



Principals In Action

**Donna Ross, Westside Elementary School
Helena, AR**

Background

West Side Elementary School in Helena/West Helena, Arkansas is a K-6 school with 465 students. 83% of those students come from economically disadvantaged homes. The student body is 97% African-American and 3% White. West Side Elementary's scores on state tests were showing improvement year by year, but were still consistently low with just 49% of fourth graders meeting standard in reading and 16% meeting standard in math in 2004.

Donna Ross, principal of West Side Elementary, was taking many steps to improve her school. She was aligning the curriculum, visiting classrooms every day, and setting goals for certain student groups. She was going in the right direction, but continued to fall short of reaching her goals. She knew she needed an extra push to help her improve her beleaguered school, and she knew she needed it quickly. She called on School Turnaround.

In Donna's Own Words

I am really excited about School Turnaround. I have learned some new things and I have learned about some things that I can do better. For example, I have learned to look at a certain target of students. We were actually looking at all of the students. We were looking at the students at the top and how we could move them. But now we are looking at students in the middle and towards the bottom to see what we can do for them.

The hardest part is those people who say they want to support the program and that they really want their students to do well, but they are the ones that hold us back. I have learned to go in and be a catalyst and try to get them started. I've got to set a fire under them and keep it going. I need to lay out the test scores on the table and show them that this is where you were two years ago, this is where you were last year and get them to tell me what can we do differently than to try and move the students in a forward direction.

School Turnaround is the best professional development program you can find in the country!