

UNDERSTANDING GAPS IN STUDENT PERFORMANCE: ROOT CAUSE ANALYSIS

**Developed by
Education Development Center, Inc.**

**Offered by
The New Hampshire Department of Education
in collaboration with
The New England Comprehensive Center**

Overview

Data.. Data. And more data. What do we do with all this data? How do we use it effectively to ground the development of our district improvement plans? This 6-session process, "*Understanding Gaps in Student Performance: Root Cause Analysis*," will provide district teams with the guidance to delve into the use of data to identify in a systematic and structured way what are the underlying causes of student performance gaps. Working with an on-site external facilitator, participants will gain information and tools to examine existing data and gather additional data in order to arrive at a deeper understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in their district that most directly impact school improvement and student achievement. This process will require teams to conduct in-depth investigations into potential root causes for the gaps in their students' achievement and confirm those that exist in their district.

Overall Outcome

- The district team will identify priority areas for improvement that will form the basis for the preparation of a District Improvement Plan.

Overall Objective

- To train district teams on how to conduct root cause analysis in the context of a comprehensive approach to the analysis and use of data for the purpose of understanding gaps in student performance and developing District Improvement Plans that directly address confirmed root causes and not just symptoms.

Participant Objectives

- To gain the ability to use a process for identifying and validating the root causes of performance gaps in student outcomes.

- To understand the broader implications of root cause analysis as it fits into a continual district improvement effort.

Staff

Overall Support	Merry Fortier, NH DOE MaryEllen Arigo, NH DOE Maria-Paz Avery, NECC/EDC
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Technical Support	Lori Kincaid, NH DOE
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Audience

District team composition (*=required, **=recommended):

- *'high level' district administrator
- *district curriculum specialist and/or lead teacher in the content area(s) that did not meet AYP
- *district data person who has an understanding of, and access to, various sources of data available in the district
- **principal
- **teacher
- *designated district-level person to serve as team coordinator
- *external facilitator (e.g., staff person from a regional service center, school-based coach or contracted individual that has received training on the RCA process)

Role of the district team: The role of the RCA district team is to coordinate the work of conducting the root cause analysis process, identifying the hypotheses that will be investigated, support and coordinate the collection and analysis of data, and synthesize the findings. The district team is expected to elicit the involvement and assistance of others within the district as appropriate and necessary in order to build broad ownership for this process. The RCA district team could be a subcommittee of a larger District Improvement Planning team.

Suggested individual roles:

- *Team Coordinator*
 1. Notifies team members of the dates and times of face-to-face team meetings.
 2. Coordinates with the external facilitator to ensure progress.
 3. Is the keeper of notes and documentation of activities on the Worksheets
- *External Facilitator*
 1. Develops and supports a team culture that is able to look at the data in a safe, objective way, keeping in mind what is best for their students.
 2. Supports the district team throughout the process.

3. Communicates regularly with the Team Coordinator to ensure that progress is being made.
 4. Flags data collection and analysis issues for the Team Coordinator.
- *Administrators on the Team* (in addition to their work on the team)
 1. Enlists the appropriate people outside the team to assist in conducting investigations of specific hypotheses, including going over the appropriate data analysis plan and how to report the findings on the documentation worksheets.
 2. Updates and develops shared ownership for the work with other administrators in the district who have decision-making and approval authority.
 - *Data person*
 1. Helps group to identify and interpret data sources that are needed to answer specific questions.
 2. Obtains district statistical data as needed by the team.

Approach

- Each session will be posted on a web page on the New Hampshire Department of Education website. Each session will last for a specified period of time (see schedule).
- To accomplish the work and to achieve the intended outcomes, the team will need to schedule several meetings during the time specified for each session and complete agreed upon tasks in-between meetings.
- Each session includes an Introduction that sets the context and provides a rationale for the activities, followed by a presentation of the Key Concepts. Key readings and tools are also provided to support and supplement the Key Concepts. The core of each session consists of site-based assignments that will guide team inquiry into potential root causes for student performance gaps in critical areas of improvement.
- Each session will have a tangible outcome inasmuch as there are specific tasks to be accomplished.
- Tasks will be consistent with the steps of the “Using Data for District Improvement Planning Flow Chart” that will be introduced in Session 1.
- Tasks are designed to serve as building blocks towards the determination of district priority areas for improvement that will be used to prepare the District Improvement Plan.

Timeline of Sessions

Session	Venue	Dates	Topic
Session 1	Face-to-face	October 4 – 10 (1 week)	Introduction to Using Data for District Planning and Root Cause Analysis (RCA) <i>Posted October 4</i>
Session 2	District work	October 4 – October 31 (4 weeks)	RCA: Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment <i>Posted October 4</i>
Session 3	District work	November 1- 14 (2 weeks)	RCA: District Processes <i>Posted October 24</i>
Session 4	District work	November 15 – December 5 (3 weeks)	RCA: Leadership; Culture & Climate <i>Posted November 7</i>
Session 5	District work	December 6- December 11 (1 week)	Identifying the priority areas for district-wide improvement and areas for further investigation, including challenges and next steps <i>Posted November 28</i>
Session 6	Face-to-face	December 12	Transition to the District Improvement Plan <i>Posted December 8</i>