EMPOWER schools
Context: Why the Third Way?

The Open System Model

The Work of Empower Schools

Evidence and Requirements for Success
Context: Why the Third Way?
The story of education in Massachusetts over the last 25 years sets an important stage for our story

1993 Law
- Funding
- Standards
- Principals
- Charters

2010 Law
- Turnaround
- In-district Charters
- Raised Cap
**Context: Why the Third Way?**

Despite all that we have learned, socio-economic status still determines student outcomes at the district level.

Note: Traditional districts refer to MA school districts, but does not include vocational or charter districts. Individual schools include both districts and charter schools. The total percent of students scoring advanced and proficient is indexed against the average proficiency for that school level to account for the differential proficiency levels across grade levels.

Every district in MA with >60% low income students underperforms the state average.
Context: Why the Third Way?
The conversations in education are too often all or nothing, with vehement positions of district vs. charter...

- Scale
- Local buy-in and control

- Innovation
- Flexibility and autonomy
- Proof points

Traditional Districts

- Bureaucracy
- Lack of innovation
- Centralized control

Charter Schools

- Lack of scale
- No guarantees
- Political limitations (cap & public opinion)
Context: Why the Third Way?
And similar debates involve the right actor for change of state vs. local

+ Successful authorizers
  - Strong accountability

- States
  - Not in the business of running schools
  - Scorched earth of takeovers

- Local School Boards
  - Lack of training / skill
  - Political winds
  - Bureaucracy

Local voice
Manageable focus
Context: Why the Third Way?
Empower Schools seeks to build the third way

Traditional Districts
- Scale
- Local buy-in and control

Charter Schools
- Innovation
- Flexibility and autonomy
- Demonstrated results

States
- Successful authorizers
- Strong accountability

Local School Boards
- Local voice
- Manageable focus
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Evidence and Requirements for Success
The Open System Model
The Open System model is based on the premise of empowering individual schools as the unit of success...

Empowered schools have the ability to make school-level decisions utilizing the key levers of success:

- people
- time
- resources
- data
- curriculum
- culture
The Open System Model
The Open System enables empowered schools

Individual Empowered Schools

Level Playing Field

School-based freedoms

Accountability for results

District-level conditions

- Fair and flexible labor contract
- Streamlined central office services
- Menu of proven and promising partners
- Strong environment for nonprofit school operators
The Open System Model
Empowered Schools are judged not by their individual governance structure but rather by their ability to produce dramatic results for their students.

Open Systems of Empowered Schools

- Traditional district schools
- Charter school
- Operator-run school
- Traditional schools with new leadership

Ecosystem of Adaptive Supports

- Talent
- Data
- Time
- Community Engagement
- Operators
- Innovation
The Open System Model
Open Systems are applicable to whole districts or designated schools
The Open System Model
The five keys

1. Schools as the unit of success
2. Empowering schools
3. District conditions
4. Agnostic on governance
5. District-wide or Zones
Context: Why the Third Way?

The Open System Model

The Work of Empower Schools

Evidence and Requirements for Success
The Work of Empower Schools
Empower has developed four key areas of expertise that enable the work

Regulatory Art & Science

Persuasion

Strategic Partnerships

Change Management
The Work of Empower Schools
Regulatory Art & Science

Key Characteristics of Empowerment Zones

- Joint Governance
- Formal agreement
- New contract (CBA)
- Voluntary

Binding agreement between Springfield & the state to create independence
Thin contract with SEA allows for fair and flexible agreement

Springfield Public Schools
MOU

Board: 4 state, 3 local

Springfield Education Association (Union)
CBA

School board voted 6-1

92% of teachers ratified new agreement
The Work of Empower Schools
Persuasion
The Work of Empower Schools
Strategic Partnerships

Talent and Leadership

School Design and Supports

Nonprofit Operators

Community Engagement
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Change Management

1. Rejuvenate Existing Talent
2. Attract New Talent
3. Ensure Strong Leadership

Raise Expectations
Restructure Systems
Context: Why the Third Way?

The Open System Model

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Evidence and Requirements for Success
Evidence and Requirements for Success
The Lawrence proof point

Lawrence School Performance, Number of Schools Meeting SGP Goal of 50 in Math and ELA, Grades K-8

- 2012:
  - ELA: 12
  - Math: 11

- 2013:
  - ELA: 14
  - Math: 16
  - 14% ELA, 4% Math

- 2014:
  - ELA: 9
  - Math: 15
  - 12% ELA, 6% Math

- SGP >50:
  - ELA: 12
  - Math: 15

- SGP <50:
  - ELA: 6
  - Math: 14
Evidence and Requirements for Success
The Lawrence proof point

Common elements across different schools:
- Clear vision and plan designed by educators
- Expanded learning time and flexibility within the schedule
- Focus on student data to drive all decisions
- School autonomy to meaningfully support students
- Skillful leadership and talent

Traditional district school
New Level 1 school
57 ELA SGP
73 Math SGP

Contract school
Met PPI targets and improved percentile ranking 9 points
64 ELA SGP
65 Math SGP

Note: Bentley Elementary’s turnaround happened in two stages over two years. In year one, Bentley was a contract school with Blueprint Schools. In year two it will be a Horace Mann Charter
Evidence and Requirements for Success
Essential elements

1. State catalyst
2. Local champion(s)
3. True school-level autonomy
4. Novel governance structure
5. Partners