The state of Nebraska is planning to take a more active role in turning around its lowest-performing schools. Under LB 438, the state will designate three “priority schools” based on poor performance in areas such as student graduation rates and test scores. Nebraska’s education commissioner will then establish five-member intervention teams for each of these schools. Each team will submit plans to the Nebraska Board of Education on how to improve performance and to measure progress. A local school district must follow these plans or risk losing accreditation.

According to Students First (the group led by Michelle Rhee, former head of Washington, D.C.’s school system), Nebraska had been one of four Midwestern states without laws allowing for intervention in low-performing schools.

On the flip side, Illinois, Indiana and Michigan are listed as having some of the broadest intervention authority in the nation. Illinois and Indiana, for example, have given the mayors of Chicago and Indianapolis control of their local schools. Independent authorities or special management teams (appointed or assigned by the state) can also take over operations of low-achieving schools. Michigan legislators, meanwhile, have created a state-run school district to operate struggling schools in Detroit.