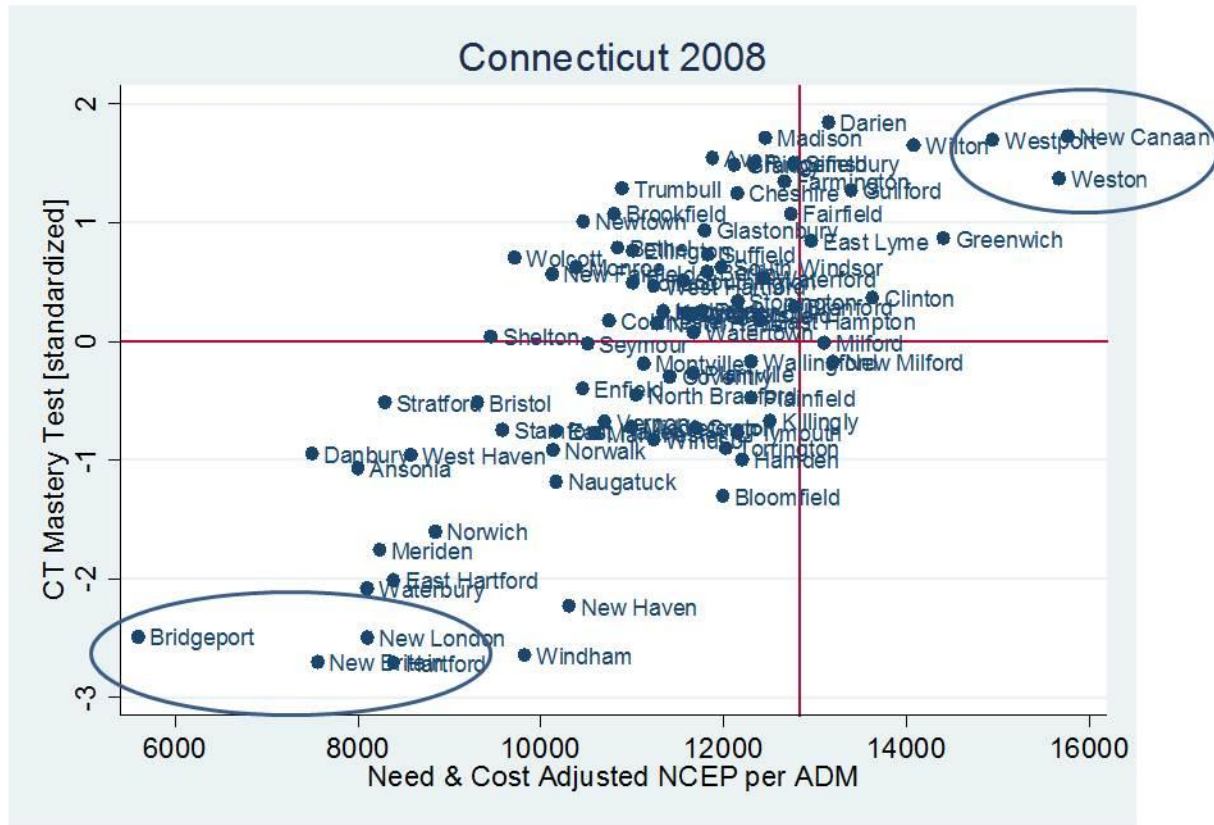


Turnaround principals must have very strong internal convictions that compel them to do the work

. . . they have to have the right belief systems

## 4. Reduce funding inequities

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Source: Bruce Baker, School Finance 101

## What inequities look like in IL districts

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### Illinois Districts

District	% Free or Reduced	% ELL	% Black or Hispanic	Nominal Current Expenditures per Pupil 2008	Average Salary 2009
Aurora East USD 131	64%	35%	93%	\$ 8,368	\$ 55,793
J S Morton HSD 201	69%	4%	88%	\$ 10,316	\$ 71,800
Barrington CUSD 220	13%	5%	14%	\$ 12,563	\$ 72,454
New Trier Twp HSD 203	2%	2%	3%	\$ 18,246	\$ 94,041

Source: Bruce Baker, School Finance 101

## 5. Give principals more authority over personnel decisions

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Findings from the *Three Essentials* study:

District level of support	Principals have authority over personnel decisions	Number of comments	Comments per respndnt.
<i>High</i>	8 of 10 80%	19	1.9
<i>Moderate</i>	4 of 9 44%	7	0.78
<i>Minimal</i>	6 of 16 38%	8	0.5

## 6. Improve overall quality of teachers

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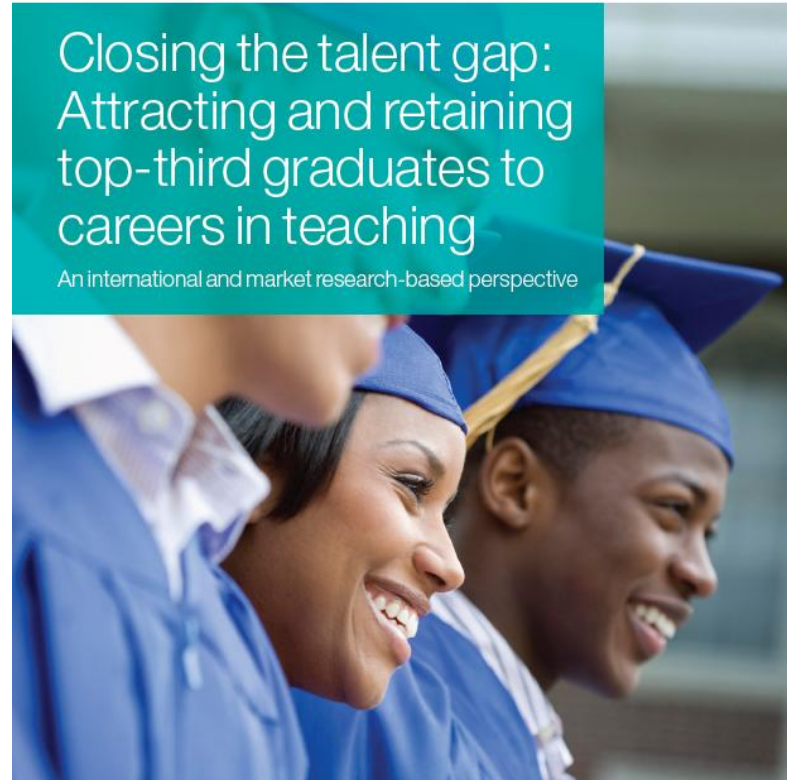
McKinsey&Company

- 100% of teachers in Singapore, S. Korea and Finland are from academic top third
- In US only 23% of teachers come from top third
- Only 14% of teachers in high poverty schools

Education

Closing the talent gap:  
Attracting and retaining  
top-third graduates to  
careers in teaching

An international and market research-based perspective



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## 7. Give turnaround leaders authority to make big changes

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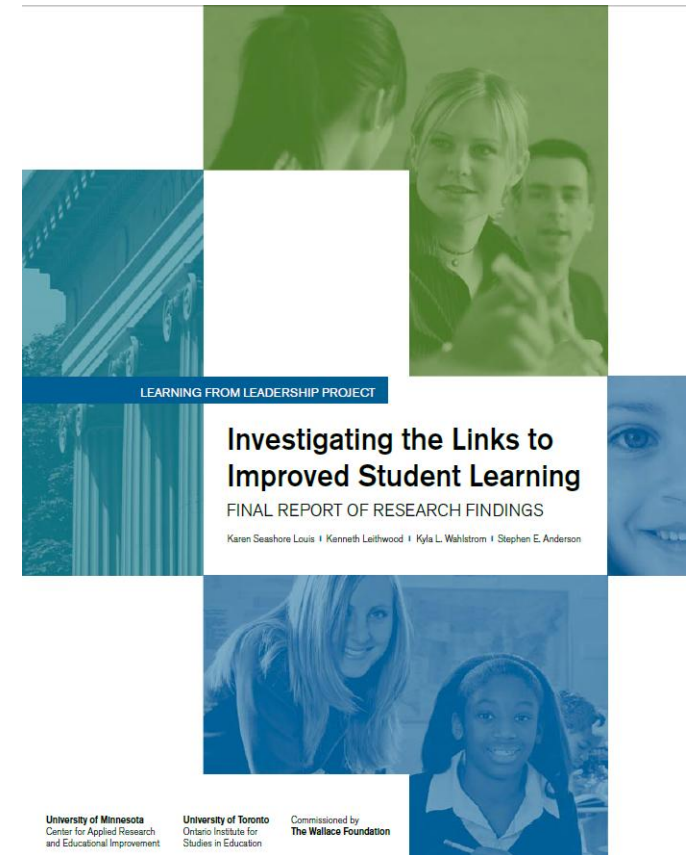


FDR and the 100 Days was about big changes, when small wouldn't do

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## 8. Set expectations that are high but not impossible

- Principals move schools by (1) consistently and clearly setting high expectations, and (2) holding adults accountable
- True change takes time
- Campbell's Law, and dangers of asking principals to do the impossible
- Clear goals for 45 days, 90 days, etc.
- Focus on 'how' as well as 'what'



## 9. Support leader as part of a team

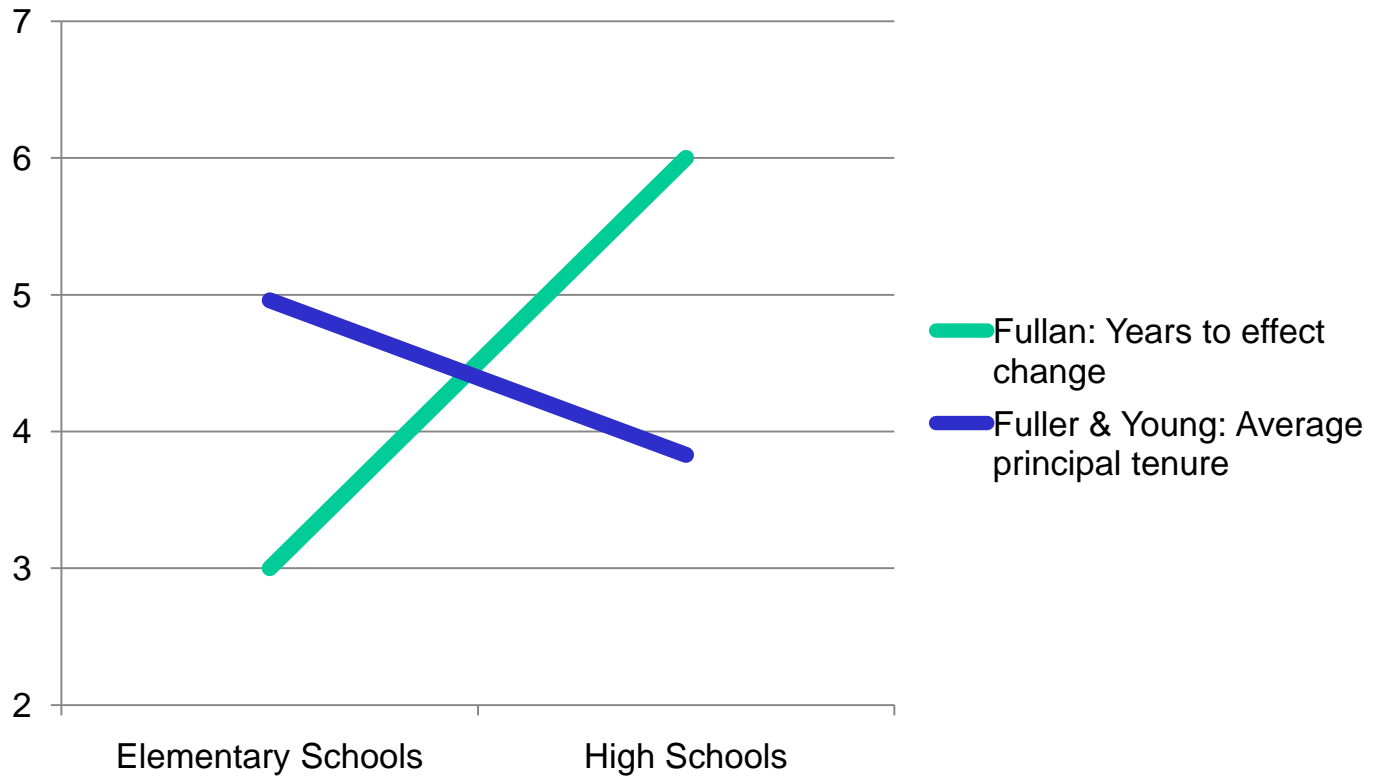
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- Train a team of 5-6 people
  - The principal
  - Assistant principals
  - 2-3 teacher leaders
  - Maybe a guidance counselor
- External 'shepherd(s)' – from district, state, university, non-profits
- Maybe a school administration manager?



# The Fullan-Fuller&Young Conundrum: Schools requiring the most time to change have shortest principal tenure

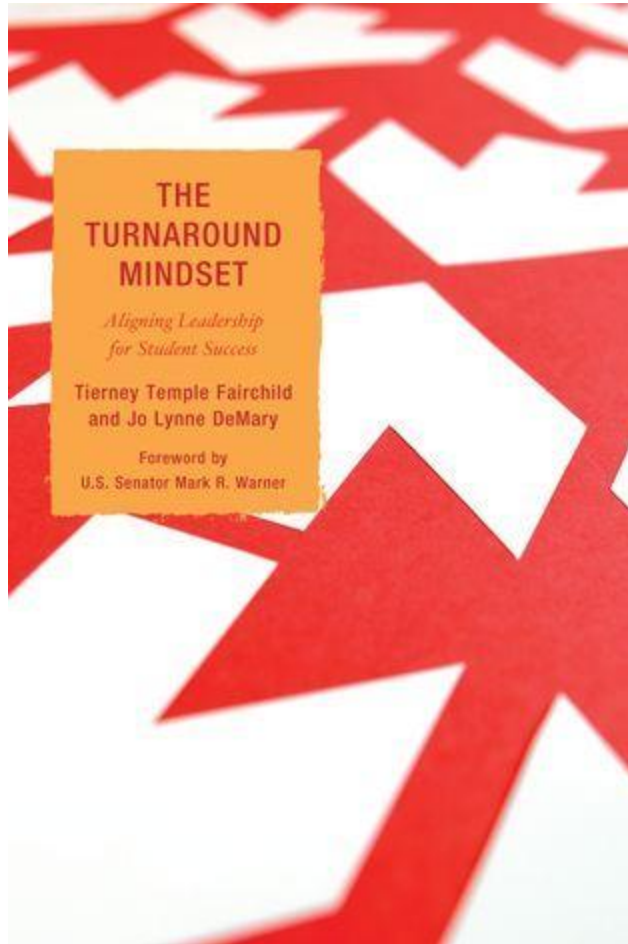
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## 10. Support turnaround for the long term

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- Planning for sustainability and succession
- Avoid 'yo-yo' by continuing treatment for school that has been 'sick'

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# For More Information

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