Cause Cards

Time ▨ ☐
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60 minutes.

Materials

Resource

TR1—Cause Cards

General

Card stock
Scissors
Chart paper
Marking pens
Masking tape

Purpose

To surface and explore a variety of potential causes for the identified student-learning problem(s).

Overview

Cause Cards are used to prompt discussion about possible causes for an identified student-learning problem.

Audience

Data Team.

Use

Primary Task: Task 13.

Advance Preparation

1. Make one copy of Resource TR1 (Cause Cards) using card stock (suggested) or paper and cut along the lines provided.

2. Create a chart with the student-learning problem at the top and seven columns labeled curriculum, instruction, assessment, equity, professional development, data use, and critical supports. Alternatively, use the Fishbone graphic (see Toolkit) or the Verify Causes Tree graphic (see Toolkit). Post the chart.

Procedure

1. Explain that the intent of this activity is to stimulate discussion about possible causes of the student-learning problem(s). Emphasize that this is merely the beginning of the exploration of causes. In order to actually identify a cause(s) of their student-learning problem(s), the Data Team will collect additional data and research to validate and verify their cause.

2. Ask the team to consider each Cause Card by discussing if the card could be contributing to the student-learning problem. If yes, have them place that card on the chart in the appropriate caregory (or on the appropriate spine of the Fishbone or box in the Verify Causes Tree). Place other cards in either a No or a Maybe pile. They may also write their own possibilities on the blank cards provided.

3. Facilitate a discussion of the cards in the Maybe pile. Does anyone have information that would help the team decide if the cause is a Yes or No? If there is enough information generated to make a decision, add the

card to the chart if it was a Yes or put it in the No pile. If the team is still not clear, ask team members, "What information do we need to know in order to make a decision? Who would know?" Make assignments for getting the information.

> **Facilitation Note**
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> Use the cards as they are most appropriate for the team. For example, if the team has already identified one or two categories as primary causes, use only the cards from those categories. On the other hand, if the team is not sure where to start, using all cards can prompt the discussion.

4. Ask the Data Team to review the chart/Fishbone/Tree. Are there any other possible causes that should be added? Once all causes are identified, ask the team to prioritize the causes (see Tookit: Spend-a-Buck) for further verification.

Cause Cards

(cut before distributing)

A variety of research-based instructional strategies are not utilized to effectively address diverse student-learning needs.	Teaching strategies do not elicit and build on students' thinking.
All staff do not demonstrate a will to close any and all achievement gaps.	All stakeholders (e.g., teachers, specialists, paraprofessionals, tutors, parents) are not engaged in making decisions about teaching and learning.
Benchmarks for student-learning goals are not clearly defined and communicated.	Classroom assessment is not used to inform next steps in instruction.
Classroom assessments are not frequent enough to monitor student progress.	Classroom assessments are not rigorous and tied to state standards in both content and student expectation.
Classroom instruction does not address the student performance expectations outlined in the state standards.	Communication with families is not clear, regular, frequent, and focused on student-learning goals.
Data is not used regularly and continuously to improve student learning.	Decisions are not based on student-learning goals and the findings from research and best practice.

Every student does not have access to challenging curriculum.	**Every student does not have access to all parts of the curriculum.**
Homework is not aligned with classroom curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices.	**Homework is not frequent and appropriate to the grade level.**
Instructional activities are not consistently monitored.	**Leadership at the school level does not support collaborative planning across grade levels and content areas.**
Leadership does not have a process in place for effectively using evaluation results to improve teaching.	**Performance expectations are not clearly and consistently communicated to students.**
Professional development is not aligned with student-learning goals and expectations.	**Professional development is not characterized by ongoing teacher-to-teacher conversations about teaching and learning.**
School culture is not characterized by collaborative teams, trust, and internal responsibility for student learning.	**School leaders do not have the knowledge, skills, and support that they need to provide strong instructional leadership.**
School leadership and staff does not ensure that the learning environment is safe and orderly for every student.	**School leadership and staff do not identify solutions and strategies that are supported by research and/or best practice.**

School policies and organizational processes impose obstacles or barriers to student learning.	School staff do not collaboratively analyze, validate, and verify the causes for their identified student-learning problems using data and the findings from research.
School staff do not have a strong and demonstrable commitment to equity.	School staff does not have access to and use the findings of research and/or best practice.
School staff do not have ongoing and consistent support stuctures in place to assist them in implementing effective curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices in their classrooms.	School time is not organized to maximize opportunities for teaching and learning.
Staff evaluations and individual professional development plans are not tied to student-learning goals and expectations.	Staff do not have the time to meet in collaborative groups on a regular and frequent basis.
Student achievement and success are not recognized and publicly celebrated.	Student achievement data is not used to identify strengths and weaknesses in assessment practices.
Leadership and/or teachers have a tendency to blame the student and/or his or her circumstances rather than take on the responsibility for teaching the learner.	Student achievement data is not used to identify strengths and weaknesses in the curriculum.
Student-learning and assessment data, both state and local, are not used to inform and adjust instructional content and practice.	Student-learning goals are not clearly communicated to all stakeholders (e.g., teachers, paraprofessionals, parents, students, etc.).

Student-learning goals are not SMART (i.e., specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-bound).	**Teachers do not collaboratively and regularly analyze student work in order to inform classroom curriculum, instruction, and assessment.**
Students do not know how to access additional support when needed.	**Students do not know what is expected in terms of proficient work.**
Teachers and support staff are not organized to provide equitable learning opportunities for each student.	**Teachers and support staff do not demonstrate effective and appropriate use of technology for curriculum and instruction.**
Teachers and support staff do not have the resources they need to effectively implement the curriculum.	**Teachers are not clear about what is expected from them.**
Teachers do not collaborate on designing assessment items that are aligned with the content and expectations of state standards.	**Teachers do not demonstrate that they have the necessary content knowledge to challenge and motivate students to meet high expectations for learning.**
Teachers do not have access to the professional development and support they need to implement a challenging and rigorous curriculum.	**Teachers do not have the same clear, consistent, and high expectations for each student.**
Teachers do not have the pedagogical content knowledge they need to assist students in reaching high levels of achievement.	**Teachers do not hold themselves accountable for student success or failure.**

Teachers do not regularly communicate with families about individual students' progress.	Teachers have a tendency to ask questions that require Yes/No responses or short answers from students rather than asking them to explain their thinking.
Teachers do not use multiple assessment strategies to monitor student progress and learning.	The classroom curriculum content (topics and subject matter) is not aligned with state standards.
The classroom curriculum is not aligned with student performance expectations relative to the content being taught as defined by state standards.	The content of the school's curriculum is not aligned with state standards.
The content of the K-12 curriculum overlaps from one grade to another or has unnecessary gaps.	The curriculum is not clearly articulated across grade levels.
The district and school do not have an accurate and reliable data system in place for analyzing and using multiple measures and sources of student-learning data.	The expectations for proficient student work at each grade level are not the same from one class to another and/or from one teacher to another.
The school community and stakeholders do not share a common vision for effective classroom teaching and learning.	The school does not frequently and regularly evaluate the degree to which it has met its student-learning goals.
The school does not have a process in place to regularly and consistently measure the impact of implemented strategies on identified student-learning goals.	The school does not have a process in place to regularly and consistently measure the implementation of curriculum and instruction.

The school does not have an established plan and/or processes for collecting, managing, and analyzing student-learning and appropriate related data (e.g., attendance rates, course enrollment, race/ethnicity).	The school improvement plan does not incorporate the findings of research and/or best practices in teaching and learning.
The school does not maximize its use of available fiscal resources to focus on supporting the achievement of student-learning goals.	The school plan does not clearly identify resources, timelines, and people responsible for the implementation and monitoring of each strategy.
The school plan is not focused on the achievement of student-learning goals.	The school does not provide structures and supports to meet the diverse needs of students (e.g., physical, academic, emotional, cultural, socioeconomic).
The school staff do not have a relentless focus on high expectations for every student—without exception.	The school does not use and analyze disaggregated student-learning data to address any inequitable learning opportunities and achievement gaps.
The school does not use multiple sources of student-learning data to identify priority student-learning needs and set goals.	The strategies in the school improvement plan have not been implemented and/or there is not data to support their implementation.
Professional development is not sustained enough to enable teachers to move beyond the basic mechanics of curriculum implementation.	Teachers do not use multiple approaches to classroom instruction (e.g., lecture, demonstrations, small group projects, working in pairs).