Texas Accountability Intervention System

Creating Sustainable Transformation

The Texas Accountability Intervention System (TAIS) is designed to establish the foundational systems, actions, and processes to support the continuous improvement of Texas school districts and campuses. TAIS offers a common framework and language for improvement that integrates all accountability systems and measures through an aligned system of support.

Through TAIS, assistance moves beyond the mere classification of schools and districts to aligned, yet differentiated support based on identified needs. TAIS provides school districts with clearly articulated commitments and support systems needed to engage in thoughtful and holistic school improvement and was developed through synthesizing decades of school improvement research to identify critical success factors and a cycle of continuous improvement that, when fully implemented, results in accelerated achievement.

Success requires purposeful actions and thoughtful planning based on analyzing data, determining needs, developing targeted plans for improvement, and monitoring the implementation and impact of those plans to ensure a focused, data-driven approach.

Framework for Continuous District and School Improvement

What are the essential foundations for success?
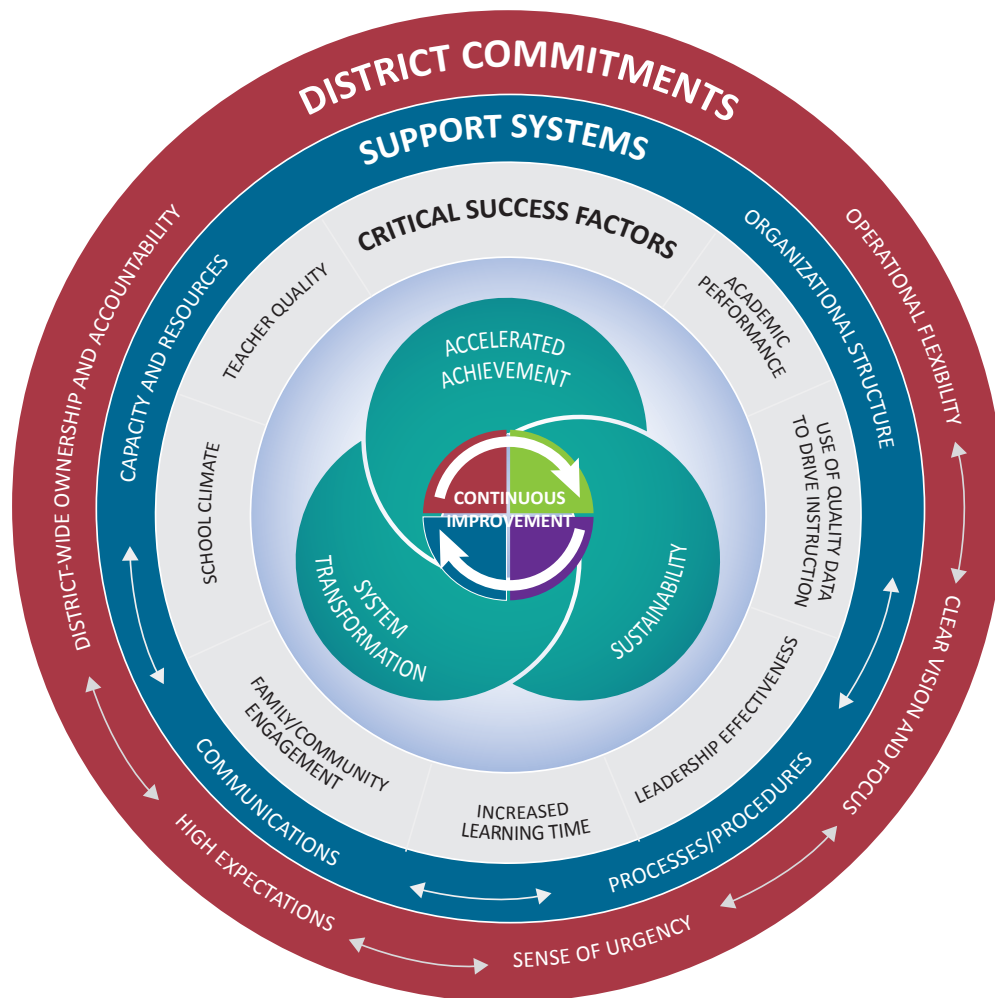
The Texas Accountability Intervention System (TAIS) includes a continuous improvement process built on a foundation of district commitments and support systems. TAIS recognizes the importance of a systemic approach to improvement with an emphasis on the critical success factors (CSFs) and best practice research for improvement planning. The continuous improvement process of data analysis, needs assessment, targeted planning, implementation, and monitoring leads to improved student outcomes. By taking a holistic approach, the TAIS framework leads to and prepares districts and campuses for accelerated achievement, system transformation, and sustainability.
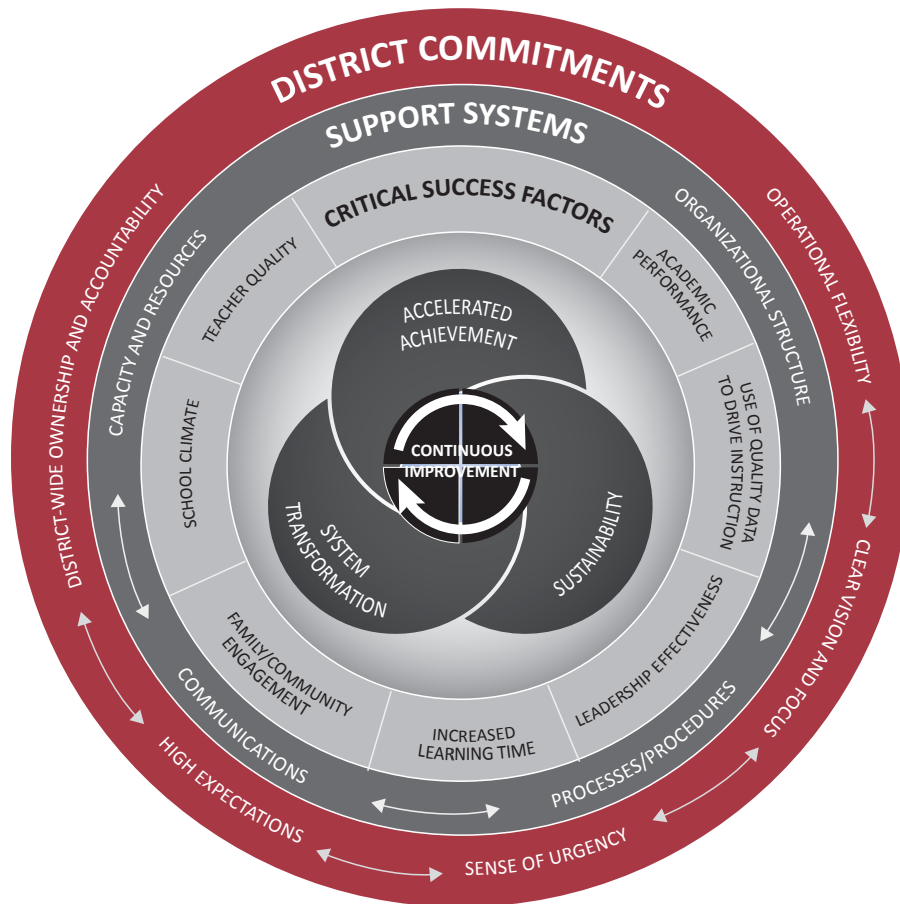
District Commitments

Operational Flexibility

The district permits the shifting of resources, processes, and practices in response to the critical needs that have been identified. The district's ability to address the needs of all students is contingent upon allowing customized approaches, expedition of resources, and departures from standard practice when the need is substantiated (Bottoms & Schmidt-Davis, 2010); (Fullan, 2010).

Clear Vision and Focus

The district strongly articulates a focus on student achievement as its primary work. Clear plans and systems, aligned to that vision, are developed to address increasing performance for all students within the district. The vision is integral and embedded in daily practice and is the driver of improvement by all staff members (Kouzes & Posner, 2007); (Hargreaves, 2013).
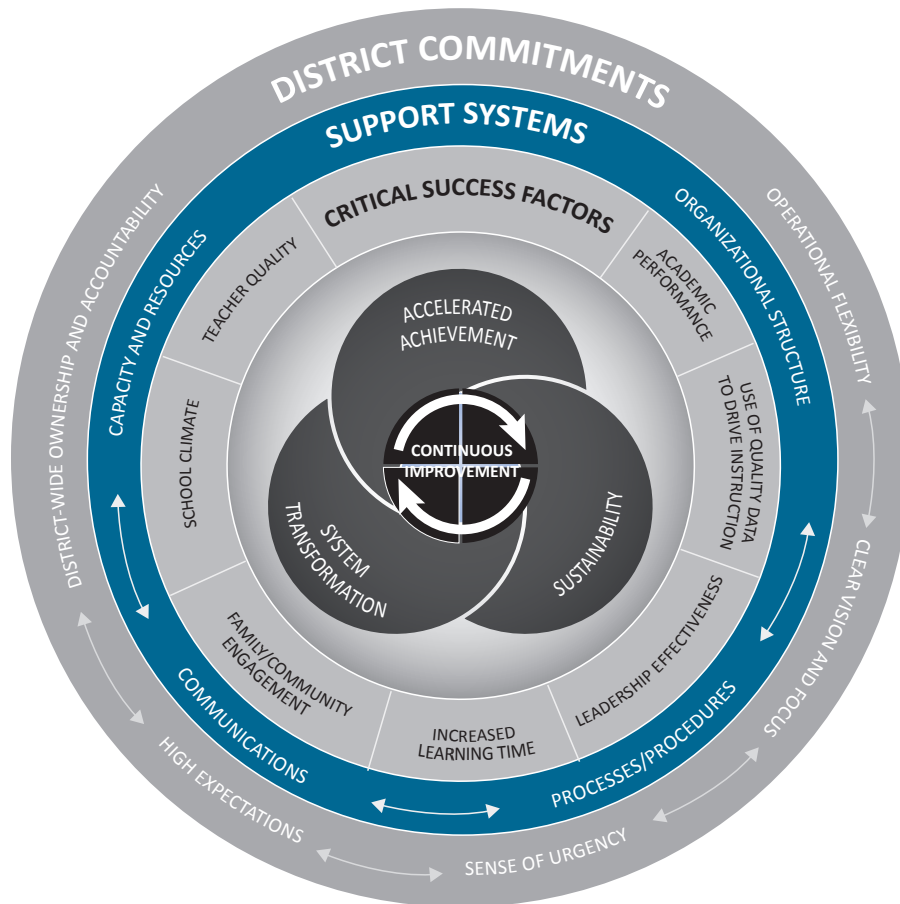
Sense of Urgency

The district, compelled by an intolerance of failure and dissatisfaction with deficits of the current state, sets a priority and presses for rapid action to change ineffective practices and processes that impede student success (Bambrick-Santoyo, 2012); (Kouzes & Posner, 2007); (Dufour & Marzano, 2011).

High Expectations

Explicit, rigorous standards are in place for student learning with all stakeholders confident that success is attainable. These expectations are pervasively evident and understood by all with a commitment to providing a timely response and/or adjustment when goals are not met (Bambrick-Santoyo, 2012); (Kouzes & Posner, 2007); (Dufour & Marzano, 2011).

District-Wide Ownership and Accountability

The district leadership recognizes and accepts responsibility for all current levels of performance and transparently interacts with stakeholders to plan and implement improvement initiatives. The district is engaged in continuous review of systemic, district-wide practices to ensure effective impact on critical need areas, such as low-performing campuses (Zavadsky, 2012); (Fullan, 2010).

The diagram shows concentric circles labeled (outer to inner): DISTRICT COMMITMENTS, SUPPORT SYSTEMS, CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS. Inner circles include ACCELERATED ACHIEVEMENT, SYSTEM TRANSFORMATION, SUSTAINABILITY, and CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT. Outer ring labels: DISTRICT-WIDE OWNERSHIP AND ACCOUNTABILITY, CAPACITY AND RESOURCES, TEACHER QUALITY, SCHOOL CLIMATE, FAMILY/COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT, COMMUNICATIONS, HIGH EXPECTATIONS, SENSE OF URGENCY, INCREASED LEARNING TIME, PROCESSES/PROCEDURES, LEADERSHIP EFFECTIVENESS, USE OF QUALITY DATA TO DRIVE INSTRUCTION, ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE, ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE, OPERATIONAL FLEXIBILITY, CLEAR VISION AND FOCUS.

Support Systems

Organizational Structure

The organizational structure has clearly delineated roles and responsibilities for personnel that focus on teaching and learning, accountability, and impact on student achievement. District and campus leaders eliminate barriers to improvement, redefine staff roles and responsibilities as necessary, and empower staff to be responsive in support of improvement (Dufour & Marzano, 2011); (Bottoms & Schmidt-Davis, 2010); (Fullan, 2010); (Honig, Copeland, Rainey, Lorton, & Newton, 2010).

Processes/Procedures

Priority is placed upon teaching and learning when establishing and implementing systemic operational protocols that guarantee accountability, availability of resources, and their effective use (Bottoms & Schmidt-Davis, 2010); (Levine, 2013).

Communication

A clearly defined process exists that ensures a consistent message is being sent, received, and acted upon using multiple, effective delivery systems. Proactive efforts are engaged by district and campus-level staff to establish successful internal communication systems and transparent external communication practices. Communication is focused on a shared and clear vision for continuous improvement which streamlines collaborative efforts toward student success (Kouzes & Posner, 2007); (Dufour & Marzano, 2011).

Capacity and Resources

The organization strategically utilizes internal and external human capital and necessary resources to meet all needs for a successful learning environment. Expertise is purposefully cultivated and sustained through targeted recruitment, retention, and succession planning (Hargreaves, 2013); (Bottoms & Schmidt-Davis, 2011).

Key Components of a Successful School
How are interventions and resources customized for the campus?

The research is clear, whether interventions are being provided through the district, local education service center (ESC), Texas Education Agency (TEA), or Texas Center for District and School Support (TCDSS), sharing a common language around resources is essential. The Texas Accountability Intervention System (TAIS) framework, including the seven critical success factors (CSFs), provides a common language to anchor the work of school improvement across Texas and create opportunity to match resources to needs.
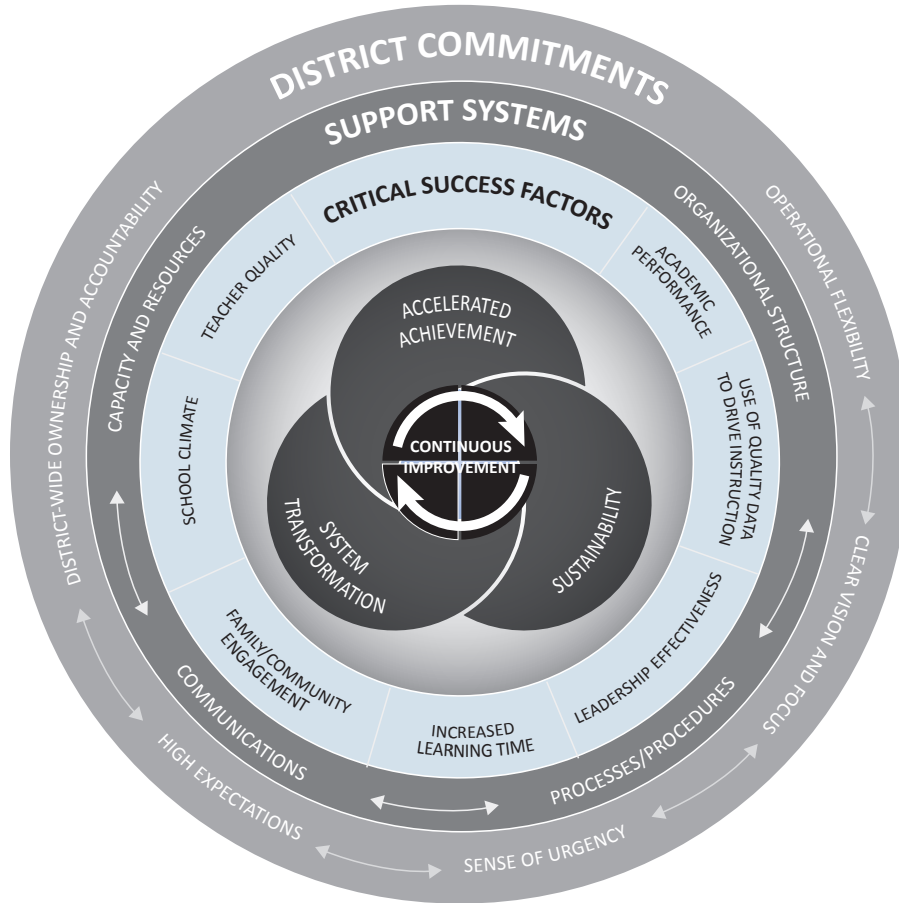
Critical Success Factors (CSFs)

The following success factors are foundational elements within the framework of the TAIS developed by TEA and TCDSS. These CSFs serve as key focus areas in school improvement planning. The CSFs documented within these pages are grounded in evidence-based research and have been found to be key elements for implementing improvement efforts.

"...each CSF must be thoughtfully developed by stakeholders to ensure the campus initiatives are successful" (Gates, 2010).

1. Academic Performance

Academic performance is the foundational CSF. By ensuring the CSFs of teacher quality, effective leadership, data driven instructional decisions, productive community and parent involvement, efficient use of learning time, and maintaining a positive school climate, campuses can increase performance for all students. All of these research-based measures, when taken as a whole, are key to continuous school improvement.

2. Use of Quality Data to Drive Instruction

The use of quality data to drive instructional decisions can lead to improved student performance (Wayman, 2005); (Wayman, Cho, & Johnston, 2007); (Wohlstetter, Datnow, & Park, 2008). This CSF emphasizes effective uses of multiple sources of disaggregated data. However, it is not necessarily the amount of data utilized, but rather how the information is used (Hamilton, et al. 2009). For example, academic achievement can improve

when teachers create regular opportunities to share data with individual students (Black & Williams, 2005). Therefore, it is not only the use of data to drive instructional decision-making that is significant, but also the ongoing communication of data with others that provides the greatest opportunity for data to have a positive impact on student learning outcomes.

3. Leadership Effectiveness

Leadership effectiveness targets the need for leadership on campus to exhibit characteristics and skills known to promote and implement positive educational change. Of the campus-based elements proven to have the greatest degree of impact on student achievement, school leadership is second only to classroom instruction. Examples of successful school turnaround efforts without effective leadership are rare (Leithwood, et al. 2004).

4. Increased Learning Time

Research promotes a three-pronged approached to increased learning time that includes the following elements: increased instructional time, increased enrichment activities, and increased teacher collaboration and professional development. Increased learning time necessitates strategies that maximize the number of sustained, engaging instructional minutes, the result of which is "higher academic achievement, especially for disadvantaged students" (Jez & Wassmer, 2011); (Gettinger & Seibert, 2002). Expanded learning time – lengthening of the school day or year – is also a possible strategy to increase learning time. To be utilized successfully, additional learning time must be used strategically. Effective strategies include providing a rigorous, well-rounded education that prepares students for college, using the time for teachers to thoroughly analyze and respond to data, and setting aside time to coach and develop teachers to continuously strengthen instruction (Kaplan & Chan, 2011).

5. Family and Community Engagement

Family and community engagement calls for increased opportunities for input from parents and the community, as well as the necessity for effective communication and access to community services. Parent, family, and community involvement has a direct correlation with academic achievement and school improvement. When school staff, parents, families, and surrounding communities work together to support academic achievement, students tend to earn higher grades, attend school longer and more regularly, and eventually enroll in programs of higher education (Barton, 2003).

6. School Climate

The connection between school climate and student achievement has been well established in research. Focusing on the development of a campus' climate as a learning environment is fundamental to improved teacher morale and student achievement (Nomura, 1999). Formally assessing and addressing school climate is essential to any school's effort toward successful reform, achievement, and making a difference for underprivileged student groups (California P-16 Council, 2008). Indicators of a positive school climate and welcoming learning environment are increased attendance and reduced discipline referrals. Increased attendance in extracurricular activities is another sign that students feel supported by an affirming school climate (Scales & Leffert, 1999).

7. Teacher Quality

Teacher quality focuses on the need to recruit and retain effective teachers while supporting and enhancing the knowledge and skills of current staff with job-embedded professional development. Over two decades of research has demonstrated a clear connection between teacher quality and increased student performance. The evidence shows that low-income students are more likely to benefit from instruction by a highly effective teacher than are their more advantaged peers (Nye, Konstantoupoulos & Hedges, 2004). Students enrolled in successive classes taught by effective teachers show greater gains in student performance than student groups taught by less effective teachers (Sanders & Rivers, 1996). Districts and campuses can have a direct impact on student achievement through the effective implementation of a comprehensive teacher quality program.

These CSFs reflect behavioral changes that must be demonstrated by students at the campus and district or by adults working on their behalf. The effective implementation of each CSF is crucial in school efforts to meet stated goals and objectives. CSFs must also be monitored using measurable performance indicators. It is these indicators that will enable campus and district staff to determine whether schools and programs are on track to achieve their desired outcomes.

Essential Components
of Continuous Improvement

At the heart of the Texas Accountability Intervention System (TAIS) framework is the continuous improvement process. In order for sustainable improvement to occur, it is essential that the work is grounded in research-based practice for planning.
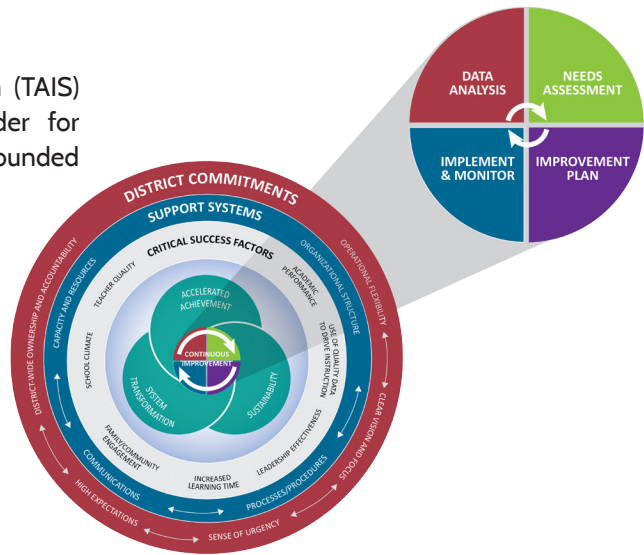
Data Analysis

- A data analysis process is outlined, findings of which feed the needs assessment process and improvement plan; however, the district/campus chooses the data analysis process utilized.

- District/Campus teams conduct a thorough review of all data down to the student level and by the new state indexes, which leads to the identification of problem statements.

Needs Assessment

- A thorough needs assessment process is outlined, findings of which reveal root causes and inform improvement planning; however, the district/campus chooses the needs assessment process utilized.

- District/Campus teams conduct a needs assessment to identify root causes.

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Implement & Monitor

- An implementation and monitoring process is outlined.

- Improvement plan progress is reviewed and feedback is provided based on goals and actions.

Improvement Plan

- A planning process to develop an improvement plan is outlined, which addresses findings from the data analysis and needs assessment process.

- District/Campus teams develop an improvement plan that is informed by the findings of data analysis and needs assessment process.

- An improvement plan includes a summary of the data analysis and needs assessment findings, resulting goals, and determined actions that directly address areas of low performance, and any required interventions.

- District/Campus teams may use planning resources to develop actions/strategies for improvement.
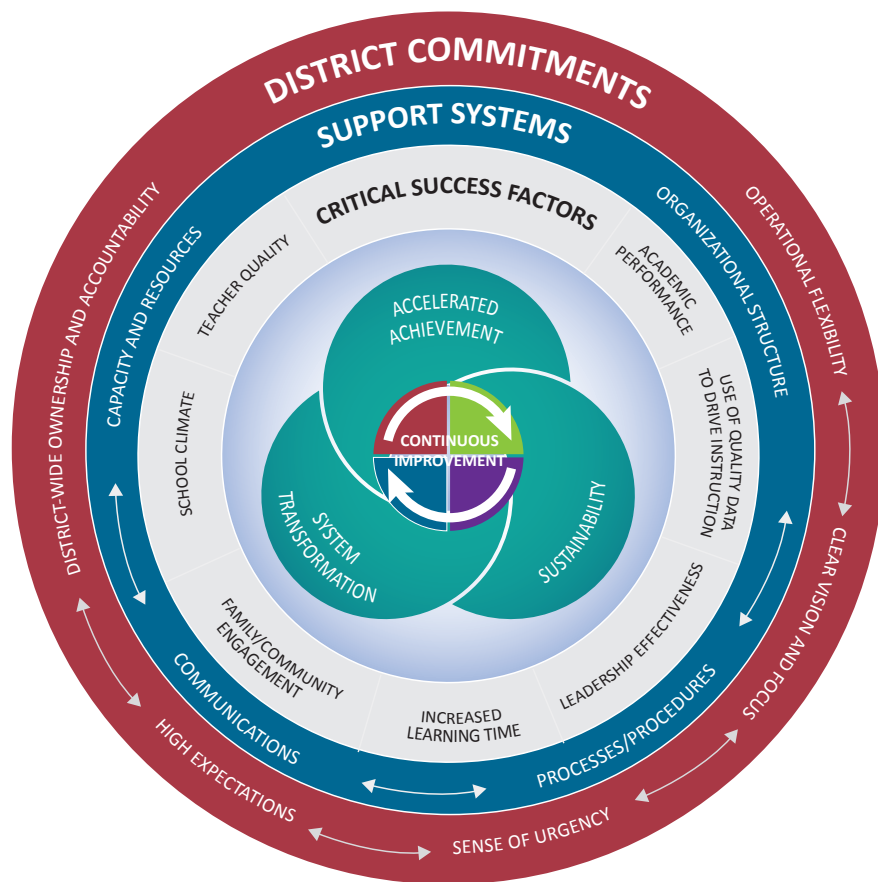
Outcomes

Continuous Improvement

Continuous improvement is the result of the dynamic interaction of district commitments and support systems, which ensure all critical success factors (CSFs) are effectively addressed. When these elements are integrated and fully operational, the outcomes of accelerated achievement, sustainability, and system transformation are produced.

Accelerated Achievement

Accelerated achievement is rapidly attained improvement resulting from an intense and urgent focus on identified areas of need. As barriers to achievement are uncovered and addressed, significant gains are accomplished and performance gaps are reduced.

Sustainability

Sustainability is the institutionalization of effective systems and processes that maintain progress over time, regardless of changing conditions. Districts ensure capacity for continuity, safeguard successful practices, and maintain commitment to continuous improvement.

System Transformation

System transformation is the comprehensive change of expectations and behaviors, resulting in sustained innovation and success. Transformation is reflected in all aspects of the organization through fully functioning and effective processes.

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