

OPENING THE GATES OF POSSIBILITY

Flexible Solutions for Dramatic School Transformation

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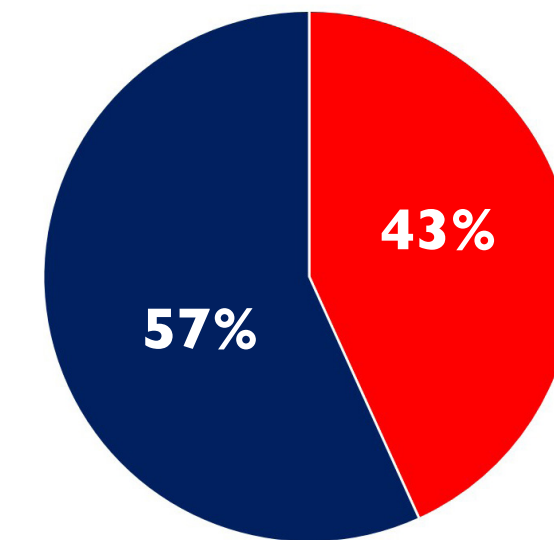
PROBLEM

In Massachusetts, too many schools are in danger of failing due to a scarcity of vital supports. Currently, only schools designated Level 4 or 5 are eligible to make changes and access resources for dramatic transformation. However, almost half of Level 3 schools perform as poorly as Level 4 and 5 schools—43% of Level 3 schools are in the bottom tenth percentile and many have not shown substantial improvement. Without access to the same resources and flexibilities, Level 3 schools are on a trajectory to fail their students.

MA SCHOOLS DESIGNATED AT LEVEL 3, 4, OR 5 IN 2015



Level 3 School Percentiles



■ 10th Percentile and Below
■ 11th Percentile and Above

In 2015, 121 or 43% of the 280 schools labeled Level 3 are in the 10th percentile or lower and many have not shown substantial improvement.

VISION

MIE envisions a system, in accordance with state and federal law, that broadens the eligibility criteria for schools to collectively bargain, extends school improvement plan time, and allows schools and districts to pool resources and money into zones. Under this vision, chronically underperforming schools are given the flexibilities and supports they need for sustained improvement before failing, disrupting the pipeline to chronic underperformance and allowing all students to have access to a high-quality education.

CURRENT SYSTEM

Current MA law (M.G.L. c. 69 s. 1J) states no more than 4% of the total number of public schools may be designated as chronically underperforming, or Level 4 or 5.



Only level 4 and 5 schools in MA currently have the opportunity to collectively bargain or change district policy, curriculum and instruction, school and district budgeting, use of time, professional development and management of staff.



Under ESSA, School Improvement Grants (SIG), which were allocated to individual schools, have been eliminated and states will now use Title I set aside to support underperforming schools.



Under current MA state law, schools that are designated chronically underperforming are required to develop a 3-year school improvement plan.



PROPOSED APPROACH

In accordance with federal law and leveraging ESSA's additional resources, Level 4 and 5 designations will be **broadened from 4% to 7%** of schools, prioritizing the lowest 10th percentile and taking into account schools' 3-year trajectory.

Level 3 schools in the 7% will also have the **option to collectively bargain the flexibilities and autonomies** (including labor management MOUs for funding eligibilities); this will not be state mandated but may be incentivized.

Using new Title I set aside guidelines, districts will have the option to **pool resources and money into networked zones of schools** rather than single-school applications.

Level 3 schools in the 7% would develop a **5-year school improvement plan** with a state review in year 3 to review the school's progress and assess the school's capacity for continuous improvement.