

Using Root Cause Analysis to Reduce Student Failure

What can you expect to get from this module?

Schools that are successful at closing performance gaps between subgroups of students consistently improve the school and classroom practices that allow students to meet or exceed academic standards. A culture of high performance is fostered by a schoolwide approach to closing gaps by identifying problems and understanding their root causes. School leadership teams attending this training will have a chance to closely examine root causes of problems and research-based solutions within their schools.

What *shouldn't* you expect to get from this module?

This module provides some review of basics of data collection and analysis, but assumes that participants already have a basic knowledge of this area.

Who should take this training?

This module is for school leaders and potential school leaders. The audience may include school teams of principals, aspiring leaders, teacher leaders and others who are members or potential members of the school's instructional leadership team. **NOTE:** In order for this training to have significant impact, the principal **MUST** be part of the school team being trained.

Other SREB Leadership Curriculum Modules that support this module:

The following modules are *suggested* prerequisites for this module: *Using Data to Focus Improvement* and *Creating a High-Performance Learning Culture*. While not having attended these modules will not be a barrier to mastery of the course objectives, participants who already have attended these two modules will have a richer understanding of the concepts in this module. It is essential that participants have a basic understanding of how to interpret and analyze data.

What will you have to do to get the most from this module?

Participants must commit to attending as a team, completing the prework, attending two initial days, completing homework assignments and attending three separate follow-up days. It is important for teams to have time to reflect and apply what they have learned between the initial training and the follow-up sessions.

Big Ideas in This Module

- Nationally, there is neither achievement equity nor programmatic equity. This is true for every state.
- There are groups of children who fall through the cracks, never achieving their full academic potential.
- Some schools have been able to reduce achievement gaps among groups of students. Research reveals that this is due to school and classroom practices that other schools can duplicate.
- The foundation for improvement is a 4E Culture (Engagement, Equity, Expectations and Efficacy).
- Through the savvy use of data, you can identify inequities in achievement and their root causes, in order to determine what changes *you* can make to reduce those inequities.
- It is very difficult to discuss inequities in programs, achievement and teacher quality. Such discussions may make people very uncomfortable as they involve deep feelings related to race, culture, policy and history.
- Data provides a way to somewhat neutralize emotions and help you focus on facts and options within your control.
- Some of your school traditions — or traditional ways of thinking — may limit your ability to identify and implement practices that can make a difference. Trying harder is not the answer; trying *differently* may be the answer, but it requires us to take risks and look at data in ways we have not yet tried.
- Effective school teams continually use data in a planned, thoughtful way to determine how to improve implementation of a strategy and whether to continue pursuing that strategy.

Module Design. *Using Root Cause Analysis to Reduce Student Failure* is a five-day workshop (2+1+1+1). It also includes prework and homework assignments. Each section is described below.

Prework. Participants read two articles about school and classroom practices that make a difference in student achievement. They also gather disaggregated data related to student engagement and achievement and review their school improvement plans.

What is a Culture of High Performance? (five hours, 15 minutes). In this section of the training, participants are exposed to case studies, research and data that clearly show that school culture can and should be shaped to ensure that all students achieve to their potential and aspirations. Discovery learning techniques are used to ensure that participants gain a deep understanding of the effects of a variety of school practices on student learning. Working in small groups, participants use these different sources (case studies, research and data) to develop their own constructs of the practices that influence equity and achievement.

Who is Failing? How? (five hours, 15 minutes). School teams begin the process of analysis — specifying, gathering and analyzing data to answer the questions: Who is achieving? Who is not? What school and classroom practices contribute to gaps in achievement?

Homework. School teams choose an area of focus (a red flag issue) that will help them address inequities and work on the school's improvement plan. They gather data to better understand and define the red flag issue.

How Does Our School's Culture Contribute to Student Success/Failure? What Practices Need to Change? (Day Three). In this section, school teams begin the process of analyzing root causes of their red flag issue. Working in school teams, they form and organize hypotheses. They have a chance to share their work and get feedback from other teams.

Homework. School teams begin gathering data from multiple sources to confirm or dispute the suppositions in their root cause analysis.

Application: Analysis and Planning for New Practices (five hours). School teams have a chance to share their efforts to date with the trainer and other schools, getting feedback and initial third-party ideas about additional work. This day includes school team presentations and feedback, followed by several mixed-group activities designed to encourage further analysis and reflection. By the end of this session, they have an implementation plan.

Homework. School teams work on implementing their plan and gathering data related to its effectiveness.

Are We On the Right Track? How Can We Tell? (four hours) The enthusiasm and ideas that participants gain in training may fade as they face everyday school tasks. In order to ensure that new ideas take hold, professional development efforts must be sustained and embedded. For this reason, teams return for a final session. They present and discuss their work to date, and hear how other schools are doing. Participants then learn about monitoring strategies and how to formatively and summatively evaluate their efforts.