

# Conducting a Root-Cause Analysis with Stakeholders

## INTRODUCTION

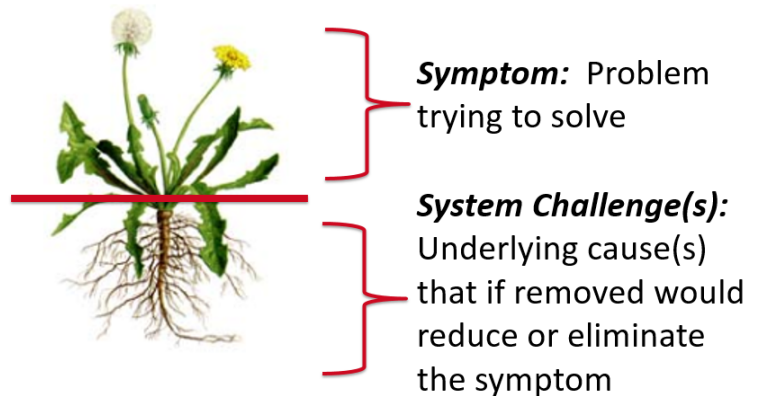
It is imperative to understand *why* gaps in equitable access to excellent educators exist in schools with higher populations of poor and minority students. There are often systemic challenges present within the human capital management system that drive staffing and placement trends of educators which could cause an equity gap(s) to occur. To understand the systemic challenges of individual districts or schools it is necessary to conduct a root-cause analysis with stakeholders.

## MATERIALS NEEDED

- Stakeholder team
- Equity gap data
- Chart paper, sticky notes, pens/markers

## UNDERSTANDING A ROOT-CAUSE ANALYSIS

Once districts and schools complete the data analysis, identifying the most concerning equity gap, districts and schools then conduct a root-cause analysis to understand *why* there are equitable access gaps to excellent educators. A root-cause analysis is a systematic strategy to determine the cause of equity gaps. It is important to differentiate between a symptom – for example, high teacher turnover – and a system challenge, or root cause, of that symptom – for example, a specific weakness in the building leadership.



*Designed by Battelle for Kids*

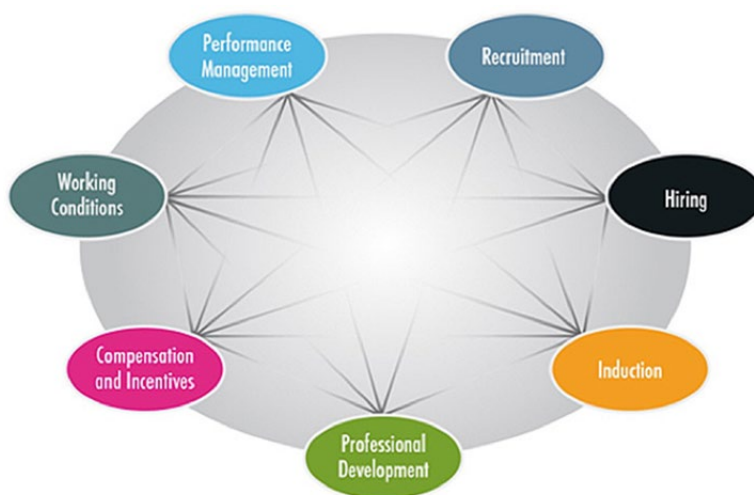
## STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT

Districts and schools should invite stakeholders into the root-cause analysis process. This can include, but is not limited to, teachers, principals, district administration, school improvement support staff, human resource staff, community organizations, federal program coordinators, teacher association representatives, teacher leaders, local school board, parents and/or other stakeholders deemed appropriate for this planning process. Stakeholders provide essential perspectives in their various roles that can inform why gaps are occurring.

## CONDUCTING A ROOT-CAUSE ANALYSIS

As the district or school conducts the root-cause analysis, stakeholders should take into consideration the human capital management system for educators (both principals and teachers) from preparation to retirement. Activities and policies found in this continuum encompass recruitment, selection, hiring, induction, deployment, evaluation, development and career advancement.<sup>1</sup> During the root-cause analysis process, it is important to keep the focus on **educators and not students**. Stakeholders should ask reflective questions about the human capital management system in the district and the influence of that system on gaps in equitable access to excellent educators for poor and minority students.

**You can use the following steps to conduct your root-cause analysis:**



1. Develop a problem statement based on the most concerning gap from the data analysis. Use the problem statement to focus the root-cause analysis process.
2. Individually list on a sticky note what could be causing inequitable access in your building. Make sure to use the data from your analysis.
3. As a group, sort these sticky notes into categories on the chart paper. You can use a tool such as a [fishbone diagram](#) to further visualize the possible causes of your systems challenges.
4. Continue to dig down to find the most likely cause until your group is satisfied that you have identified the correct systems challenge. Identify the correct systems challenge that when addressed will alleviate the equity gap.

<sup>1</sup> Diagram taken from: ODE (2010). METWorks Ohio Frame Work. Retrieved from <http://education.ohio.gov/Topics/Teaching/Educator-Equity/METworks-in-Ohio>

**It is important to remember the following strategies when conducting a root-cause analysis:**

- Focus on system challenges, not symptoms
- Keep in mind your sphere of influence
  - Focus your changes on the adults, not the students
  - Emphasize what you can control over what you cannot control
- Remember that the symptom can be reduced or eliminated if the system challenge is addressed
- There is rarely one root cause in complex systems such as education