

 **AUDIO**
3:45 min

[Full Details and Transcript](#)



Supporting School Turnaround

MacArthur Elementary School, Minnesota
January 2014

Topic **TURNING AROUND CHRONICALLY LOW-PERFORMING SCHOOLS**

Highlights

- » The Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) has three regional Centers of Excellence, which comprise their statewide system of support.
- » MDE facilitates relationships between the Centers and individual schools. An advocate from the Northern Center provides support to Laura MacArthur.
- » The regional Centers have teams made up of specialists in math, reading, English learners, special education, and implementation science.
- » MDE provides guidance for the Centers in how to help and coach principals.
- » MDE and the Centers provide professional development, training, and coaching to make sure schools receive the support they need.

About the Site **MacArthur Elementary School Duluth, Minnesota**

Demographics

(Source: NCES Common Core of Data, 2011-12)

- » Grades PreK–5
- » 466 students

- » 77% White
- » 9% Multiracial
- » 6% American Indian/Alaska Native
- » 5% Black
- » 2% Hispanic
- » 1% Asian/Pacific Islander
- » 79% Free or Reduced-Price Lunch
- » Schoolwide Title I

- » The Minnesota Department of Education identified Laura MacArthur Elementary School as a Priority school in 2012, demonstrating performance in the lowest 5 percent in the state.
- » The school applied for and received a School Improvement Grant (SIG) in September 2012.
- » The principal and the Leadership Team worked together to identify areas of weakness and form a plan for instructional changes in the following areas:
 - Differentiated instruction in math
 - Small-group instruction in reading
- » The school received support from the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) as well as a regional center called the Northern Center of Excellence.

Full Transcript



 **00:04** My name is Betsy Ziemer, and I work at the Minnesota Department of Education in the Division of School Support. My role in the division is to supervise the School Improvement Grants and the Statewide System of Support, Regional Centers of Excellence.

 **00:20** My name is Becky Smith. I am a school advocate for four Priority and Focus Schools in Northern Minnesota. I work for the Northern Center of Excellence, which is a partnership with the Minnesota Department of Ed. for School Improvement.

- Betsy Ziemer**  **00:37** When we developed the concept of the centers, which was in the 11–12 school year, that was the opportunity to build teams of staff that had specialties. So the centers were developed with a director, and with that director was a team of specialists in reading, math, English learners, special ed., and implementation science.
- Becky Smith**  **01:01** Our job is to work with the school, mainly the building principal and the leadership team, to help them with improvements and to guide them through the whole process that is directed through the Department of Ed. Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) works with us, partners with us, in assisting these schools. We as school advocates are down here for training probably at least four times a year, and we have continued to work quite closely with them through this whole process. They have created documents that schools need to be recording their work on, they guide us in how to help the schools do this, and they also give us some specific directives, but some of it is left up to us and our expertise as school advocates in how to guide the school and how to coach them.
- Betsy Ziemer**  **01:56** My role with the center is to supervise the program, and so I keep in contact with not only the directors, but the advocates. In addition, the advocates come down to the Minnesota Department of Education quarterly for professional development, so we can find out from them what specific needs are that they have with their schools. And we also make trips up to each of the centers periodically to attend their meetings or leadership training that they have in their region.
- Becky Smith**  **02:27** Each of our team members is assigned either three or four schools. The reading, math, and special ed. specialists all have their individual responsibilities with those contents. They try to answer and help the schools in specific ways. An example would be that the school I work with, Laura MacArthur, wanted to do a co-teaching model between special education and the classroom. So our special education specialists came in and worked with those two teachers on how to develop this co-teaching model.

Betsy Ziemer  03:05 No matter what your approach is, the relationships that we're building with our schools have been key. There has been a real effort to establish relationships with these schools and get in there and stand beside them as they're doing the work. And so that idea of partnership has been really important to us. And not just being a monitor but letting them know that continuous improvement and the achievement of those children is really at the heart of all of the work that we do.

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