What is Tennessee•Focus?

Tennessee•Focus is an instructional-improvement online module that allows a team of educators to assess their results and plan for improvement. This analysis can be conducted at both the teacher team level and the individual classroom level. If you would like to conduct this analysis at the classroom level, enroll in the Tennessee•Classroom Focus course.

During this analysis, you will:

1. Examine and assess your student performance data;
2. Establish the strengths and challenges associated with your current academic program;
3. Identify one area of strength and one area of challenge around which to build team goals;
4. Determine the root causes of your identified area of strength and area of challenge;
5. Produce SMART goals and action plans to:

    a. Amplify/expand your area of strength; and,
    b. Productively address your area of challenge.

At the end of this analysis, you will:

Download a document called Focus Forward that inventories all of your work in Tennessee•Focus.

If you would like to see a sample Focus Forward document, click here.

Tips for Facilitating Focus

Focus works best when it is facilitated by a person who is not a part of the Focus team. Facilitation instructions are provided in the Facilitating BFK•Focus document, available here.

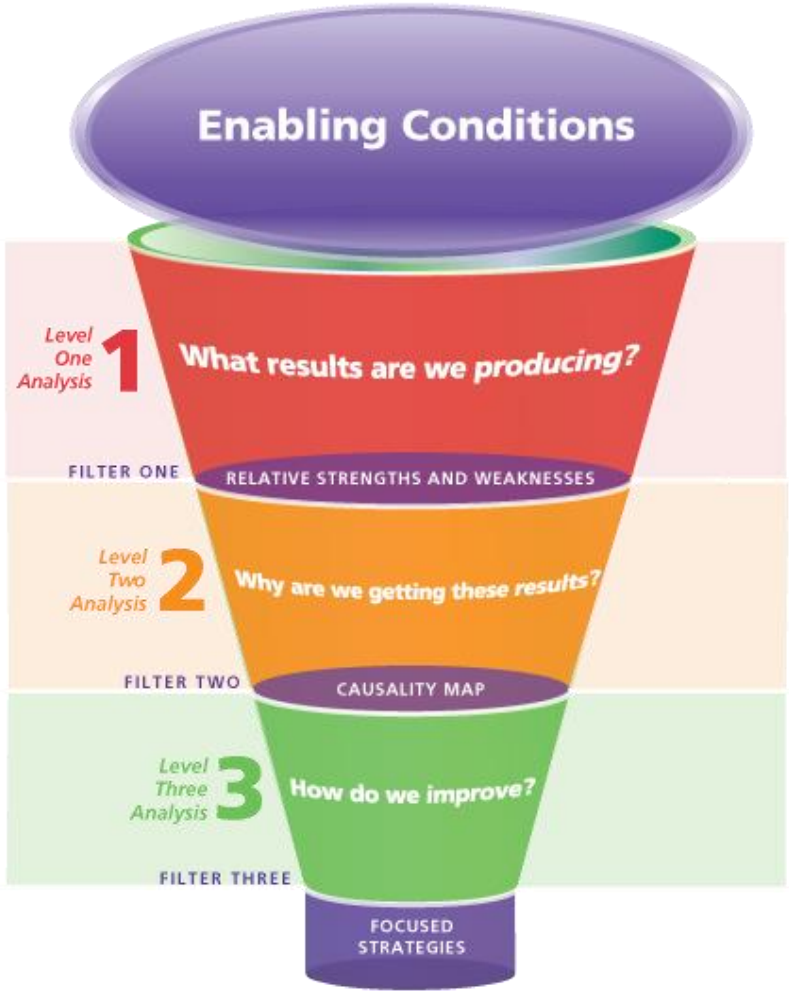
DOWNLOAD DOCUMENT

Developed by Battelle for Kids, BFK•Focus is referred to as Tennessee•Focus throughout this process.

Structure of Focus - "The Funnel"

Tennessee•Focus is organized into the following four Team Activities:

Preparing for Tennessee•Focus
Introduces teachers, administrators and other participants to the purpose and objectives for Tennessee•Focus.
Level 1 Analysis: Achievement and Progress **Data Analysis**
Uncovers strengths and challenges in achievement and value-added data.
Level 2 Analysis: Root Cause Analysis
Uses root cause analysis to uncover factors underlying strengths and challenges.
Level 3 Analysis: Instructional-Improvement Planning
Includes the development of SMART goals and action plans to improve instruction.



Battelle for Kids recommends that you work through each Tennessee•Focus Team Activity sequentially to make sure that you and your team are getting the support you need to create a fully-operational action plan.

A Word about Enabling Conditions

At the top of the Tennessee•Focus Funnel is a bubble titled, “Enabling Conditions.” Enabling Conditions are school- and district-level factors that support a culture of continuous improvement.

Enabling Conditions

1. Both the district and the school have a clearly articulated vision for continuous improvement.
2. District policies and frameworks support the continuous-improvement mindset.
3. District and school personnel recognize the importance of data and information for school improvement.
4. Educators across the district understand progress and achievement measures.
5. Principals are expected to be instructional leaders.
6. Collaborative planning and learning time are built into the schedule.

If these conditions are present within your school, they will strengthen and reinforce the Tennessee•Focus activity. However, the relative absence of these conditions is not a reason to shy away from Tennessee•Focus. The experience itself will help establish a collaborative culture within your building.

Preparing to use Tennessee•Focus

As you progress through Tennessee•Focus, you will be asked to discuss information and make judgments associated with your team's educational practice. There are no right or wrong answers — You are simply being asked to move forward with your best assessment of the available information.

Improvement is almost never easy or straightforward. In fact, things sometimes get worse before they get better. Participants must enter this process with their eyes open and with the knowledge that real improvement is as much about commitment and persistence as it is about selecting exactly the right course of action.

Ultimately, this online module is useful to the extent that it moves your team toward collective action.

As you progress through Tennessee•Focus:

Remember

- *There are no right or wrong answers.*
- *Concerted efforts yield results.*
- *There is no "one best way," — only what's right for your team.*

Progressing through Tennessee•Focus

In the activities that follow, your team will be asked to submit information into text boxes. Later, you will be asked to make judgments based on the information you entered.

For example, as a 4th grade team, you may be asked to enter achievement data for all four subject areas represented on your team. Later, you will be asked to identify strengths and challenges associated with that information.

At the end of Tennessee•Focus, all of your team's efforts will be captured in a document called Focus Forward. The purpose of this document is to support your team as you work to improve your instruction. If you want to document your work along the way, you can always print any screen in Tennessee•Focus through the Print command in your browser.

Outcomes of Tennessee•Focus

Upon completing this online module, you will have identified:

- A list of your team's strengths and challenges in terms of student performance data.
- Two areas of team improvement—one based on an area of strength and one based on an area of challenge.
- A set of "root causes" associated with your chosen areas of strength and challenge.
- A SMART goal and a preliminary action plan constructed to address each of your two areas of improvement.

	*The decision of "what" to improve is less critical than the decision to improve something. By bringing focus to an issue and by working together over time to understand and address the issue, positive results will emerge!*

Limitations of Tennessee•Focus Version 1.0

This first version of Tennessee•Focus has some limitations because of structural aspects of the Tennessee•Learn platform. These limitations will be addressed in later versions of Tennessee•Focus.

Limitations:

1. Currently, the only way to enroll in Tennessee•Focus is as an individual. In later versions of Tennessee•Focus, Focus participants will be able to enroll as members of a team. If one facilitator leads several teams through the Tennessee•Focus process, make sure that a different person enrolls in Tennessee•Focus each time so that a record for each trip through the planning process persists in the system.
2. Currently, text boxes are the only kind of entry format available in Tennessee•Focus. In later versions, data entry will be streamlined with more efficient data entry formats.
3. In this version of Tennessee•Focus, you must access student performance information separate from the process. In later versions of Tennessee•Focus, you may be able to access this information directly from within the process itself.
4. The final output from completing the Tennessee•Focus online module is a document called "Focus Forward." It provides a detailed accounting of your team's data, your analysis of these data and your team's action planning based on these data. In this version of Tennessee•Focus your action planning will be done off-line. To complete your Focus Forward document, you will have to manually add your action planning items to the document. In later versions of Tennessee•Focus, action planning will be done online and those results will automatically be displayed in your Focus Forward document.

Establishing Your Tennessee•Focus Team

Record below the name of the process facilitator on this improvement team. Required

Record below the names of all the other members on this improvement team. Required

Gather Materials

In this version of Tennessee•Focus, you will need to collect student performance information prior to starting the Focus process. In later versions, you may be able to collect these materials within the process itself.

✓ Materials Check

1. A copy of the most recent Achievement Report for your school. Within that report, you will need:
    a. Student passage rates for the subjects and grade levels represented on your team.
    b. Trends in these achievement data
    c. Information on subgroup passage rates.
    d. AYP results for subjects taught by your team.
    e. Item analysis results if available
2. A copy of particular TVAAS® value-added reports.
    a. School and district (if available) value-added reports for each of the subject areas represented on your team.
    b. School and district (if available) diagnostic reports for each grade level and subject area represented on your team.
3. As your team moves through Tennessee•Focus, other information may become important. You will need to gather these materials as the needs of the team dictate.

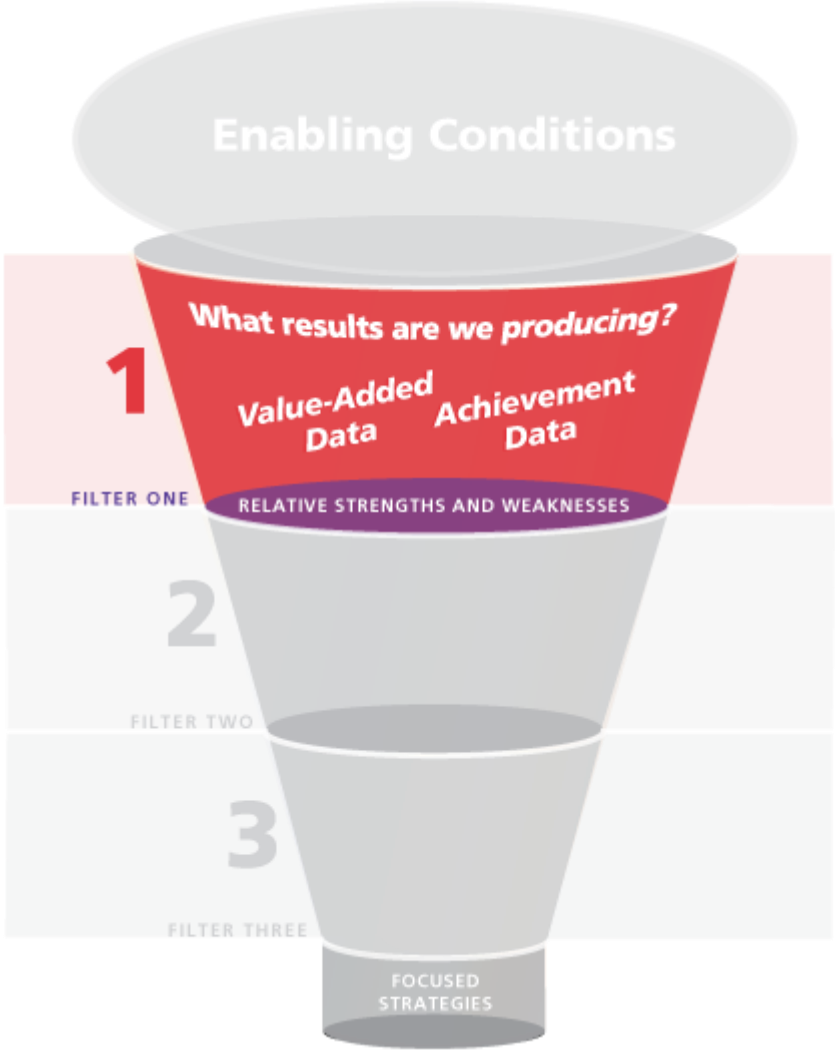
Level 1: Achievement and Progress Data Analysis

Purpose:
The purpose of Level 1 Analysis is to examine your achievement and progress data and determine your areas of strength and challenge.

Outcomes:
In Tennessee•Focus Level 1, your team will:

1. Analyze its achievement and progress results.
2. Generate a list of strengths and challenges based on your achievement and progress results.

For the first part of Level I Analysis, you will focus on the achievement data that appears on the in your AEIS Report and AYP results.



✓Materials Check

Please have copies of your most recent **State Achievement Report and AYP results** as well as your **school and district value-added reports** and your **school and district diagnostic reports** available for all team members.

The Power of Two

When viewed alongside one another, Achievement and Progress data provide important insights into the depth, breadth and rate of student learning. While related, these two metrics provide very different kinds of information.

Achievement Data:
Tells you what your students know relative to state standards. Students who pass achievement tests have met minimum competencies as defined by the state of Tennessee.
EXAMPLES: • Classroom Assignments/Projects • School Report Card • Summative Interim and Formative Assessment Results

Progress Data:
Tells you how your curriculum and instruction are impacting students. Is your program producing adequate student growth? Are some students growing more than others?
EXAMPLES: TVAAS® Reports like: • District and School Value-Added Reports • District and School Diagnostic Reports • School and Student Searches

When these two different metrics are examined jointly, you literally have “The Power of Two.” You know where students are relative to state standards, and you know how well your current program is working to move students from where they are to where they need to be. With this information in hand, you have what you need to assess the quality of the current instructional program and to set targets for instructional improvement.

Achievement Data Analysis

Achievement Data Results

For each grade level and subject area represented on your team, record your passage rates, the passage rate trend over the last two years, the passage rate of any student subgroups that are below average and the Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) result for that subject area. If Tennessee accountability results are not available, skip the passage rate and AYP results for that subject.

Example:

Fifth grade math
Passage rate—74%
Passage rate relatively stable over the last two years
Students with disabilities have only a 57% passage rate
AYP results—all Math subgroups met AYP except for Students with Disabilities

Record your team's achievement results below. Required

Achievement - Strengths

Given the achievement results (recorded below from prior work), what are your relative achievement strengths? Use the guidelines below to identify your strengths.

Guidelines to identify strengths:

1. Passage rate and/or passage rate trend is high relative to:
    a. Other subject areas for the team, and/or
    b. Other schools within the district, and/or
    c. The average passage rate in the state
2. Meeting AYP with subgroups that are problematic for the school or district.

Example:

Fifth Grade Math - 74% passage rate is trending upward the last three years, and is tops for the district even though we are below the state proficiency level.

AND/OR

Fifth Grade Reading - This is the only subject for which we are meeting AYP with all subgroups.

Record your achievement strengths below. Required

Achievement - Challenges

Given the achievement results (recorded below from prior work), what are your relative achievement challenges? Use the guidelines below to identify your challenges.

Guidelines to identify challenges:

1. Passage rate and/or passage rate trend is low relative to:
    a. Other subject areas for the team, and/or
    b. Other schools within the district, and/or
    c. The average passage rate in the state
2. Not meeting AYP with any subgroups.

Example:

Fifth Grade Science - 54% passage rate is below both the district passage rate and the state passage rate and is trending downward.

AND/OR

Fifth Grade Reading - This is the only subject area for which we have missed AYP for two consecutive years.

Record your achievement challenges below. Required

Aggregate Value-Added - Strengths

Given your aggregate value-added results (recorded below from prior work), what are your team's aggregate value-added strengths? Use the accompanying guidelines and examples to identify your strengths.

Example:

Fifth Grade Math - In the most recent year, this is the only subject in which our students are making above expected gains.

AND/OR

Fifth Grade Reading - We have been almost three standard errors above expected for the last three years.

Guidelines to identify aggregate value-added strengths:

1. The most recent year's Mean Gain or School Effect is high relative to:
    a. Other subject areas for the team, and/or
    b. Other schools within the district
2. Long-term trend is strong relative to:
    a. Other subject areas on the team, and/or
    b. Other schools within the district

Aggregate Value-Added Results

Examine the School Value-Added Report(s) associated with your team's grade level(s) and subject area(s). For each grade level and subject area represented on your team, record the school's Mean Gain or School Effect, the associated standard error and the designation (color).

Example:

Fifth Grade Math:
Mean Gain: 3.4 NCEs
Standard Error: 1.2
Designation: Green

Record below the aggregate value-added results that relate to your team. Required

Aggregate Value-Added - Strengths

Given your aggregate value-added results (recorded below from prior work), what are your team's aggregate value-added strengths? Use the accompanying guidelines and examples to identify your strengths.

Example:

Fifth Grade Math - In the most recent year, this is the only subject in which our students are making above expected gains.

AND/OR

Fifth Grade Reading - We have been almost three standard errors above expected for the last three years.

Guidelines to identify aggregate value-added strengths:

1. The most recent year's Mean Gain or School Effect is high relative to:
    a. Other subject areas for the team, and/or
    b. Other schools within the district
2. Long-term trend is strong relative to:
    a. Other subject areas on the team, and/or
    b. Other schools within the district

Record your team's aggregate value-added strengths below. Required

Aggregate Value-Added - Challenges

Given your aggregate value-added results (recorded below from prior work), what are your team's aggregate value-added challenges? Use the accompanying guidelines and examples to identify your challenges.

Example:

Fifth Grade Math - In the most recent year, this is the only subject in which our students are making below expected gains.

AND/OR

Fifth Grade Reading - We have been consistently below average district gains for the last three years.

Guidelines to identify aggregate value-added challenges:

1. The most recent year's Mean Gain or School Effect is low relative to:
    a. Other subject areas for the team, and/or
    b. Other schools within the district
2. Long-term trend is poor relative to:
    a. Other subject areas on the team, and/or
    b. Other schools within the district

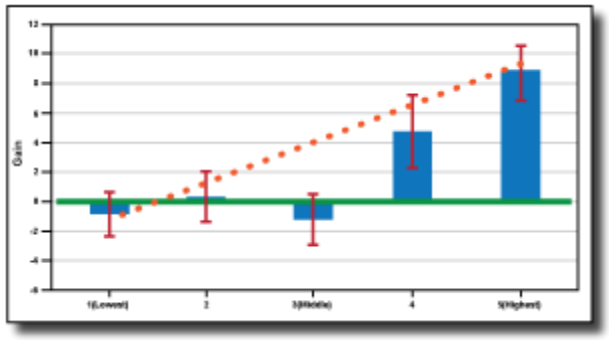
Record your team's aggregate value-added challenges below. Required

Diagnostic Value-Added Results

Examine the School Diagnostic result(s) associated with your team's grade level(s) and subject area(s). For each grade level and subject area represented on your team, record the gain pattern (Click here to download information on gain patterns) and whether each quintile subgroup is:

1. At least one standard error above expected gains (+);
2. Within one standard error of expected gains (0); or
3. At least one standard error below expected gains (-).

Example:



Team Fifth Grade Math:
Upward Shed Pattern
1st: (0), 2nd: (0), 3rd: (0), 4th: (+), 5th: (+)

Record below the diagnostic value-added results that relate to your team. Required

Diagnostic Reports - Strengths

Given your team's Diagnostic Value-Added results (recorded below from prior work), what are your team's diagnostic value-added strengths? Use the accompanying guidelines and examples to identify your strengths.

Example:

Fifth Grade Math — In the most recent year, this is the only subject in which our students are making above expected gains in all quintiles.

AND/OR

Fifth Grade as a whole — Our first and second quintile students have made more than expected growth in all four subject areas.

Guidelines to identify diagnostic value-added strengths:

One or more diagnostic reports display:

1. all student subgroups making at least expected growth.
2. a growth pattern that is more positive than that of other subject areas.
3. high levels of growth with students who are displaying poor growth in other schools in the district.
4. more than expected growth with students who are below proficiency.
5. a long-term trend of high growth or improvement in quintile growth.

Record your diagnostic value-added strengths below. Required

Diagnostic Reports - Challenges

Given your team's Diagnostic Value-Added results (recorded below from prior work), what are your team's diagnostic value-added challenges? Use the accompanying guidelines and examples to identify your challenges.

Example:

Fifth Grade Math — In the most recent year, this is the only subject in which our low achieving students are making less than expected gains.

AND/OR

Fifth Grade Reading — We have produced less than expected growth in the top two quintiles for the last three years.

Guidelines to identify diagnostic value-added challenges:

One or more diagnostic reports display:

1. all student subgroups making less than expected growth.
2. a growth pattern that is less positive than that of other subject areas.
3. low levels of growth with students who are generally displaying positive growth across the district.
4. less than expected growth with students who are below proficiency.
5. a long-term trend of low growth or decline in quintile growth.

Record your diagnostic value-added challenges below. Required

Level 1 Analysis - Reflection

Consider the following prompts for reflection or discussion to help you plan for success:

What areas of strength suprised you? Required

What areas of strength did you expect and were confirmed by the data? Required

What areas of challenge suprised you? Required

What areas of challenge did you expect and were confirmed by the data? Required

Level 2: Root Cause Analysis

Purpose:
The purpose of Level 2 Analysis is to select an area of strength and an area of challenge on which to focus continued attention. After these are identified, your team will uncover factors that help account for these results.

Outcomes:
In Level 2 Analysis, teams will:

1. Examine the list of achievement and progress strengths and challenges you developed in Level 1.
2. Select one strength and one challenge to carry forward through the rest of the analysis.
3. Assess the instruction, curriculum, and systemic, assessment and teacher development factors that are significantly contributing to the areas of strength and challenge you selected.

The Use of Examples

Very few educators have experience with identifying instructional strengths and challenges or with root cause analysis. While these processes are not difficult, they are likely different from other things you may have done. To support your learning in these areas, two different kinds of examples are provided.

The Big Picture Examples
At the beginning of the strength- and challenge-based analysis sections, you have the option to download a **big picture example** of root cause analysis. These larger scale examples provide a look at the entire process of root cause analysis.

In-Process Examples
In-process examples are also included at multiple places throughout Level 2. The strength-based in-process examples are color-coded **Green**. The challenge-based in-process examples are color-coded **Red**.

Review Strengths from Level 1 Analysis

Level 2 Areas of Strength

Review your list of achievement and progress strengths.

As you scan your list of achievement and progress strengths, which:

1. Represents a significant area of concern for your school or district?
2. Represents an area of the curriculum for which you have some passion?
3. Represents a unique strength of your teaching team or of someone on your teaching team?
4. Could be leveraged to create additional area(s) of strength for your teaching team or your school?
5. Is related in some way(s) to an important area of challenge?
6. Is critical to the development of the students you teach?

Select a Focus Strength

As a team, discuss which area of strength best satisfies one or more of these conditions.

Choose one of these strengths to carry on to the next phase of the Level 2 Analysis and list it below:

Team A - Strength

Example: Team A produced strong growth with average and high achieving students in Math and Science.

Record your area of strength below. Required

Review Challenges from Level 1 Analysis

Level 2 Areas of Challenge

Review your list of achievement and progress challenges.

As you scan your list of progress and achievement challenges, which:

1. Represents a significant area of concern for your school or your district?
2. Represents an area of the curriculum for which you have real need for growth?
3. Represents a unique and pressing challenge for your teaching team?
4. If overcome, would have benefits across more than one subject area or grade level?
5. Is related in some way(s) to an important area of strength?
6. Is critical to the development of the students you teach?

Select a Focus Challenge

As a team, discuss which area of challenge best satisfies one or more of these conditions.

Choose one of these challenges to carry on to the next phase of the Level 2 analysis and list it below.

Team A - Challenge

Example: The bottom two quintiles of Team A's reading students made less than expected growth each of the last two years.

Record your area of challenge below. Required

Root Cause Overview

Probing for the “root causes” of your area of strength and area of challenge:

In this second part of Level 2 Analysis, you will be uncovering factors, called **root causes**, that tend to produce your particular strengths and your particular challenges. By definition, these are factors over which you have considerable influence. The primary reason for uncovering root causes is that they provide a significant lever for improvement. It only stands to reason—if something is working, you need to know why so that you can get more of it; if something is not working, you need to know why so that you can fix it.

What is an educational root cause?

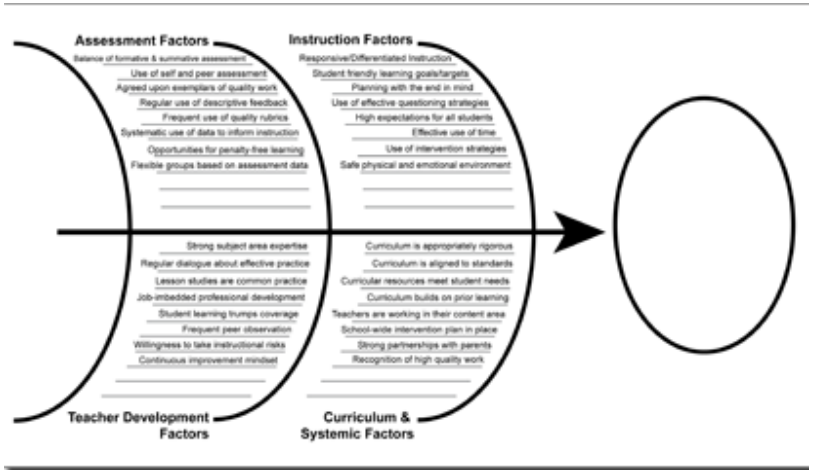
For our purposes, educational root causes are curricular and systemic factors, instructional factors, assessment factors and/or teacher development factors that contribute to particular academic outcomes.

In the pages that follow, you will be taken through a process for uncovering root causes associated with your identified strength and challenge.

You will begin by examining your identified area of strength. This is not an arbitrary choice. Most educators have a better grasp of what they do to create positive outcomes than what they do that contributes to negative outcomes. So by starting with an area of strength, you will be practicing a process that will allow you to get traction in an area of challenge. Second, and perhaps more important, educators pay too little attention to things that go well. The “root causes” of your successes can and should be leveraged to produce higher levels of success in other areas.

Preparing for Your Strength-Based Analysis

You will begin your strength-based analysis with a particular kind of cause/effect diagram called a Fishbone. This tool allows you to explore the factors that may be contributing to a particular outcome. In this strength-based analysis, the "effect" you are interested in is the area of strength you have previously identified.



To the left of the "fish head" are large "bones" that represent four categories of "causation" over which you have considerable influence.

These areas are:

1. Instructional Factors
2. Curriculum & Systemic Factors
3. Assessment Factors
4. Teacher Development Factors

Attached to these "large bones" are more specific factors that could be contributing to the identified area of strength. The empty lines on the diagram are places to add additional causal factors that emerge from your conversation.

Remember

Any additional factors you add:

1. Must connect to the larger category.

2. Must be something over which you have a measure of control.

An Overview of Your Strength-Based Analysis

In the analysis that follows you will:

Step 1:
Write down your area of strength in the "head" of the fishbone.

Step 2:
Select the fishbone factors that have a clear causal relation to your identified area of strength.

Step 3:
Assess the significance of each of the factors you have chosen.

Step 4:
Record the factors that have strong causal links to the identified area of strength.

Note

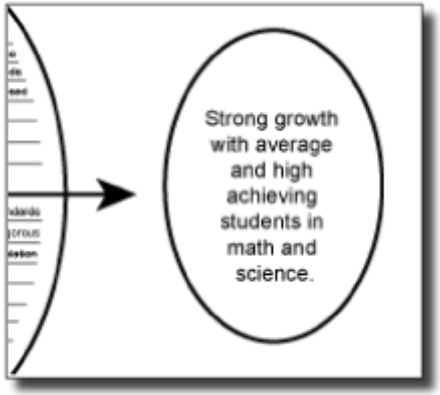
If you would like to read through an example of a completed strength-based analysis, click here.

Using the Strength-Based Fishbone

Step 1: **Click here to download a copy of the strength-based fishbone. Print a copy for each participant, then write down your area of strength in the "head" of the fishbone.**

Team A - Strength

Example: Team A produced strong growth with average and high achieving students in Math and Science.



In earlier work, you identified an area of strength.

Write your area of strength in the head of your fishbone.

Using the Strength-Based Fishbone

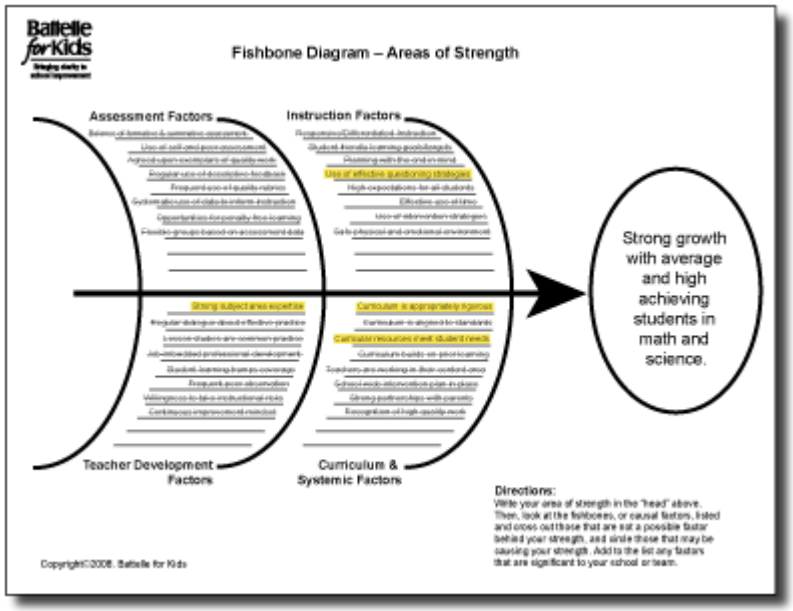
Step 2: **Select the fishbone "factors" that have produced the identified area of strength.**

In Step 2, your team is exploring why your area of strength has emerged. **What is it that you and your teammates put in place that produced this specific area of strength?** Begin by looking at the area of the fishbone entitled, **Instructional Factors**. Are any of the listed factors things you and your team did that account for your area of strength?

Team A - Strength

Example: Team A identified "Strong growth with average and high achieving students in Math and Science" as their area of strength. Their task is to figure out why average- and high-achieving students are displaying high growth and **low achieving students are not.** What is happening at their grade level that is boosting the growth of some students and not others? Are their average- and high-achieving students showing strong growth because of:

1. Responsive/Differentiated Instruction?
2. Student friendly learning goals/targets?
3. Planning with the end in mind?
4. The use of effective questioning strategies?
5. High expectations for all students?
6. An effective use of time?
7. The use of intervention strategies?
8. A safe physical and emotional environment?



Team A identified factor 4 - The use of effective questioning strategies. They also identified three other factors highlighted in the fishbone above.

When your team has have moved through all of the **Instructional Factors**, move on to the next category and repeat the same process. Make sure your team adds other important factors that are not listed but fit within the category. Remember, these must be factors over which you have a measure of control.

When your team has completed this process, you will have identified one or more factors that have potential causal links to the strength you have identified.

Using the Strength-Based Fishbone

Step 3: **Assess the significance of each of the factors you have chosen.**

As your team looks at the factors that emerged from your fishbone analysis, what can you cite from your experience or from available evidence that supports each of these factors as an essential contributor to your identified area of strength? Remove from your list those factors that do not pass this test.

Team A - Strength

Example: Team A has identified four factors that are likely contributors to the identified area of strength, "Strong growth with average and high achieving students in Math and Science." These factors are:

1. Use of effective questioning strategies.
2. Curriculum is appropriately rigorous.
3. ~~Curricular resources meet student needs.~~
4. Strong subject area expertise.

As Team A discussed each of these factors, the third factor was rejected. Teachers felt like the curriculum was also well suited for low achieving students.

What evidence supports each of the factors on your list as "critical" factors? Does each of these factors have strong causal connections to the identified area of strength?

Record Causal Factors - Strengths

Step 4:

Record the factor(s) that have strong causal links to your team's identified area of strength.

Record the causal factor(s) associated with the identified area of strength below. Required

Probing an Area of Challenge

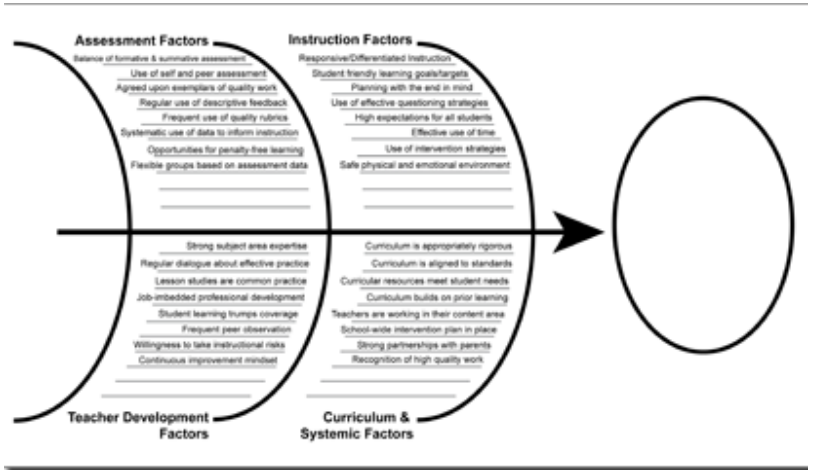
Probing for the “root causes” of your area of challenge:

Your team has now completed the root cause analysis of an area of strength. You will now follow a similar pattern to explore the factors that may be producing an area of challenge.

This analysis may be a little more difficult because your team may be more puzzled about the factors that are responsible for producing an area of challenge.

Preparing for Your Challenge-Based Analysis

You will begin your challenge-based analysis with a particular kind of cause/effect diagram called a fishbone. This tool allows you to explore the factors that may be contributing to a particular outcome. In this challenge-based analysis, the "effect" you are interested in is the area of challenge you have previously identified.



To the left of the "fish head" are large "bones" that represent four categories of "causation" over which you have considerable influence. These areas are:

1. Instructional Factors
2. Curriculum & Systemic Factors
3. Assessment Factors
4. Teacher Development Factors

Attached to these "large bones" are more specific factors that could be contributing to the identified area of challenge. The empty lines on the diagram are places to add additional causal factors that emerge from your conversation.

Any additional factors you add:

Remember

1. Must connect to the larger category.
2. Must be something over which you have a measure of control.

Challenge-Based Analysis Overview

In the analysis that follows you will:

Step 1:
Write down your area of challenge in the "head" of the fishbone.

Step 2:
Select the fishbone factors that have a causal relation to your identified area of challenge.

Step 3:
Assess the significance of each of the factors you have chosen.

Step 4:
Record the factors that have strong causal links to the identified area of challenge.

Note

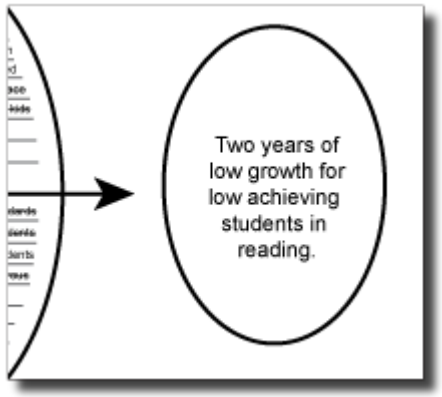
If you would like to read through an example of a completed challenge-based analysis, click here.

Using the Challenge-Based Fishbone

Step 1: **Click here to download a copy of the challenge-based fishbone. Print a copy for each participant, then write down your area of challenge in the "head" of the fishbone.**

Team A - Challenge

Example: Two consecutive years of below expected growth with low achieving students in reading.



In earlier work, you identified an area of challenge.

Record this area of challenge in the head of your fishbone.

Using the Challenge-Based Fishbone

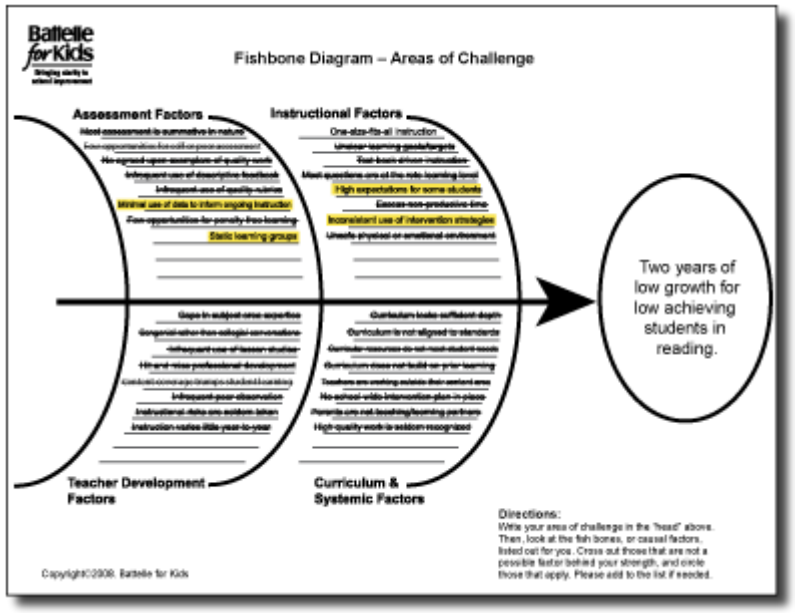
Step 2: **Select the fishbone "factors" that have contributed to the emergence of your area of challenge.**

In Step 2, your team is exploring why your area of challenge has emerged. **What is an element of current practice that helps to account for this specific area of challenge?** Begin by looking at the area of the fishbone entitled **Instructional Factors**. Would any of the listed factors produce your identified area of challenge?

Team A - Challenge

Example: Team A identified "Two consecutive years of below expected growth with low-achieving students in reading," as their area of challenge. Their task is to figure out why these students are displaying low growth and **average- and high-achieving are not.** What is happening at their grade level that explains limited growth for some students and not others? Are low-achieving students showing less than expected growth because of:

1. One-size-fits-all instruction?
2. Unclear learning goals/targets?
3. Text-book driven instruction?
4. Most questions being at the rote-learning level?
5. High expectations for some students?
6. Too much non-productive time?
7. The inconsistent use of intervention strategies?
8. An unsafe physical or emotional environment?



Team A identified two factors from this list - 5 and 7 - as potential causal factors. They also identified two factors associated with assessment. These are highlighted above.

When your team has moved through all of the **Instructional Factors**, move on to the next category and repeat the same process. Make sure your team adds other important factors that are not listed but fit within the category. Remember, these must be factors over which you have some measure of control.

When your team has completed this process, you will have identified one or more factors that have important causal links to the challenge you have identified.

Key Factors - Challenges

Step 3: **Assess the significance of each of the factors you have chosen.**

As your team looks at the factors that emerged from the fishbone analysis, what can you cite from your experience or from available evidence that supports each of these factors as an essential contributor to the identified area of challenge? Remove from your list those factors that do not pass this test.

Team A - Challenge

Example: Team A identified four factors that are likely contributors to the identified area of challenge, "Two consecutive years of below expected growth with low achievers in reading." These factors are:

1. ~~High expectations for some students.~~
2. Inconsistent use of intervention strategies.
3. Minimal use of data to inform ongoing instruction.
4. Static learning groups.

As Team A discussed each of these factors, the first one was rejected. Teachers felt like they were communicating high expectations to their poor readers.

What evidence supports each of the factors on your list as "critical" factors? Does each of these factors have strong causal connections to the identified area of strength?

Record Causal Factors - Challenges

Step 4:

Record the factor(s) that have strong causal links to your team's identified area of challenge.

Record the causal factor(s) associated with your identified area of challenge below. Required

Level 2 - Reflection

Consider the following prompts for reflection or discussion to help you plan for success:

Were the factors associated with your area of strength mostly instructional factors, curriculum & systemic factors, assessment factors or teacher development factors? Required

What factor(s) associated with your area of strength surprised you? Required

Were the factors associated with your area of challenge mostly instructional factors, curriculum & systemic factors, assessment factors or teacher development factors? Required

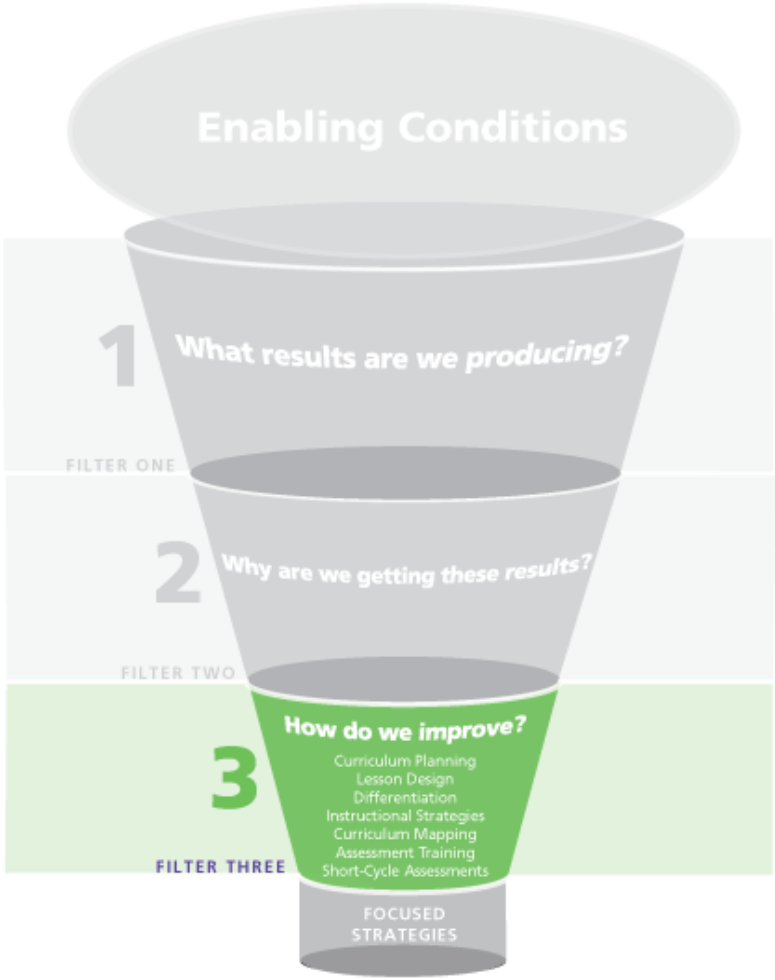
What factor(s) associated with your area of challenge surprised you? Required

Level 3: Instructional-Improvement Planning

Purpose:
The purpose of Level 3 Analysis is to use the work from Levels 1 and 2 to create instructional-improvement goals and supporting action plans.

Outcomes:
In Tennessee•Focus, teams will:

1. Create one SMART goal for improvement using the area of strength and the associated root causes from Level 2 Analysis.
2. Construct a strength-based action plan that includes action steps, resources, timelines, accountabilities and indicators of success.
3. Create one SMART goal for improvement using the area of challenge and the associated root causes from Level 2 Analysis.
4. Build a challenge-based action plan that includes action steps, resources, timelines, accountabilities and indicators of success.



Connecting to Prior Work

In Levels 1 and 2 your team has:

1. Examined your value-added and achievement results;
2. Determined the current strengths and challenges of your team's program in terms of student performance results;
3. Selected one area of strength and one area of challenge to focus your team's continued learning, experimentation and improvement; and
4. Uncovered Root Causes for your identified area of strength and area of challenge.

The intent of Level 3 is to use the information your team has already generated to create concrete SMART goals and action plans for instructional improvement. There are no hard and fast formulaic rules for creating these goals and action plans, but without goals, action plans and accountabilities real long-term improvement is unlikely.

SMART Goal Overview

A SMART goal is a goal that meets particular requirements for specificity as captured in the acronym SMART.

– Strategic and Specific. A SMART goal is designed to improve both the short- and long-term effectiveness of your teaching team and your students' learning experience. It clearly states, in simple language, exactly what you want to accomplish.

– Measurable. A SMART goal is measurable in a readily-available and specified way with both interim and summative measures considered.

– Attainable. A SMART goal is challenging, but ultimately achievable. It is a goal for which you and your team are willing to be held accountable.

– Relevant and Rigorous. A SMART goal is tied directly to the specific strengths and challenges associated with your teaching team and with the results you are currently producing with your students. Achieving this goal demands a higher level of effectiveness from everyone.

– Time Bound. A SMART goal can be accomplished in the span of a school year.

Examples of SMART goals:
• I will lose three pounds a month for the next six months for a total loss of 18 pounds. • Over the 2008-2009 school year, our seventh grade team will improve its average math score on the end-of-course exam from 70% to 80%. • The fifth quintile students in fifth grade math will make above expected growth for the 2008-2009 school year.

Examples of goals that are not very SMART:
• I want to lose some weight. • I want to improve my students' performance. • I want to see more progress from my students.

Producing Your Team's Strength-Based Goal and Action Plan

When your team knows where it is producing great results (your identified area of strength) and why it is getting these results (root cause analysis), it is a small step to leverage that knowledge for even more effective practice. This kind of improvement may show up as:

1. Additional growth in one subject-area based on methods that work in another.
2. Collaborative work with another grade-level or department team to help them improve in an area where your team is strong.
3. Modified resources that are modeled after other resources that have proven effective with other students or other subject areas.
4. Collaborative work within your team to share one teacher's strength with other team members.
5. A school-wide or district-wide presentation based on an area of strength of the team.

In what follows your team will produce a SMART goal and a plan of action to leverage an area of strength your team already possesses.

SMART Goal Setting - Strengths

Examine your identified area of strength and the root causes associated with that strength from Level 2 Analysis.

The Level 2 Select a Strength Input has not yet been completed.

What could you do to:
1. Leverage this strength so that it enhances your current students' learning? 2. Broaden the relevance of this strength so that it impacts more students more often? 3. Share this strength and what you did to produce it with other teachers so that this strength is more accessible to more students? 4. Leverage this strength to address an area of challenge for your team or for another team within your school? 5. Leverage your surroundings to make this strength even more prevalent and powerful than it currently is?

Your Strength-Based SMART Goal:
As you contemplate your identified area of strength and how it might be leveraged, reflect on the following questions: 1. What do you want to do? 2. Who will be involved in the fulfillment of this SMART goal? 3. What will be different when you are finished? 4. How will this goal be monitored? 5. When will this goal be accomplished? 6. Write your strength-based SMART goal. Be specific, but concise.

Record your strength-based SMART goal below. Required

Action Planning - Strengths

Action Planning your SMART Goal

Any worthwhile goal requires multiple action steps. These steps must be comprehensive, and they must include resources, accountabilities, a timeline and interim measures of success.

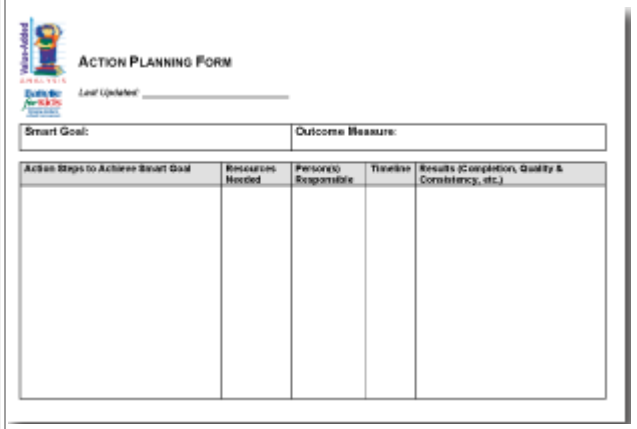
Next, you will develop an action plan to realize the strength-based goal you have determined.

Use the Action Planning Form to record the steps you will take to move ahead in achieving your goal. Click here to download a copy of this form to your desktop. Print a copy of this form as a worksheet for your team.

Think about the following questions and record the information in the appropriate column:

- What are the action steps necessary to achieve the goal?
- What resources (time, people, materials) are needed?
- Who are the person(s) responsible for completing each action step?
- Who will monitor the team's progress and hold it accountable?
- What is the timeline/due date?
- What are the expected results/measures of completion and quality?

Action Planning Framework for Your Strength-Based SMART Goal


ACTION PLANNING FORM

Last Updated: _____

Smart Goal:	Outcome Measure:

Action Steps to Achieve Smart Goal	Resources Needed	Person(s) Responsible	Timeline	Results (Completion, Quality & Consistency, etc.)

Above, you see a diagram of the Tennessee•Focus Action Planning form. **(At the end of the planning process, you will download Focus Forward, a Word document with an editable Action Planning Form for you to fill out and upload back to the portal for future use.)**

Making It Happen - Area of Strength

Making it All Happen

With the work you have just finished, you now have a strength-based SMART goal and an action plan upon which to make it a reality. This is the beginning of the improvement process for your team.

The primary job of all educators is to get better at their craft. This will not happen without a systematic effort to improve. The easiest way to get better is to leverage your strengths.

In the next segment, you will take steps to address an area of challenge for your team.

Producing Your Team's Challenge-Based Goal and Action Plan

When your team focuses its attention on a single problem area (your identified area of challenge) and on why that problem area exists (root cause analysis), you are left with two potential paths to address the issue.

1. The first and most obvious path is to address the root causes that produce the problem. For example, if your team's science results are poor and the root cause of this problem is limited teacher expertise in that subject area, then one solution is to increase the science expertise of the members of your team. Your SMART goal would involve increasing your team's science expertise and your action plan would describe the steps you would take to make this happen.

2. A second approach to this same problem would involve reframing the issue and searching for novel solutions. For example, a science specialist could be hired to teach science to all students on the team. The obvious problem with this solution is that it has budgetary implications. Your principal may not have the funds to hire additional staff.

Other, perhaps more practical approaches might include:

1. One team member develops her level of expertise in science so that she can teach science to all students on the team; or
2. The team decides to divide up the science curriculum so that each teacher becomes responsible for only one-third of the science curriculum. Students would move through all team members over the course of the year.

The keys to successfully addressing challenging problems are:
1. A clear vision of what is wrong and what you can do to fix it; 2. A thoughtful and systematic approach for addressing the issue(s); 3. Clear timelines and accountabilities associated with the work; 4. Continual formative assessment of work-in-process; and 5. Commitment, persistence, and a sense of humor.

By reframing the issue, the problem may be resolved more economically. Regardless of the approach, your team's capacity to address its problem areas will take long-term focused work.

SMART Goal Setting - Challenges

Examine an identified area of challenge and the root causes associated with that area of challenge.

What can you do to:
1. Address and overcome this area of challenge? 2. Positively influence the root causes of this area of challenge? 3. Support a teammate in your shared quest to overcome this challenge? 4. Connect with others in your school or district who demonstrate strength in your area of challenge? 5. Identify resources that will help you find your way through this challenge? 6. Use one or your areas of strength to overcome this challenge?

Your Challenge-Based SMART Goal:
As you contemplate your identified area of challenge and how it might be addressed, reflect on the following questions: 1. What do you want to do? 2. Who will be involved in the fulfillment of this SMART goal? 3. What will be different when you are finished? 4. How will this goal be monitored? 5. When will this goal be accomplished? 6. Write your challenge-based SMART goal. Be specific, but concise.

Record your challenge-based SMART goal below. Required

Action Planning - Area of Challenge

Action Planning your SMART Goal

Any worthwhile goal requires multiple action steps. These steps must be comprehensive, and they must include resources, accountability measures, a timeline and interim measures of success.

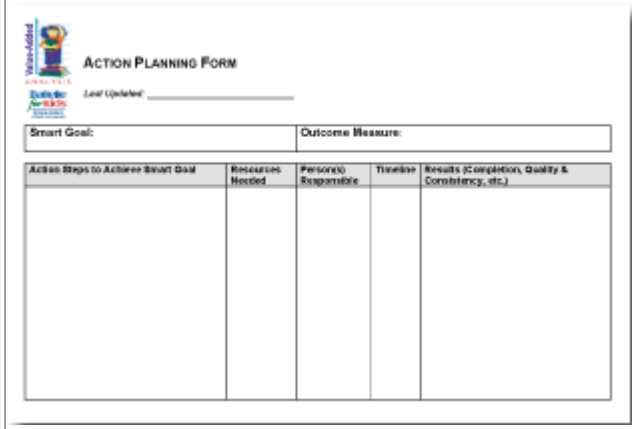
Next, you will develop an action plan to realize the challenge-based goal you have determined.

Use the Action Planning Form to record the steps you will take to move ahead in achieving your goal. Click here to download a copy of this form to your desktop. Print a copy of this form as a worksheet for your team.

Think about the following questions and record the information in the appropriate column:

1. What are the action steps necessary to achieve the goal?
2. What resources (time, people materials) are needed?
3. Who are the person(s) responsible for completing each action step?
4. Who will monitor the team's progress and hold us accountable?
5. What is the timeline/due date?
6. What are the expected results/measures of completion and quality?

Action Planning Framework for Your Challenged-Based SMART Goal



Above, you see a diagram of the Tennessee•Focus Action Planning form. **(At the end of the planning process, you will download Focus Forward, a Word document with an editable Action Planning Form for you to fill out and upload back to the portal for future use.)**

Making It Happen - Area of Challenge

Making it All Happen

With the work you have just finished, you now have a challenge-based SMART goal and an action plan to make it a reality. This is the beginning of the improvement process for your team.

The primary job of all educators is to get better at their craft. This will not happen without a systematic effort to improve.

Level 3 - Reflection

Consider the following prompts for reflection or discussion to help you plan for success:

How will your team stay focused on the tasks in the action plan? Required

How will you leverage existing resources—such as personnel, curriculum, or professional development--to implement your action plan? Required

Who will be responsible for making sure that all members of your team are accountable for their parts of the plan? Required

How could you use this goal-setting process with your students? Required

Congratulations!

Your team has completed the online portion of Tennessee•Focus. In doing so you have:

1. Examined and assessed your student performance data;
2. Established the strengths and challenges associated with your current academic program;
3. Identified one area of strength and one area of challenge around which to build team goals;
4. Determined the root causes of your identified area of strength and area of challenge;
5. Produced SMART goals and action plans to:

    a. Amplify/expand your area of strength; and,
    b. Productively address your area of challenge.

Improving Practice

Producing a thoughtful data-based plan is an enormous accomplishment, but it is only the first step in constructing a better future for your students. Meaningful and enduring change is an ongoing evolutionary process. To move forward you need a plan, but you also need commitment, persistence and leadership.

Make sure you meet quarterly with your facilitator and the rest of your team to:

1. Assess the progress you have made on your action-plans;
2. Make adjustments in your action-plans based on the work you have already completed;
3. Affirm the next steps, accountabilities, and interim measures for the next stage of the process.

Next year, this whole process will be easier and even more meaningful.