



## Partnership for Leaders in Education

*Darden School of Business  
Curry School of Education*

# UVA-STP DELIVERY MODEL

The University of Virginia School Turnaround Program (UVA-STP) is the only program in the country focused both on establishing system conditions ripe for change and building transformative leadership to achieve that change. Through three years of integrated work, we empower courageous system and school leaders to pursue what's possible and together rethink, reignite, redesign and ultimately transform their organizations.

## PLANNING YEAR: RETHINKING THE SYSTEM TO SET THE STAGE

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During the planning year, our team partners with district leadership to assess current capacity and practice and rethink how to design aspects of the system to enable turnaround. We believe transformative change is most effective when led from the district level and allows both top-down and bottom-up innovation. The UVA-STP focuses on building systemic capacity across four areas - leadership, instructional infrastructure, support & accountability, and talent management. Activities during planning the year are described below.

### **READINESS ASSESSMENT, IMPLEMENTATION PLAN & CONSULTATION**

During the readiness assessment, we analyze the district's current ability to engage in a sustainable turnaround initiative and provide preliminary recommendations for how the district (or alternative form of LEA or CMO) can address gaps in readiness and enhance its capacity. After the assessment, district leaders and UVA-STP representatives co-determine what commitments will be necessary for successful turnaround. If a mutual agreement to move forward is established, an implementation plan is developed detailing the agreed upon commitments. A UVA-STP representative will then consult with district leaders to help them set the stage for the initiative launch.

### **BEHAVIORAL EVENT INTERVIEWS: IDENTIFYING HIGH-IMPACT LEADERS**

Our team works with the system to recruit, interview and select high-impact leaders to lead the turnaround initiative. UVA-STP representatives support the district in implementing a rigorous competency-based selection process, the behavioral event interview, to identify school leaders uniquely qualified to lead effective school turnaround. This information used alongside the candidates' track record of performance informs both the placement and critical development needs of current and prospective leaders. This experience is adapted to meet the needs of system leaders and can include support with selecting the leader who will oversee the cluster of turnaround schools. Given the necessity of competent leadership in a turnaround setting, a principal candidate must meet a threshold score to be eligible to participate in the UVA-STP.

## **SPRING TURNAROUND LEADERSHIP BOOT CAMP**

This executive education experience brings together leaders from across the country seeking to launch bold turnaround initiatives. Boot Camp inspires district leadership to embolden their turnaround plan and rethink the support and accountability schools currently receive. The experience equips leaders with the knowledge to face some of the most challenging, yet rewarding work of their careers. Our team will also help leaders develop a strategy to redefine their relationship with schools and identify school-by-school needs, ensuring that each school's root-cause needs inform the turnaround plan.

## **SUMMER PROGRAMS: REIGNITE LEADERS TO CO-CREATE SUCCESS**

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Over two consecutive summers, residential executive development programs for the school leader(s) and district turnaround team will be held at the Darden School of Business. These immersive experiences focus on igniting change in organizations and leadership practice. During the 6-day program in Year 1, leadership teams work together to understand root cause needs, launch organization change efforts, learn how to better drive decisions with data, establish focused execution plans and create a learning organization that continuously adapts. It also serves to create honest conversations and build trusting relationships between the district turnaround leadership team and principals in order to create and sustain change in the targeted schools.



In Year 2, the program is held over three days. The focus during this time is further leveraging strengths to build on success, addressing gaps in implementation, utilizing innovation to promote change and reinvigorating change efforts to overcome resistance.

## **YEAR 1 & 2: REDESIGN AND TRANSFORM PRACTICE**

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With people and structures in place ready to inspire performance, we help system and school leaders execute a shared vision of success. We continuously expose leaders to data-driven and system redesign approaches to ignite a mind-shift in what is possible. All four semesters, each partner system and school develops context-based 90-Day Plans that enable teachers and students to succeed. As implementation deepens, the cluster of turnaround schools become a learning lab for what's possible as successful approaches are identified that can transform system-wide practice and inform further system redesign. To help leaders stay urgently on course, our team makes embedded visits, provides customized support and remains engaged throughout both years.

## **DISTRICT AND SCHOOL SITE VISITS**

Through on-site visits, we seek to empower change that cannot wait. The UVA-STP team owes it to our partners to hold them to commitments and brainstorm how to improve execution. Thus, a team will visit each school after each summer session and the first winter session to help each school assess progress on their turnaround plans and determine next steps. Our primary purpose is to collaborate with the school system and school leadership teams to assess progress, discuss opportunities to reinvigorate or adapt efforts and determine how our team or consultants can best support the effort. We seek to set a high bar to allow leaders to emerge while quieting naysayers.

## **WINTER RETREATS**

Two-to-three day executive education retreats will be held in January or February of each year. These sessions will include not only the district turnaround leadership team and the turnaround specialist principals, but also a 3-member school leadership team (per participating school). The focus for these retreats is strengthening teamwork, empowering change agents and making strategic mid-course corrections. Change is not formulaic and requires engaged leadership across each district and school solving their most critical challenges. Sessions will include turnaround specialist principals and school leadership teams from around the country, allowing for the exchange of ideas and promising practices.

## **CUSTOMIZE SUPPORT**

Following all executive education programs, each partner system and school develops context-based 90-Day Plans. To help leaders stay urgently on course, the UVA-STP team regularly connects with system leaders to provide feedback on action plans and brainstorm how to strengthen the initiative and overcome hurdles. As we collectively identify high leverage opportunities to embolden the initiative, the UVA-STP team will at least once per year directly provide customized, hands-on support tailored to the district's needs. Additionally, based on identified needs, our team will connect leaders to members of nation-wide network of successful turnaround practitioners.

## **SPRING RETREATS**

A local one-day strategic retreat will be held with the school system leaders and the turnaround principals each spring of the turnaround effort. These meetings will be facilitated by UVA-STP staff or faculty and in year one typically focuses on resource reallocation and coordination – covering topics that help energize summer planning. Our final retreat focuses on sustainability to help leaders determine lessons and practices that will drive continuous transformation.