

Using a Strategic Mapping Process to Systemically Focus District Improvement Efforts

A process for assisting districts to better align their strategies and supports towards sustainable school improvement

XXX Public Schools
Date



THE EDUCATION ALLIANCE at Brown University

Building Districts' Capacity for Inclusive and Sustainable Improvement

- States and districts are struggling to figure out how they can meaningfully build district capacity to support sustainable school improvement efforts

Inquiry Questions

- ▶ What does "district capacity building" mean?
- ▶ How can districts cultivate and create the conditions for dramatic improvement?
- ▶ What are the leverage points?
- ▶ What is the state role and what is the role of external providers?

The Strategic Mapping Process What is it?

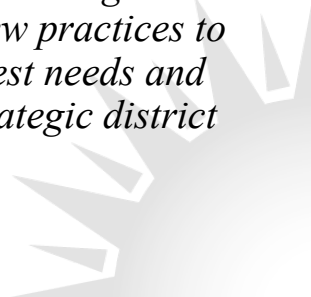
- A process to collectively consider and map different strategies for supporting underperforming schools.
- With multiple potential purposes and outcomes:
 - ▶ To inform the crafting and articulation of a cohesive and aligned system of support - how can states and districts **collectively** support dramatic improvement in targeted schools.
 - ▶ To contribute to the development of **aligned and mutually supportive** state- and district-level strategies for supporting schools with diverse populations, needs, and assets.

Assumptions underlying the Strategic Mapping Process

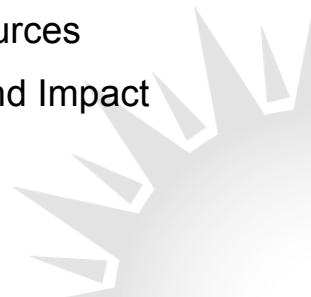
The strategic mapping process reflects an understanding of the education system as complex and multi-tiered and the reality that multiple policy messages and strategies coming from different parts of the system oftentimes hinder district and school improvement efforts.

Using the Strategic Mapping Process for Strategic District Improvement Planning


The Strategic Mapping Process can help districts and State Education Agencies collectively and collaboratively consider the system of support in districts serving their schools, looking to integrate and align present and new practices to better meet their identified greatest needs and challenges in an inclusive and strategic district improvement plan



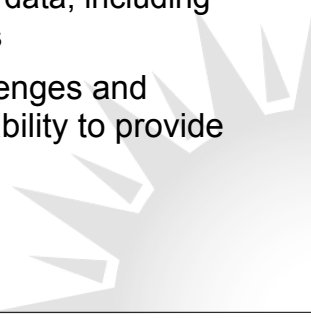
Steps in the Process

- 1 Describe the Context
 - 2 Identify the Issues and Challenges
 - 3 System Diagnosis
 - 4 Analyzing Strategies and Resources
 - 5 Integrating for Cohesiveness and Impact
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1 **Description of the Context:** What are the characteristics of your most underperforming schools?

- For the purposes of this exercise, we will identify and focus on those schools in your district that you feel need the greatest support for improvement at this time.
 - List the major characteristics of these schools under the following five categories:
 - Demographic characteristics
 - Organizational characteristics
 - Socio-cultural characteristics
 - Academic and non-academic programs
 - Resource allocation
- 

2 **Identify Central Issues and Challenges:** What are the issues and challenges facing these schools?

- List the issues and challenges hindering these schools from performing well and improving:
 - ▶ Based on student achievement data
 - ▶ Based on district experience
 - ▶ Based on other school and district data, including other measures or diagnostic tools
 - Be sure to list additional district challenges and issues that may hinder the district's ability to provide support to these schools
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3 **System Diagnosis:** Prioritize, organize, and link the issues and challenges impeding these schools' success

- Collectively identify the issues and challenges impeding these schools' and the district's success
- Take the list of issues and challenges and:
 - ▶ *Prioritize* them in terms of degree of need and relative critical impact on the schools' ability to significantly raise student achievement
 - ▶ *Organize and link* them through deliberate consideration of their root causes and how these issues and challenges impact student performance
 - ▶ *Challenge* hypotheses through the deliberate questioning of data, personal and organizational beliefs, and observations

System Diagnosis Questions for Group Work

Consider the following questions:

- 1) Which three issues/challenges are having the greatest impact on student achievement in these schools?
- 2) How do you see these issues/challenges influencing student achievement in these schools?
- 3) How do these issues or challenges connect or relate to other issues/challenges identified by the group?

- 3 System Diagnosis:** Begin to graphically represent the central issues and challenges as they directly and systemically impact student achievement
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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 systemically connects with and relates to the other issues and challenges, and to student achievement.

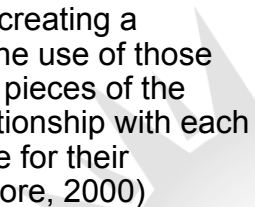
We invite creativity!



Capacity Building

The development and use of policies, strategies, and actions that increase the collective power or efficiency of whole groups, organizations, or systems to engage in continuous improvement for student learning. (Fullan, 2005)

Building capacity requires "...enhancing the skills and knowledge of people in the organization, creating a common culture of expectations around the use of those skills and knowledge, holding the various pieces of the organization together in a productive relationship with each other, and holding individuals accountable for their contribution to the collective results" (Elmore, 2000)



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

1 Identify Current Array of Strategies and Resources

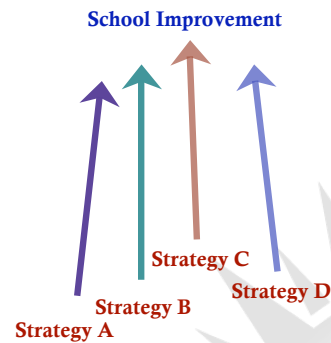
Strategy A: ?????

Strategy B: ?????

Strategy C: ?????

Strategy D: ?????

Strategy E: ?????



4 Strategies and Resources: Linking strategies to high priority issues and challenges and assessing the sufficiency and impact of existing strategies

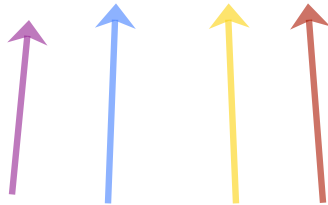
2 Link Strategies and Resources to System Diagnosis Map

Analyze and explain how these strategies and resources **directly or indirectly attend to and address** the high priority issues/challenges in the system diagnosis.

Assess whether this array of strategies and resources is **sufficient** to fully address the prioritized challenges and issues, and in particular the issue that your group is discussing.

4 Strategies and Resources: Identify existing and new district, state, and school-based strategies and resources that could perhaps more effectively and directly enable these schools to meet the central challenges

3 Given the previous analysis, what types of strategies not now being used could more effectively and directly enable the district and targeted schools to better address the schools' challenges?

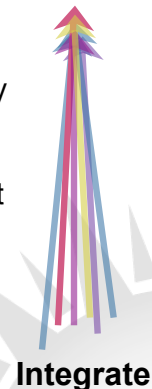


Consider innovative and high impact strategies that may influence multiple parts of the system (district and schools) to more systemically address the challenges, with student achievement the ultimate goal

5 Integrated and Cohesive Systems of Support: Select and integrate the most promising state, district, and school-specific strategies that could significantly and substantively impact the success of your targeted schools

Look to identify and integrate those catalyzing strategies and resources that:

1. Can best “leverage” the district and schools’ capacity to effect significant and substantive improvement for student achievement
2. Can ensure the long-term sustainability of the district and schools’ efforts to effect significant gains in student achievement
3. Attend to the priority issues and challenges



- 5** **Integrated and Cohesive Systems of Support:** Consider the external supports or challenges that could impact the success of your schools and the district in implementing these strategies

External challenges or supports for successful implementation

To carefully consider what external supports or challenges might impact the successful implementation of your plan, please consider the following questions:

- What existing state-level systems or supports would best support your district improvement efforts?
- What shifts in policies or state-level strategies would enable your district to sustain improvement efforts?
- What non-district factors impede the ability of your district to successfully implement a more integrated and strategic approach?

Beyond this initial Strategic Mapping Exercise ...

The district, with support from its partners (the SEA and others), may need to reconsider its current district improvement plan, collective district activity, knowledge, skills, and relationship with schools, and its application of strategies and resources to enable its lowest performing schools to do better