“The Death Spiral”

Identifying Early Indicators of Distress in Charter Schools

An Intimate Discussion with Authorizers

Virtual | Zoom

charterschoolcenter.ed.gov
Icebreaker

Please share in the chat your name, organization and your go-to quote, motto, or mantra you always turn to when you meet challenging times.

"Insert Inspiration Here."
Norms for Today’s Call

• Update your name to your full name and organization.
• Mute yourself when not speaking.
• Show your video to enhance dialogue and interaction.
• Be open to other opinions and courteous to your peers.
About the NCSRC

The National Charter School Resource Center (NCSRC) provides technical assistance to federal grantees and resources supporting charter sector stakeholders. NCSRC is funded by the U.S. Department of Education (ED) and managed by Manhattan Strategy Group (MSG) in partnership with WestEd.
On the Webinar Today

Aimee Evan
National Charter School Resource Center

Laura Groth, Ed.D.
National Charter School Resource Center

Hannah Sullivan
National Charter School Resource Center

Tess Stovall
Tennessee State Board of Education

Jamie Garwood, Ph.D.
Ball State University

John Carwell
Delaware Department of Education
Today’s Big Question

How can we identify schools that are falling off-track and help get them back on-track?
### Session Objectives

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<th>Learn</th>
<th>Incorporate</th>
<th>Understand</th>
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<td>Learn from your peers about how they use the data they are already collecting to identify struggling schools prior to failure.</td>
<td>Incorporate indicators of distress in your monitoring and support of schools.</td>
<td>Understand the potential role of an early warning system (EWS) approach to identify schools in distress early in the school failure trajectory.</td>
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Agenda

1. Why should authorizers be aware of indicators of distress?
2. What are indicators of distress?
3. How can indicators of distress be used to get schools back on track to success?
4. How are authorizers using indicators of distress?
Why should authorizers be aware of indicators of distress?
Early Warning Systems and Death Spiral

**Early Warning Systems:**
- Review past events in broad context to identify potential characteristics of distress
- Review past events in one's own context against characteristics
- Apply characteristics to current events in one's own context to predict potential future events

**Death Spiral:**
- Identify organizational decline
- Define the stages of decline to determine when and how intervention(s) needs to occur

Used together: Indicators can help identify schools in distress and determine type of intervention(s) necessary prior to school failure and negative impact on students.
What types of indicators come to mind when thinking of schools in distress?
What are indicators of distress?
Indicators of Distress

Data signaling that a school's performance is declining in a number of areas.

Leadership
Governing Board
Operations
Finance
Talent
Culture
Instruction
Finding: Authorizers tend to focus on indicators at the upper layer of the stratosphere of a school's functions.

Authorizers identify indicators of distress related to school leadership, school governing boards, and operational/financial elements, which may reflect additional areas of concern in areas of talent, culture, and instruction.
Stratosphere

Above the Stratosphere: Aligned with Authorizers’ Purview
- Leadership
- Governing Board
- Operations/Finance

Below the Stratosphere: Beyond Authorizers’ Perspective
- Talent
- Culture
- Instruction
Leadership and Governance

- Lack of systemic leadership development
- Inadequate board capacity to govern
- Inability to sustain leadership
- Mismatched leadership competencies to context
- Boards’ inability to hold school leaders accountable
- Boards’ deteriorating relationship with authorizers
- Inability to convene the board
- Lack of leadership
Operations and Finance

- Breakdown in compliance and reporting functions
- Failure to align to market needs
- Failure to properly manage finances
- Misappropriation of funds
How can indicators of distress be used to get schools back on track to success?
Finding: The context of authorizing has continued to evolve as the field matures, especially as it relates to school improvement.
How are authorizers using indicators of distress?

Panel Discussion
Our Panelists

**Delaware Department of Education**

- SEA, 20 Charter Schools

**Ball State University**

- Indiana, HEI, 24 Charter Schools

**Tennessee State Board of Education**

- SEA, 3 Charter Schools
Guiding questions

1. Where do you see the role of authorizers heading with respect to schools in distress prior to formal renewals?

2. What is the role of authorizers in determining equitable outcomes for all students?

3. Should authorizers push to capture further data “below the stratosphere” and pertaining to talent, culture, and/or instruction?
Applying the Indicators of Distress

Breakout Room Discussion
DISCLAIMER

The following caselets are fictional and do not depict any actual persons or events. Any resemblance to actual people, schools, or scenarios, is purely coincidental.
What are the issues you see at this school?

How could you collect information to learn about these issues?

How detrimental are these issues to the health of this school?

If this school was under your authorization, what would you do?
What’s Next?

- Report Release
- Webinar on Sept 23
- Workshop for CMOs and Independent Charter Schools in late October
- Additional Tools
- Further Research
Resources to Assist with Sustaining High-Quality Charter Schools

SMART Objectives Toolkit

Four Domains for Significant and Sustainable Charter School Improvement
A Systems Framework for the Charter Context

By Dawn Evans and Steve Cassmore

Supporting Significant and Sustainable Charter Improvement:
A Systems Framework

February 25, 2020

National Charter School Resource Center
Four Domains for Significant and Sustainable Improvement
Washington, DC

February 25, 2020
Recently Posted to NCSRC Website

SE Grantee Profiles and Webinar


CMO Grantee Profiles and Webinar


How are State Entities Improving Authorizing? Webinar

Keep an Eye Out for Upcoming NCSRC Virtual Events & Resources

• *Identifying Indicators of Distress in Charter Schools*
• English Learners and Charter Schools: A Learning Experience Focused on EL Instruction
• Leading in the Unknown Self-Guided Master Class
How can you contact us?

charterschoolcenter.ed.gov

contact-us@charterschoolcenter.org
Response requested, please!

Please respond to the survey to let us know how we did on this event.
THANK YOU!