

# Support for Step Zero: Problem Analysis (Why)

## 5 Why's Root Cause Analysis Tool

### What is this tool?

This is a brainstorming tool for drilling deeper to understand the root causes that are keeping your team from achieving a desired state. It is understood that by asking, “Why?” five times successively, you are likely to understand the problem deeply enough to uncover the root cause. The fifth why may not always need to be asked, but the idea is to go deeper than a team might otherwise.

### When should I use this tool?

During the Problem Analysis phase of Step Zero, teams should use “The 5 Domains Essential Questions” and consider which area(s) is/are a priority for your school or district. If/when you answer “no” to a question in that domain, use this tool to drill deeper to uncover what the root causes may be that are keeping you from achieving that desired state.

It is recommended that this tool is used collaboratively in alignment with the expectation for the 8 Step Planning and Problem Solving Process. This tool is meant for complex problems where you may have tried many things but are not having success.

### Step by step guidance.

1. State your problem. The problem should not communicate possible causes.



- Do teachers engage in professional development that includes self-assessment, peer observation, mentoring and coaching, and is aligned, sustained and focused with time to practice and implement?
- No.
- *Problem statement: Teachers do not engage in professional development that includes self-assessment, peer observation, mentoring and coaching, and is aligned, sustained and focused with time to practice and implement*

2. Ask, “Why?” Allow team members to provide possible responses. Eliminate any symptoms that are either: tied to a specific person or something out of your control. Prioritize and select a symptom.



- **Why** don't teachers engage in professional development that includes self-assessment, peer observation, mentoring and coaching, and is aligned, sustained and focused with time to practice and implement at this school?
- *Teachers have not had opportunities to observe one another.*
- *There has not been a sustained focus; we change topics frequently.*
- ~~*Our coach was unsuccessful*~~

3. Choose one of the causes in the first why to ask the second why.



- **Why** has there not been sustained focus with a frequent change in topics?
- *We are reacting to interim data sets for what to focus on next.*
- *We are preparing for PD right before we have to deliver it (e.g., early dismissal PD)*

4. Ask the third why.



- **Why** are we preparing PD right before we have to deliver it?
- *We are not improving student achievement outcomes on interim data sets*
- *We often lose sight of our long term goals for professional development*

5. Ask the fourth why



- **Why** do we lose sight of our long term goals for professional development?
- *There is not clear expectations for what teachers will receive throughout the year.*
- *We quickly abandon our initial plans. (Evidence: PD plan vs. agendas of what was delivered)*

6. Ask the fifth why



- **Why** do we abandon our plans?
- *We don't have a comprehensive professional development plan that is aligned to our needs and communicated to everyone so that we are held accountable and ensure peer observation, mentoring and coaching, with time to practice and implement.*

At this point your understanding of the root cause can support informed and effective goal setting & strategy selection.

## 5 Why's Root Cause Analysis Tool Template

State the problem

Why?

Why?

Why?

Why?

Why?

Probable Cause(s)

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### Sources:

Georgia Leadership Institute for School Improvement (GLISI)(2009). Leading a Team to Analyze Root Causes Using Quality Tools. URL:

<http://www.glisi.org/sites/default/files/pbm/Leading%20a%20Team%20to%20Analyze%20Root%20Causes%20Using%20Quality%20Tools.pdf>

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