



Dr. Cantor said she first deals with the most disruptive children, the small percentage who "are capable of taking a school filled with vulnerable children and sending it completely off-track."

The school must agree to hire a full-time social worker who is trained and supervised by Turnaround. A team is created to help the most challenging students.

In the Bronx, there are slightly more than 6,000 mental-health slots at clinics for an estimated 80,000 poor children who need them, Dr. Cantor said.

The social worker cuts through wait lists at clinics. In some cases, Turnaround has contracts to speed along services.

But Turnaround also trains educators to handle behavior issues and teach children who are often two to four years behind grade level and dealing with stressful home lives.

It costs about \$500 per child a year to implement Turnaround's model in a high-poverty school, or about \$200,000 per school annually.

Dr. Cantor said that through 2009, elementary schools that worked with Turnaround saw math proficiency increase to 82% from 49%, while English proficiency grew to 57% from 47%. There is no longer-term data available to show whether the improvements stick once the group leaves. though Dr. Cantor said there is anecdotal evidence from a number of schools that the trends persist.

David Osher, vice president at the American Institutes for Research, studies how children learn under different conditions. He said Turnaround has a successful approach.

Efforts that focus strictly on teacher training or curriculum but don't deal with children's underlying emotional needs tend to fail, he said. Because of that narrow focus on the classroom, "we are realizing poor results in turning failing schools around," he said.

This year, Turnaround will move into New Jersey and Washington, D.C. The group's budget is \$11 million, and most of the funds come from donors.

Today, at P.S. 85, student work once again adorns the hallways. Teachers had stopped putting them up a few years ago because kids ripped them down. Only 54 children were suspended this school year, compared with 123 in the 2008-09 school year.

Test scores have also increased. English proficiency scores went to 49% from 36% in one year, while math rose to 75% from 65%. A bigger test will come next year, when Turnaround is scheduled to leave, and Mr. Husted must continue the progress on his own.