

# **Developing and Implementing Quality District Strategic and School Renewal Plans**

**SCDE Regional Training  
Innovation & Support Team  
February 11, 2025**

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# Agenda

1. Review Strategic Planning Definition & Overview
2. Present Fundamental School Improvement Strategies
3. Share Common Challenges of Strategic Planning Process
4. Discuss The Leaders Role in the Strategic Planning Process
5. Demonstrate the Power of Collaboration



# School Improvement Model

- School improvement must be viewed as an organizational **strategy**, rather than an exercise in compliance.
- Improvement cycle gives districts a template for focused and intentional actions that lead to continuous improvement.



South Carolina School Improvement Model



# Strategic Plan

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## Formal Definition

- A **dynamic** process that formalizes and communicates the school district's mission, vision, values, goals, and objectives, and the **actions** needed to achieve those goals and objectives.



# **Quality Strategic Planning: *Essential Elements***

- **Needs Assessment**
- **Differentiated Interventions**
- **Focused Improvement**



# Quality Strategic Planning: *Essential Elements*

- **Structure/Strategy** - Strategy sets the direction and focus, elaborates plans and the environment for educators to understand the organization's goals.
- An organization must be able to efficiently execute that strategy to achieve its performance improvement goals.



# Quality Strategic Planning: *Essential Elements*

## Culture

- Building and sustaining an organizational **culture** that facilitates and accelerates change (Collaboration & Distributive Leadership) - **Relationships!**

"If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together." African Proverb

- Fostering a sense of personal **accountability** for strategy execution and ownership at every level (High Expectations) - **People will only follow you as deeply as they trust you.**

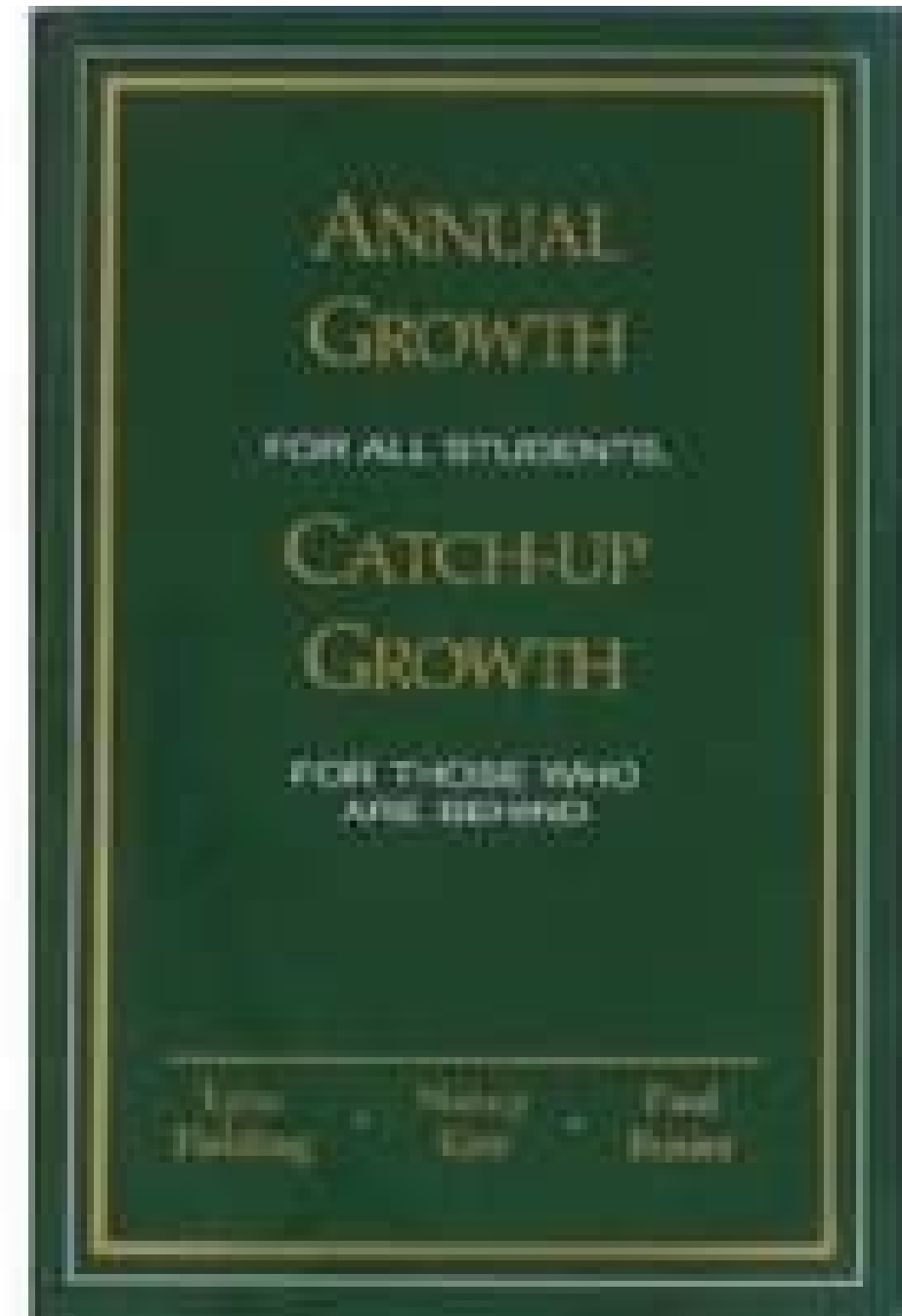
*"Do not expect changes in student outcomes before you have changes in adult practices."*



# Annual Growth...Catch Up Growth

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- Kennewick School district  
(15,000 students)  
established a 90% 3rd grade  
reading goal, moving from  
57% of students at standard  
in 1996 to 89.6% in 2006  
and 89.3% in 2007.





# Quality Strategic Planning: *Essential Elements*

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- Effective school improvement planning models emphasize comprehensive needs assessments, strategic prioritization of needs, and data-driven decision-making through ongoing monitoring.



***Transformations do not take place until the culture of the school permits it.***

# District Strategic and School Renewal Plans

## Statutory and Regulatory Requirements

- All districts and schools are required to have a District Strategic Plan/School Renewal Plan
- The plans are on a five-year cycle with annual updates
- Submissions are due by April 30<sup>th</sup> each year
- Purpose of the Plans is to coordinate and align improvement initiatives

<https://www.ed.sc.gov/districts-schools/state-accountability/district-strategic-and-school-renewal-plans/>



# **District Strategic and School Renewal Plan Components**

- ✓ Assurances
- ✓ Stakeholder Involvement
- ✓ Comprehensive Needs Assessment
- ✓ Needs Assessment Executive Summary
- ✓ Performance Goals
- ✓ Interim Performance Goals
- ✓ Strategies and Action Plans
- ✓ Evaluation of the Strategies



# District Strategic and School Renewal Plans

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## Performance Goals

### DISTRICT

- Each district must complete at least one goal for
  - Student Achievement
  - Teacher/Administrator Quality
  - School Climate
  - Gifted and Talented

### SCHOOLS

- Each school must complete at least one goal for
  - Student Achievement
  - Teacher/Administrator Quality
  - School Climate





# School Improvement Model- Diagnose

**Diagnose**-Consult many sources to help determine the critical needs in the district's current operations.

- Plan and prepare for the process
- Collect and analyze data
- Use Needs Assessment Rubric to identify needs
- Prioritize the most strategic and overarching challenges
- Conduct a root cause analysis



# **Diagnose: Comprehensive Needs Assessment**

A needs assessment:

- Requires an inclusive team approach
- Requires gathering and analyzing data
- Informs identification of primary needs, root causes, need statements and desired outcomes

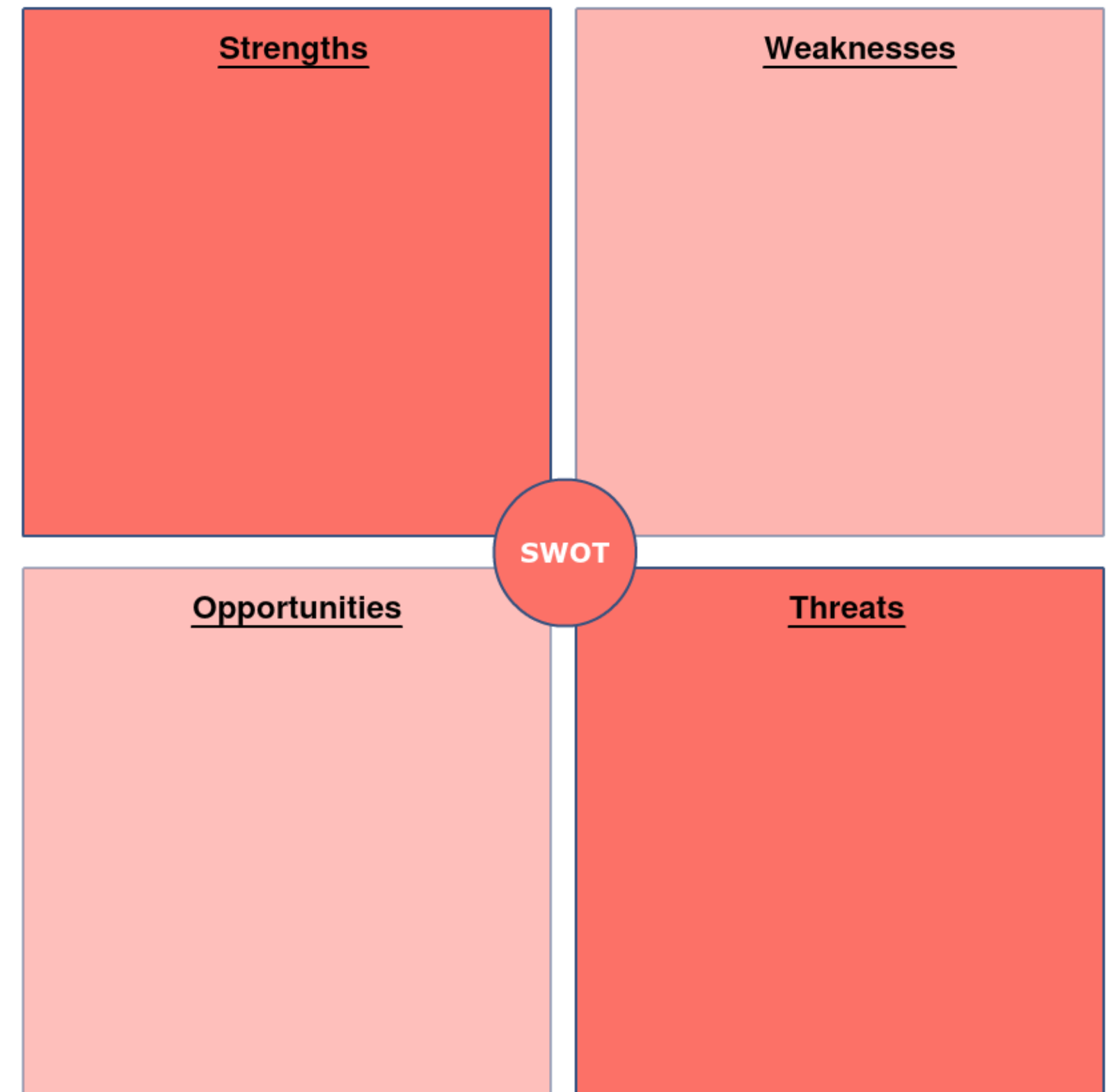


# SWOT Analysis

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**SWOT** analysis is a technique for assessing aspects of your organization.

- What challenges arose during the past school year/s that have not yet been resolved?
- What challenges do we expect might arise during 2025-2026?
- What processes and programs are helping us innovate and transform?
- How can we leverage these opportunities?
- Who are the people who have stepped up to the challenges?



# Reflective Questions

**Stakeholders will use these questions to drive discussions and use consensus to determine the current reality:**

## **Our district....**

- Engages and supports all schools in systematic processes for curriculum design to align instruction and assessments with the required standards.
- Guides, supports, and evaluates the implementation of curriculum, instruction, and assessments
- Uses a collaborative, data-driven planning process at the district and school levels for improving student learning.
- Ensures that professional learning is relevant and addresses adult and student needs
- Fosters, within the district and broader community, a culture of trust, collaboration, and joint responsibility for improving learning and teaching.





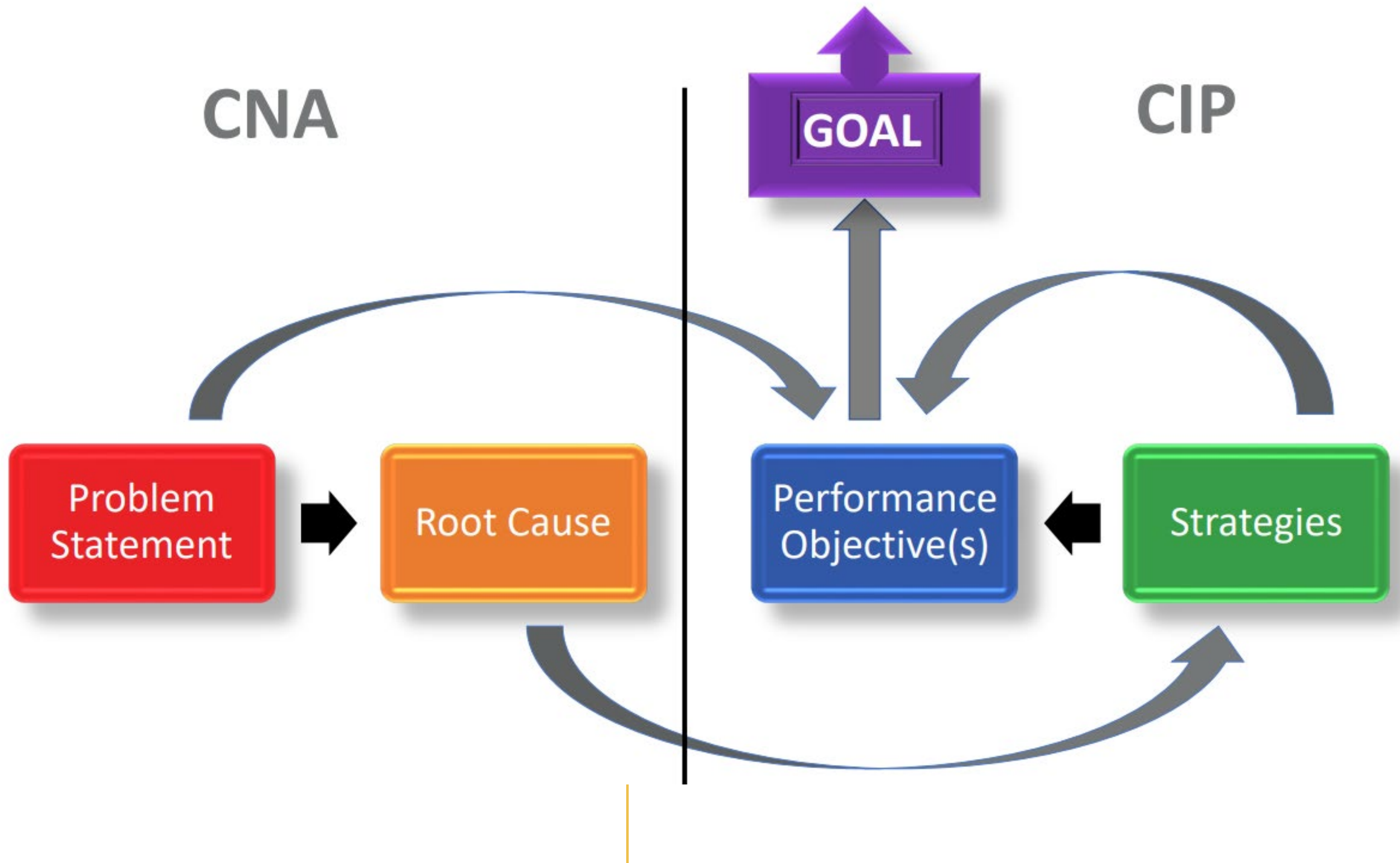
# Diagnose: Examine Educational Factors

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The data analysis should include educational factors that matter for student learning:

- Aligned Curriculum & Assessments
- Effective Instruction
- Quality of Leadership
- Supports for Students and Teachers
- A Safe and Positive Climate
- Family and Community Engagement
- Equitable Access to Resources





# Problem Statement - A Fact Backed Up by Data

- Clearly defines the problem that arises out of the data analysis.
- Describes the unfavorable condition that prevents the goal or objective from being achieved.

*The problem statement answers:*

- Who does it impact?
- What program, grade level or subject does it involve?
- Where is it occurring?
- When is it occurring?



# Problem Statement Quality Check

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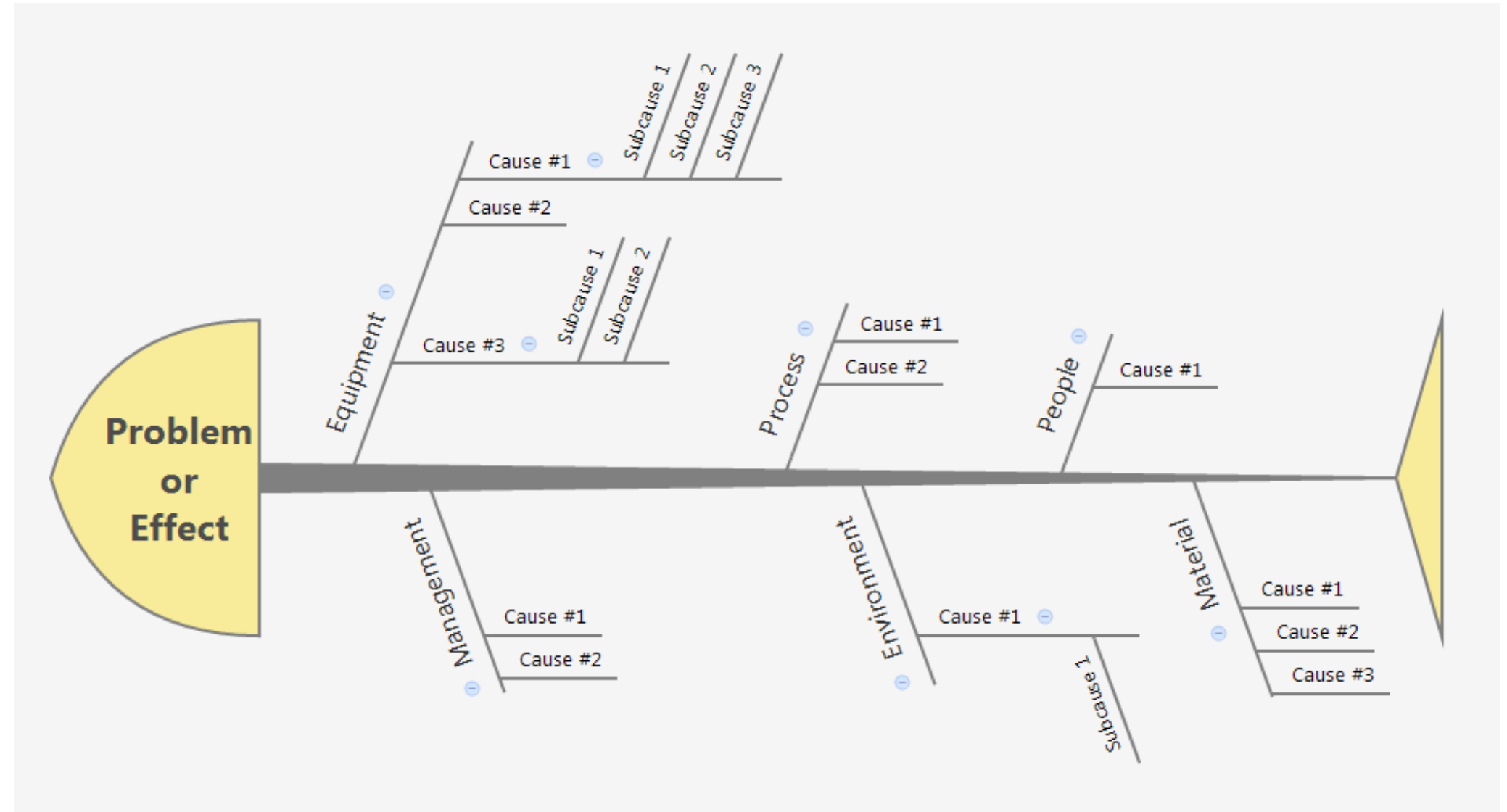
- With a quality problem statement, you can answer “yes” to these:
- Does it focus on only one issue?
- Is it verified by facts?
- Does it provide context?
- Does it avoid a cause or solution?
- Does it contain clear, jargon-free language?
- Does it avoid personal feelings or opinions?
- Does it include specific details (who, what, when, where)?





# Diagnose: Root Cause Analysis

Root cause analysis is a structured team process. It allows the use of a strategic method to dig down into the primary need and determine causes and contributing factors. At the end of the root cause analysis, the major cause is discovered and what needs to happen to remove the problem is determined. This is time to discuss causes, not solutions.



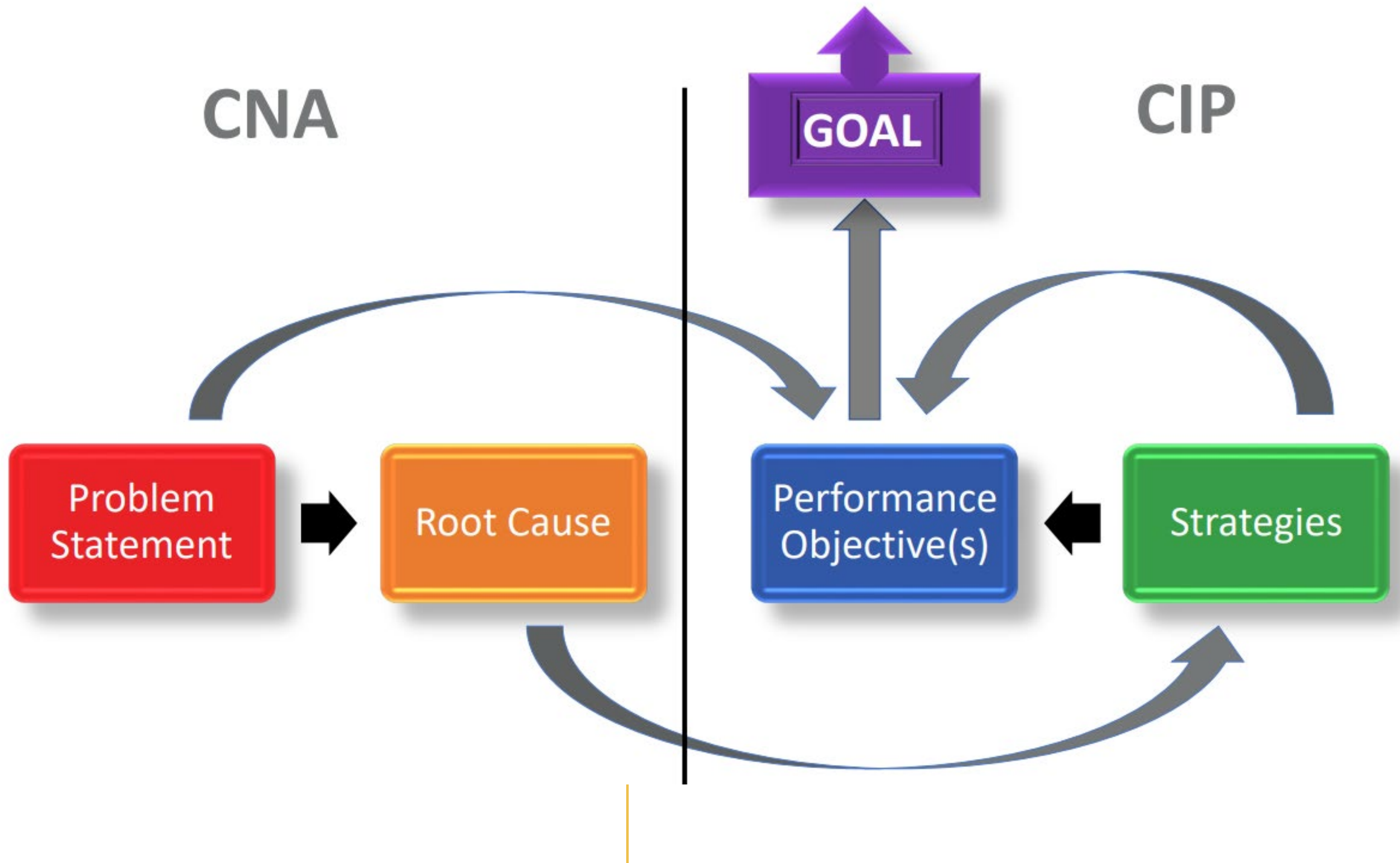
# A primary reason for our lack of success is...

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...our addiction to excess!



The result of your needs assessment must be a focused plan that allows you to prioritize on a limited number of strategic goals.

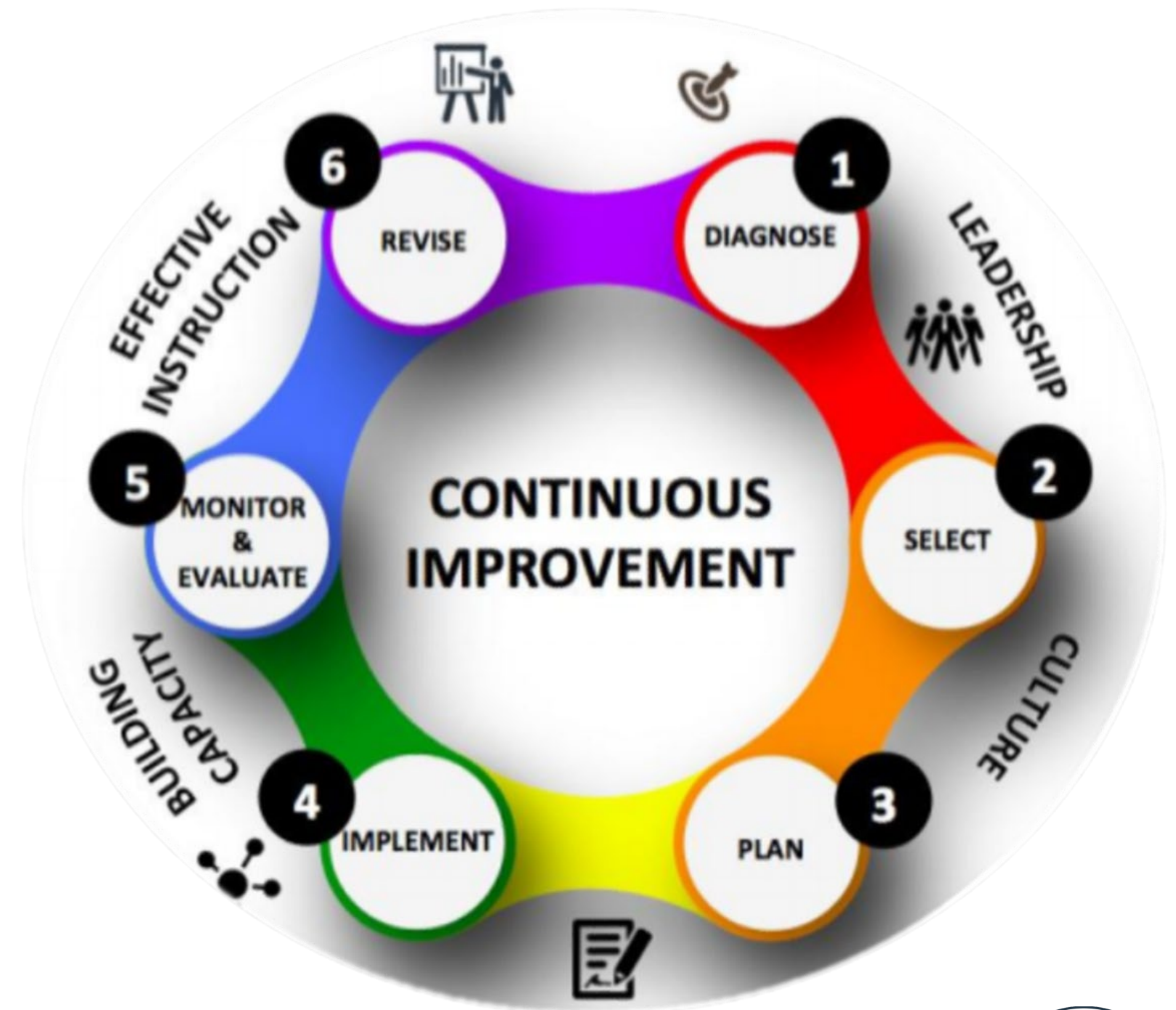




# School Improvement Model- Plan

**Plan**-Develop a team and plan to implement the solutions that are most promising and can be carried out at the school.

- Draft SMART goals defining implementation plans and timelines
- Identify roles and responsibilities of those implementing the intervention
- Develop a team that will deeply understand the intervention and planned implementation
- Identify resources and supports needed for the implementation of the intervention
- Develop a set of information to be reviewed to track the implementation





# Plan: Goals, Strategies, & Action Plans

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## GOAL

- An observable and measurable outcome to be achieved with a fixed timeframe -- the end result toward which your efforts are directed.

## ACTION PLAN

- A sequence of steps to be taken or activities to be performed for a goal to be achieved.



# Plan: Performance Goal Area

## Decide which performance goal area you plan to target:

- Student Achievement
- Teacher/Administrative Quality
- School Climate (Parent Involvement, Safe and Healthy Schools, etc.)
- District Priority



# Plan: High Quality Improvement Plans

Design high-quality school improvement plans informed by:

- Each school's assets (and how they're being used), needs (including but not limited to resources), and root causes of underperformance;
- Research on effective schools, successful school improvement efforts, and implementation science;
- Best available evidence of what interventions work, for whom, under which circumstances; and
- The science of learning and development, including the impact of poverty and adversity on learning.





# Plan: Writing a Performance Goal

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**Goal Area:** Student Achievement

**Performance Goal:** ABC School will increase the high school graduation rate from 75% to 90% by 2026.

**Interim Performance Goal:** ABC School will increase the high school graduation rate by 3% each year.

**Data Sources:** School Graduation Results



# Plan: Effective Goals

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Effective goals should be written in a SMART-C format.

1. Strategic/Specific
2. Measurable
3. Actionable
4. Relevant
5. Timely
6. Challenging





# Plan: Action Plans

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- **WHAT?** *Goal*
- **HOW?** *Action Steps*
- **WHEN?** *Deadline for completion*
- **WHO?** *Person Responsible for action*
- **HOW WILL WE KNOW?** *Indicator that the step/goal has been accomplished*



# Common Challenges of Strategic Planning

- Lack of Time
- Insufficient Tools
- Asking Wrong Questions- Are you asking the deep and “tough” questions?
- Jumping to Solutions- Leaders often jump to the task of brainstorming solutions before truly understanding the problems to be solved.
- Ineffective Implementation and Monitoring



# Common Challenges of Strategic Planning

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## Executive Summary of Needs Assessment Challenges

- Not identifying a need as the basis of the plan
- Failure to make the appropriate correlations
- Failure to analyze data at a deep level

Any discrepancies in the following areas identified by the school and district report cards must be included in the plan:

1. Achievement	5. Discipline
2. Achievement by Subgroup	6. Teacher/Administrator Quality
3. Graduation Rate	7. Other Priority Areas
4. Attendance	



# Common Challenges of Strategic Planning

## Failure to Create a **Strategic** Performance Goal

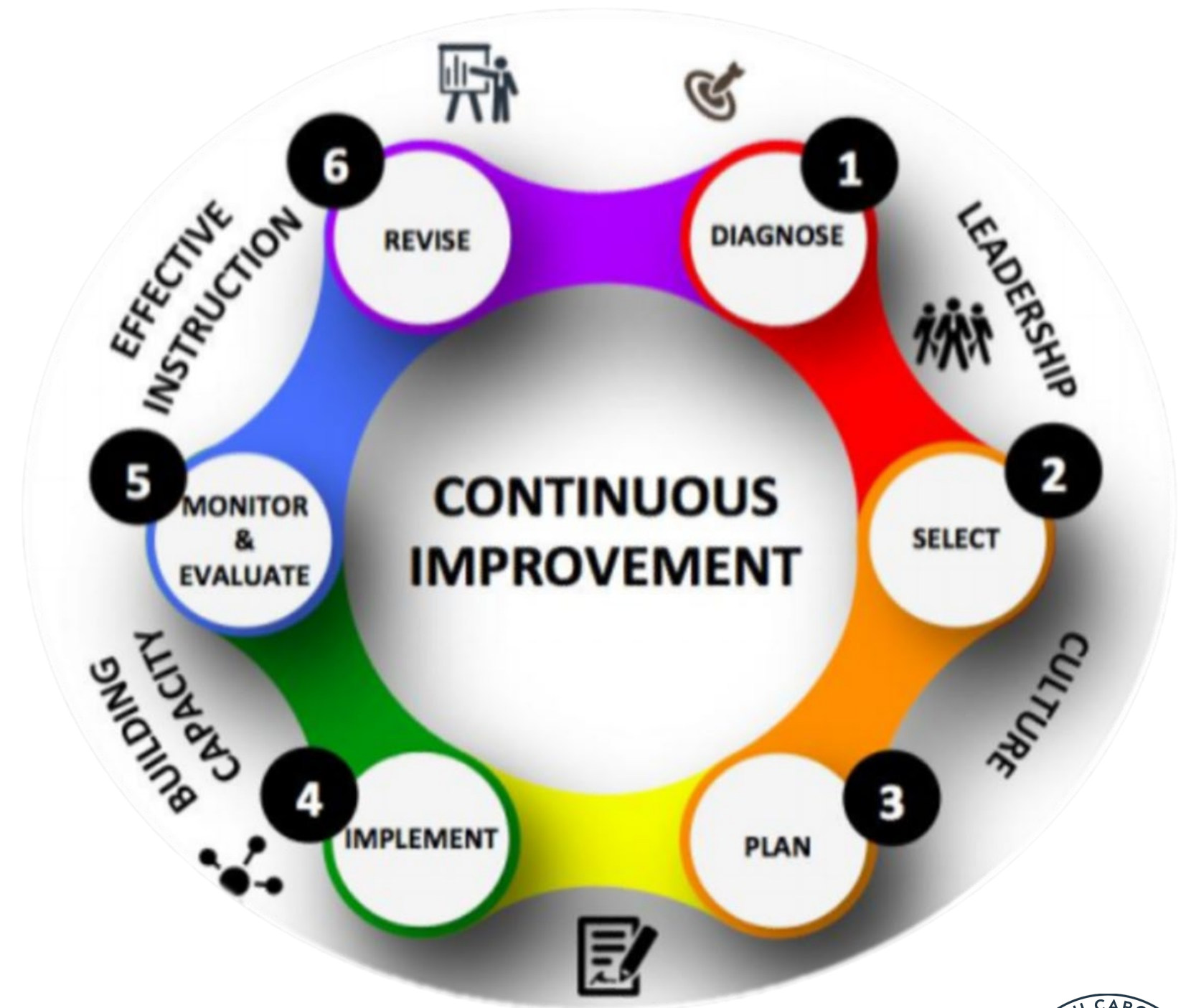
- By 2025-2026, 60% of 3<sup>rd</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> graders will score “Meets or Exceeds” on the ELA and Math benchmarks as measured by Spring MAP scores.
- Reduce class size for 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grades to 18:1 by 2025-2026.
- Provide all teachers with 3 additional professional development opportunities per school year by 2025 (OR) By 2027, 100% of the faculty/staff will receive appropriate schoolwide and area-specific professional development.
- By June of 2027, school report card surveys will show: Parents satisfied with the learning environment will increase 1 percentage point each academic year from 95.9% to 99.9%.(OR ) Teachers satisfied with the learning environment will remain at 100% each academic year.



# School Improvement Model- Implement

## Implement

- Collect information to monitor the quality of supports being provided for the intervention
- Consider what additional information is needed to determine if intervention is working
- Assess the degree to which the implementation plan is being followed
- Identify ways to break down any barriers
- Build capacity of others to facilitate the improvement process now and in the future





# **Implement: Impediments to Improvement**

There are three drivers that need to be in place for school improvement efforts to succeed, including ensuring fidelity of implementation and sustainable long-term results.

- **Human Capital (or Competency)**
- **Organization**
- **Leadership**

**“Schools improve when leaders implement well.”**



# Implement: Human Capital

- Leaders make no decision of greater consequence than the educators selected to join the school's faculty. Selecting, developing, improving, and sustaining the school and its staff's ability to implement an intervention as intended in order to benefit students.



# Implement: Organization

## Tools include:

- Developing core processes (i.e. the school's own "playbook") for the key functional areas;
- Collecting, analyzing, and using data effectively; and
- Identifying and mitigating barriers that exist outside of the school as much as possible.



# Implement: Leadership Skills

- Who the principal of a school is matters for outcomes beyond achievement.
- Studies show that some principals are more effective than others at reducing absenteeism and chronic absenteeism.
- Principals vary in their likelihood of meting out exclusionary discipline (e.g., suspensions).
- Some are more successful at retaining teachers, including more effective teachers.
- The overall impact of an effective principal can be linked to observable behaviors. That is, how principals approach school leadership directly affects schools' outcomes by **building capacity and creating culture**.





# Thoughts about Leadership

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- **Leading is Teaching**

*“If you can’t teach, you can’t lead.”*

- Dr. Jim Mahoney

- **Leaders are Servants**

*“You don’t have to be great to serve but you have to serve to be a great leader.”* - Jon Gordon

- **Dispositional vs Positional**

*“Leadership is an action, not a position.”* - Donald McGannon

- **Collective Leadership (Leadership is Shared)**

*“True leaders don’t create more followers. They create more leaders”* - Tom Peters

- **Leaders develop Cultures**

*“Great leaders succeed because they bring out the greatness in others.”* - Jon Gordon

- **Vision Oriented & Student-Centered**

*“There is nothing more demoralizing than a leader who can’t clearly articulate why we’re doing what we’re doing.”*

- James Kouzes & Barry Posner

- **Leaders are Responsible (Accountability)**

*“The lowest performing teacher in your building sets your standard for what is acceptable.”*

- Rich Hawkins



# What is the Leaders Role?

Research confirms what we know:

- Leaders influence student achievement
- Leaders influence teacher & staff decisions
- Leaders influence policy & program implementation



# Implement: The Key Levers

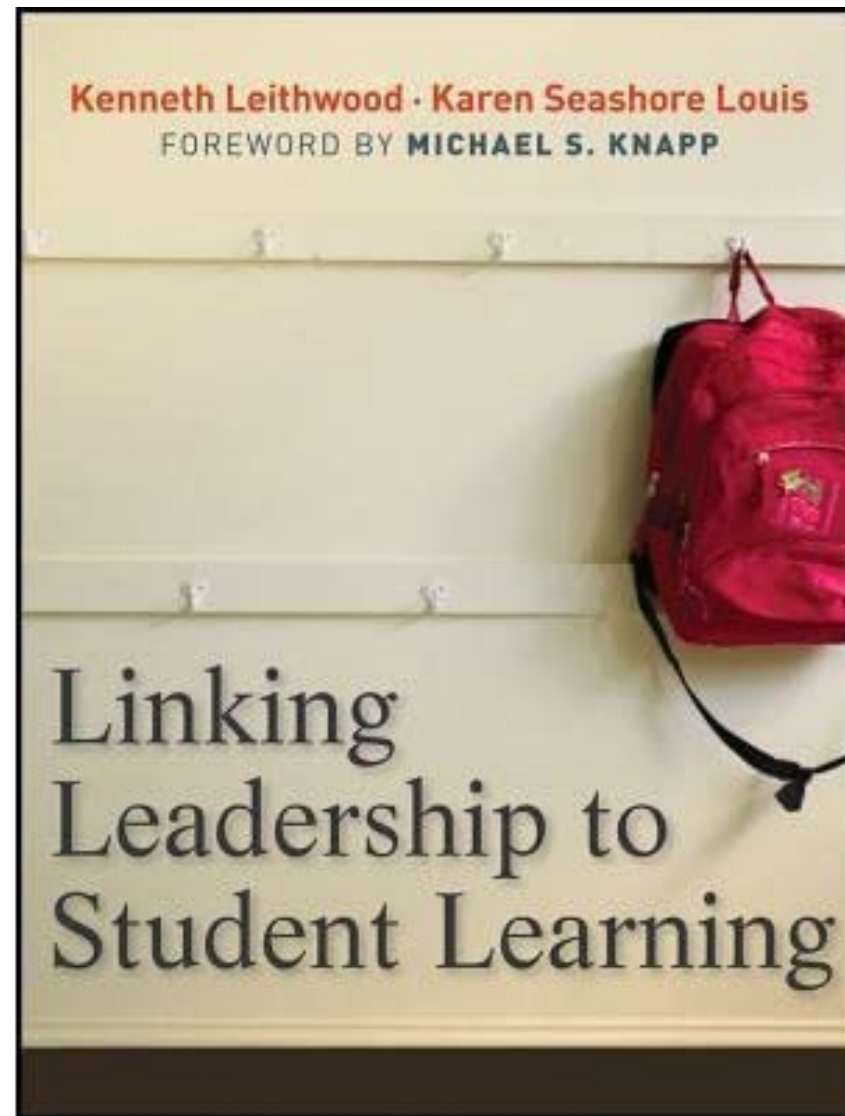
## The Key Three Levers for Improvement

1. Create and develop **instructional leadership teams** at the school level across the district.
2. Build an effective **instructional coaching** program for all educators.
3. Launch **professional learning communities** that work.



# Leadership Study-Collective Leadership

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- The authors, after five years of research, could not find a single documented case of a school that managed to turn around its student achievement trajectory in the absence of talented leadership.

- Leithwood & Seashore Louis (2012)



# Collaboration

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In the thousands of cases we've studied, we've yet to encounter a single example of extraordinary achievement that didn't involve the active participation and support of many people.... Leadership is not a solo act; it's a team performance... Collaboration is a social imperative. Without it people can't get extraordinary things done in organizations.

-Kouzes & Posner, 2003



# **Research consistently show that supporting adult learning is directly and positively linked to enhancing children's achievement.**

Drago-Severson, 2009



*“Teachers don’t leave schools, they leave leaders.”*

# School Improvement Model- Monitor & Evaluate

**Monitor & Evaluate**-Determine whether the implementation of the solutions is meeting the originally identified needs of the school.



# **Monitor: Ongoing, Timely Review and Feedback**

- The two things that matter most to instructional quality are what is being taught and how well.
- Many schools are plagued by “lots of change, but not much improvement.”
- Teachers must regularly analyze achievement data, set goals, and then meet to discuss the results.



# Review– Core Principles

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1. A focused plan **aligns** vision, mission, and philosophy.
2. The process is **continuous**, and the plan is a **dynamic** document.
3. The process relies on **quality, deep data** interpretations.
4. The process is completed in a **collaborative** and inclusive way.
5. The process produces one focused, integrated plan that directs all work and resources.
6. The process expects **substantive changes** in **student performance** and **adult practices**.
7. Efficient communication.





# Waivers & Proficiency-Based System

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- Waivers and the Proficiency-Based System Plan should not be included in this stage of the DSSR.
- Waivers should not be submitted until after the DSSR Plan is approved.
- After approval, use the [Formstack](#) to submit a waiver, a Proficiency-Based System Plan, or a Proficiency-Based System Evaluation.



# Gifted & Talented Plan

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- 2 GT SMART Goals in the District Strategic Plan
- Policies and Practices
- Scope and Sequence
- Grades of Academic Service
- Grades of Artistic Service
- Screening and Identification Notification



# **Innovation & Support Team (SCDE)**

- Collaborate to design school-based systems that focus on examining the effectiveness of interventions and instructional practices across Title programs; and
- State accreditation requirements related to the school renewal and strategic planning and submission process
- Provide, broker, or facilitate professional learning opportunities, and/or resources for school improvement initiatives



# Questions





# Staffing/Organizational Chart



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