

Root Cause Analysis Framework

As districts begin the process of formulating their equity plans, it is recommended that districts utilize facilitated discussion and the root cause analysis framework to formulate target strategies to help close equity gaps. This root cause analysis framework should be implemented during equity plan committee meetings as a way for districts to identify variables that directly impact equity gaps in student performance data. As districts move through the root cause analysis framework, they will be able to narrow down the highest leverage variables of root cause.

Step 1

After reviewing the data, the individual committee members brainstorm 10 causes/reasons using post-it notes (one note per cause) for the identified equity gaps. Reasons could include - parent-to-school connection, teacher years of experience, teacher instructional depth, etc.

Step 2

Each member posts their first 10 causes/reasons on a white board or other surface. Group the notes according to themes and topics. Next, the members identify and post five more causes/reasons for the identified equity gaps according to theme or topic.

Step 3

In step 3, members identify five more causes/reasons for the identified equity gaps following the same procedure. At the conclusion of this step, each member has at or near 20 causes/reasons.

Step 4

Based on all the identified causes/reasons, the district committee re-organizes each cause/reason into themes or categories. Topics or themes that are beyond the control or influence of the committee or focus of the ESSA Equity Plan are eliminated. Re-organize the root causes using the categories of teacher recruitment, assignment, support and retention. After each cause/reason has been categorized, the committee focuses on one or two most critical or high leverage causes/reasons.

Step 5

The district committee develops and reaches a consensus on a problem statement(s) based on the high leverage root causes identified in Step 4. Limit the problem statement(s) to two.

Step 6

Using the problem statement(s) created in Step 5, the district committee evaluates the problem statement(s) by using the "5 Whys."

Step 7

Based on the "5 Why" analysis, districts formulate a high leverage problem statement(s) and brainstorm one or more strategies aligned to the problem statement.

Suggested Committee members:

Superintendent/ Senior District Leader
Federal and/or State Programs Director(s) for Title I or II
District Coordinator(s) of School Improvement
Human Resources Staff
Teaching and Learning Staff
Principal(s) and/or Assistant Principal(s)
Principal Supervisors
Other Central Office Staff

Tips to keep in mind:

- Focus on the root causes that are within the locus of control of the committee and the ESSA Equity Plan.
- Review other district plans such as the District Improvement Plan and State/Federal Grant plans for alignment and redundancy.
- Limit the number of problem statements to two.
- When looking at metrics for aligned strategies, keep in mind this is a two year plan.

Materials & Technology Tools

Low tech materials:

Chart Paper
Post It Notes
Markers

Consider using other technology tools for the process of “10-5-5” and the 5 “Whys.”

Align the ESSA Equity plan with other plans which focus on closing the gaps and teacher recruitment, assignment, support and retention such as the District Improvement Plan (DIP), Title I and II Campus Needs Assessments, Campus Improvement Plans (CIP), and ESSR plan.