

## Using the Strategic Mapping Process to Systemically Focus District Improvement Efforts

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*A process for assisting states to better align their intervention and support strategies for underperforming districts and schools*

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### RAW NOTES AND DATA

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*{School Name Here}*  
*{Date Here}*



The Comprehensive School Reform (CSR)  
Support and Capacity Building Program

## Strategic Mapping Process

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Participants:

Facilitators:

State Representative:

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### The Education Alliance at Brown University

The Education Alliance, a department at Brown University, promotes educational change to provide all students with equitable opportunities to succeed, and we advocate for population whose access to excellent education has been limited or denied. Since 1975, The Education Alliance has partnered with schools, districts, and state departments of education to apply research findings to the development of solutions to educational challenges. We focus on district and school improvement with special attention to issues related to equity and diversity. The Education Alliance designs and delivers expert services around planning, professional learning, and research and evaluation.

The **Comprehensive School Reform (CSR) Support and Capacity Building Program** at The Education Alliance provides support and technical assistance to states and districts regarding the development of aligned and cohesive systems of support for districts and schools. Through this program, The Education Alliance offers different services and resources to states, district, and schools that are working toward inclusive and sustainable school improvement. For additional information regarding the CSR Support and Capacity Building Program, please visit the District and School Improvement Website. ([www.alliance.brown.edu/improvement](http://www.alliance.brown.edu/improvement)) or the CSR Support and Capacity Building Web site ([www.alliance.brown.edu/projects/csraqi](http://www.alliance.brown.edu/projects/csraqi)).

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## Initial Choice: Identify 2-4 schools struggling to improve student achievement.

*Before beginning Step 1: Describe the Context, please identify a core set of schools that you and your colleagues want to focus on to consider and reflect upon how the district can best, and most strategically, support local school improvement efforts.*



### **Describe the Context:** What are the major characteristics of the schools in your district?

*Second, on this and the following sheets, list the major characteristics of your most underperforming schools (or set of schools) using the following five categories as guide.*

- *Demographic characteristics (student achievement)*
- *Organizational characteristics*
- *Socio-cultural characteristics*
- *Academic and non-academic programs*
- *Resource allocation*

#### **Examples of demographic characteristics:**

- ▶ Student characteristics (racial/ethnic background, socioeconomic profile, mobility rate, and percentages of English language learners, migrant students, and students with disabilities)
- ▶ Teacher characteristics (level of education and training, percentage who are “highly qualified”, number of years of experience, and the stability of the teaching population)
- ▶ School and community characteristics (racial/ethnic background, socioeconomic profile, household characteristics, number of languages spoken at home, number of countries represented in the community, information about rates and types of employment)
- ▶ Significant history (changes in the community demographics)

#### **Examples of organizational characteristics:**

- ▶ Structure and organization (e.g., scheduling, teaching planning time, teaming or configuration of teacher teams, configuration of classrooms and space, grade configuration, size of school, and placement of students in ELL and special education)
- ▶ Leadership and management (e.g., leadership and administrative structures, school improvement teams, student governance, rate of leadership turnover, site-based management, leadership style, impact of teacher unions)

#### **Examples of socio-cultural characteristics:**

- ▶ Climate and culture (social and cultural norms within the community and/or various parts of the community, teacher expectations, collaboration among staff, relationships, and interactions among different student populations, student behavior, teacher behavior, degree of student engagement and the degree to which school staff openly discuss issues related to race, ethnicity, culture and language)
- ▶ Parent and community involvement (type and level of school-community relationships and parent-school relationships)
- ▶ Local and historical contexts (changes in the community and impact of those changes on the school/student populations, relationships between the different groups represented in the community)

#### **Examples of resource characteristics:**

- ▶ Major external funding sources or programs
- ▶ School and district funding that have impact on teaching and learning
- ▶ School and district funding that have impact on school personnel, leadership, and professional development

**The Context**

**1**

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***Demographic Characteristics:***

The Context **1**

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***Organizational Characteristics:***

The Context **1**

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*Socio-cultural Characteristics:*

The Context **1**

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*Academic and Non-academic Programs:*

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***Resource Allocation:***



**Identify the Issues and Challenges:** What are the most central and urgent issues and challenges facing these schools and the district?

*Please list issues and challenges hindering school performance and improvement efforts in your the identified set of schools. Please use multiple sources of information when developing this list, including student achievement data, school and district diagnostic data, and your professional and personal experiences with these schools.*

*Be sure to list district challenges and issues that may hinder the district's ability to provide support to these schools.*

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***Issues and Challenges***

# 3

## System Diagnosis: Prioritize, organize and link the central issues and challenges impeding these schools' and the district's success

Please use the list of issues and challenges identified during Step 2 and:

- Prioritize them in terms of degree of need and relative critical importance
- Organize (link) them through deliberate consideration of their root causes; and
- Challenge hypothesis through the deliberate questioning of data, personal and organizational beliefs, and observations.

**Activity # 1: Identify priority issues.** - In your small group, identify and prioritize the identified issues and challenges in terms of importance and influence on the ability of school leaders and teachers to improve student performance. Identify at least three key issues or challenges that are having the greatest impact on student achievement in the identified schools.

Why do you believe that these are the highest priority issues and how do you see these high priority issues and challenges influencing student achievement in these schools?

**Activity #2: Graphically represent priority issues** - As a group, choose one of the high priority issues or challenges that you identified and graphically represent how this high priority issue or challenge connects with and relates to the other issues and challenges.

Suggested parameters for your graphical representation of a high priority issue/challenge:

- ▶ State the high priority issue
- ▶ Use arrows or lines to represent relationships and impact
- ▶ Describe the nature of the connection or relationship between specific issues and challenges
- ▶ Focus on and make connections between the high priority issue/challenge and improved student achievement

### Activity #1: Identify priority issues

<b>PRIORITY ISSUE</b>	
<b>Priority Issue #1</b>	
<b>Priority Issue #2</b>	
<b>Priority Issue #3</b>	
<b>Priority Issue #4</b>	

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## System Diagnosis

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*Activity #2: Graphically represent priority issues*

***Develop a System Diagnosis Map: Graphically organize these challenges in terms of the systemic causal interactions and contributions to the primary challenges of your targeted schools and the district.***



**Analyzing Strategies & Resources:** Identify the current array of district, state, and school-based strategies and resources that are being employed at these schools and across the district to improve student achievement

*Very likely, there are already several state, district, and school-specific strategies and resources being used at your targeted schools in the service of improvement. Before considering possible additional strategies and resources, it is first useful to identify and note those strategies and resources already being used. After that, please review the core issues and challenges identified by the group, and begin to consider other possible strategies and resources not yet being used that could very well significantly and substantively better enable the school to be successful in their efforts to improve student achievement. In considering these promising strategies and resources, be sure to consider strategies and resources that could be provided by the district and/or state to the schools directly.*

**Activity #1: Identify Strategies and Resources** - As a full group, please list the current array of district, state, and school-specific strategies and resources currently being employed at these schools and the district to improve student achievement.

**Activity #2: Assessing the sufficiency and impact of existing strategies.**

- (a) In small groups, please use the system diagnosis map to analyze and explain how these strategies directly or indirectly attend to and address the high priority challenge and issue;
- (b) Assess whether this array of strategies and resources is sufficient to directly and fully address the prioritized issue that your group is discussing, and other issues and challenges as appropriate.

**Activity #3: Discussion about existing strategies and the identification of new high-leverage and high impact strategies.**

- (a) Given the previous analysis, what state, district, and/or school strategies and resources could perhaps more effectively and directly enable the district and these schools to address the central challenges that you have identified?
- (b) Please identify potentially innovative and high-impact strategies that may better enable the schools to address the identified challenges (please be sure to consider strategies that may influence multiple parts of the system).

**Activity #1- Identify Strategies and Resources**

School	District	State



## Strategies & Resources



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*Activity #2: Assessing the sufficiency and impact of existing strategies.*

- (b) Assess whether this array of strategies and resources is sufficient to directly and fully address the prioritized issue that your group is discussing, and other issues and challenges as appropriate.*





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## Integrating for Cohesiveness and Impact Sustainability:

Consider LEA, SEA, and school-specific factors that could help or hinder the successful integration and implementation of these strategies and use of resources over time

*Reflect upon your experience of how districts and states could support the successful integration and implementation of strategies and resources at the school level. As you do this, consider how your district is positioned to fully support, empower, and enable your targeted schools to meet the central issues and challenges they face, and that you have identified, by answering the three questions on this and the following pages.*

**Activity #1: As a full group, consider what it would mean to strategically select, integrate and implement the most promising state, district, and school strategies and resources that could significantly and substantively impact the success of your selected schools**

- ▶ Which existing district-level resources and systems (e.g., your district-wide system of support) could support the successful integration and implementation of your identified targeted strategies?
- ▶ Are there any shifts in policies, district-level strategies, or ways of working together (e.g., use of external providers, intermediaries, networks, or other systems of professional development) that could enable the type and intensity of support needed to better ensure the successful implementation of your targeted strategies at each school?
- ▶ Which external factors could have impact on the ability of your district and the targeted schools to successfully implement a more integrated, coherent, targeted, and aligned set of strategies? (Please consider possible factors at each of the following levels: state, district, school and community)

***Which existing district-level resources and systems (e.g., your district-wide system of support) could support the successful integration and implementation of your identified targeted strategies?***

## System Supports & Challenges

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## System Supports & Challenges

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*Which external factors could have impact on the ability of your district and the targeted schools to successfully implement a more integrated, coherent, targeted, and aligned set of strategies? (Please consider possible factors at each of the following levels: state, district, school and community)*