

Framework for District Capacity Building and Improvement - Rapid District Improvement Pathway

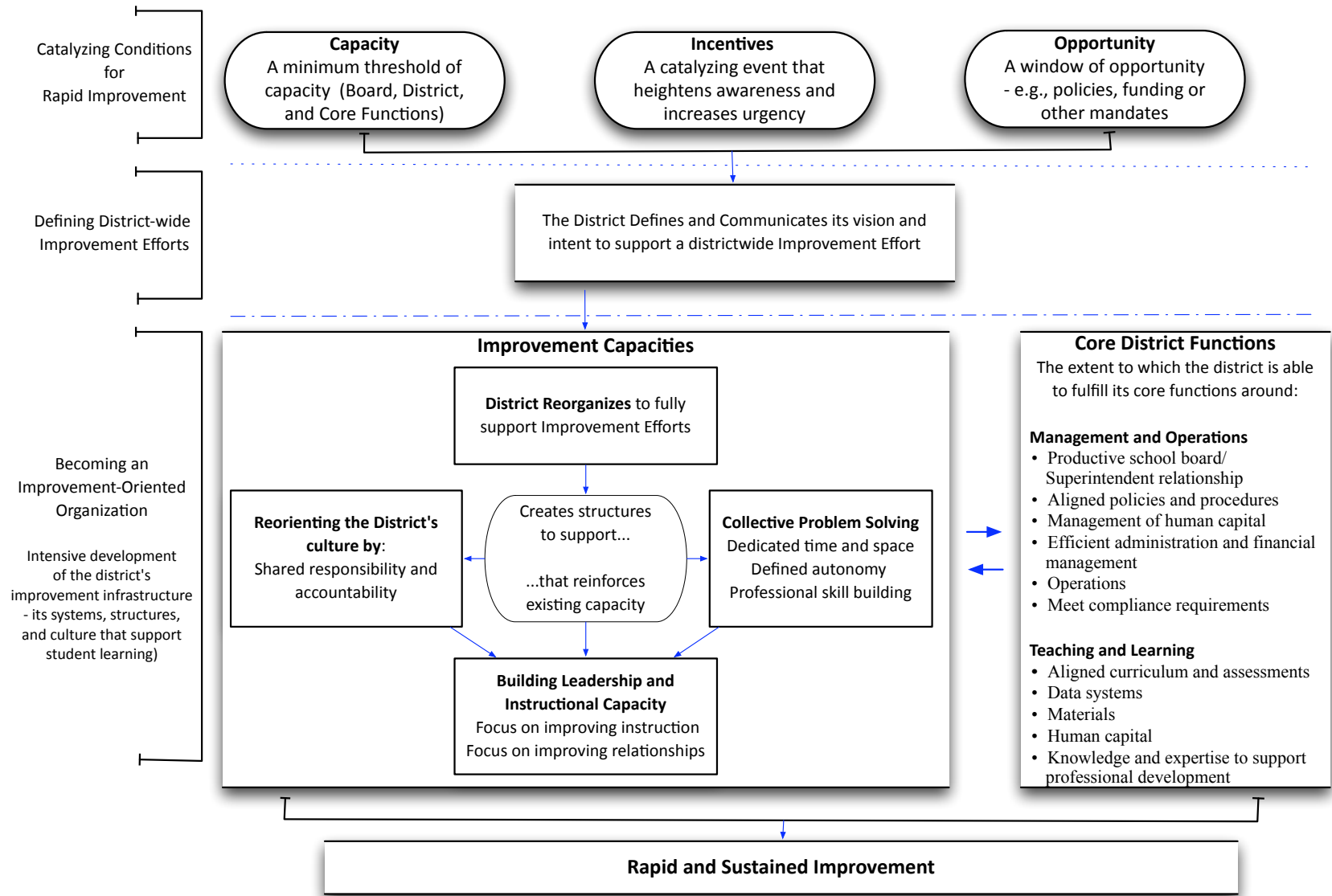


Figure 1. Framework for District Capacity Building and Improvement

The Framework integrates the core district functions and improvement capacities with the catalyzing conditions and strategies needed to initiate a process of rapid improvement. The framework includes 10 interdependent variables and depicts the relationships among the variables.

Developed for the Center on Innovation and Improvement by Brett Lane, INSTLL, LLC

Adapted from: Lane, B. (2009). *Exploring the Pathway to Rapid Improvement*. Lincoln, IL: Center on Innovation and Improvement.

Core District Functions and Catalyzing Conditions Necessary to Embark on the Pathway of Rapid Improvement

Management and Operations

Core District Function

The district demonstrates the following functions:

- Effective and mutually supportive relationship between the **School Board and the Superintendent/District**.
- Ability to develop, communicate, and enforce **policies and procedures**.
- **Strategic management of human resources** - efficient and streamlined processes (e.g., systems for induction, evaluation, compensation, and training for all staff) focused explicitly on supporting Teaching and Learning.
- **Administration and Finance** - efficient and streamlined processes for managing district finances, including an explicit connection to Teaching and Learning.
- **Operations** - efficient upkeep of district buildings and operations (e.g., physical plant, food services, custodial, and student services).
- Ability to meet **federal and state regulations and compliance requirements**.

Teaching and Learning

Core District Function

The district establishes, supports, provides, or has access to:

- **An aligned curriculum** that includes K-12 curriculum frameworks, maps, or guides and sample instructional strategies aligned with state standards and/or grade level expectations.
- **District-wide and school-level formative and summative assessments** in literacy, mathematics and science, providing for aligned assessments within and across grades.
- **Data systems** for collecting, storing, accessing and disseminating school and student-level data.
- **Materials**, including textbooks and curricular materials, as needed for instruction.
- **Human capital**, which entails that the district has the capacity to recruit, induct, evaluate, retain and/or release district and school staff, principals, teachers, coaches and support staff, including specialized instructional support.
- **Knowledge and expertise** needed to support and train district and school staff on instructional programs, including designated time and opportunity for professional development.

Improvement Pathway Phase #1:

Catalyzing Conditions for Rapid Improvement

The current state of affairs is unacceptable and must change!

- A **catalyzing event or external change agent** that: (The initial **Incentives and Opportunity**)
- a. Heightens the **awareness**, among school board and district leaders, of critical academic gaps
 - b. Increases the **urgency**, among school board and district leaders, to make significant changes
 - c. Presents a **window of opportunity** (e.g., changes to policies that create conditions for real change, availability of funding, access to expertise, mandate, willingness to change)
- Existence of a **Minimal Threshold of Capacity** among the Board, District Leaders, or Principals (**Capacity**)
- a. Strong school board or a home-grown district leader/superintendent
 - b. Strong principals and teacher leaders (but limited district leadership or board leadership)
 - c. Strong school board with the courage and ability to attract and hire high-quality, change-oriented leadership.

Improvement Pathway Phase #2:

Defining and Communicating a Districtwide Improvement Effort

Here is what we are going to do; it will require dramatic change; and here is our vision!

- Core District Leaders and the Board decide on a district-wide improvement effort that:
- a. Is **system-wide**, in that the effort encompasses the entire district and all schools in the district;
 - b. Is **linked to broadly defined needs** (but isn't necessarily a strategic plan or initially tied to specific indicators); and
 - c. **Depicts a vision of the district** that is dramatically different than the status quo and that will require administrators and teachers to do more than "tinker around the edges"; **it will require rapid, intense and dramatic change**.
- Create an initial base of support - There is a process by which:
- a. The Improvement Effort (its focus, intensity, and that it will involve significant and rapid changes) is **communicated and shared with principals, teachers, and community leaders**.

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| <p>Improvement Pathway Phase #3: Becoming an Improvement-Oriented Organization The District develops its improvement capacities by:</p> | <p>Improvement Capacity The leadership capacity of a district to engage in rapid and sustained improvement The district has explicit structures, processes, and programs for:</p> |
|--|--|
| <p>Reorienting the Organization and shifting culture and beliefs by:</p> <p>Developing an Improvement Orientation</p> <p>Cultivating Shared Responsibility</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishing and communicating a district-wide improvement strategy, including a vision and specific goals for improvement. • Developing and communicating policies, mandates, and new programs. • Establishing and maintaining a focus on equity. • Coordinating and monitoring district-wide improvement strategies. • Monitoring and supporting school improvement efforts. |
| <p>Supporting Collective Problem Solving through processes and a strategic mix of strategies that:</p> <p>Provide dedicated time and space for educators to “figure out” local solutions; the “how to” (Opportunity)</p> <p>Allow for and communicate a strategic balance of district mandates/parameters and local autonomy (Incentives)</p> <p>Provide professional development to educators on how to engage in ongoing problem solving (Skills and Capacity)</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educators (principals, teachers, administrators) to engage in ongoing (e.g., at least once a week) problem-solving around issues related to teaching and learning. (Opportunity) • Incorporating educator-developed strategies and solutions into school and district improvement efforts. (Incentives and Autonomy) • Supporting and engendering productive attitudes/dispositions, such as trust, willingness to share information, reflection and self-awareness, and willingness to change. (Skills and capacity) |
| <p>Building Leadership and Instructional Capacity by:</p> <p>Focusing improvement efforts on improving instruction</p> <p>Focusing improvement efforts on improving relations among adults and among adults and students</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving instructional capacity in schools and among district leaders. • Analyzing and using data to identify district and school areas for improvement. • Investigating, identifying and selecting improvement strategies (e.g., grants, programs, new initiatives) programs that support and align with the district’s improvement efforts. • Evaluating the impact of programs and improvement strategies |
| <p>Reorganizing the District Office to Support Improvement Efforts by:</p> <p>Restructuring the district office so that all efforts, functions, policies and actions are supporting the improvement effort.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategically allocating and targeting human and fiscal resources. • Aligning district systems and structures to support district and school improvement efforts. • Aligning policies to support district and school improvement efforts. |