Comprehensive Needs Assessment

WAKE COUNTY
PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM

Office of the Special Assistants to the Area Superintendents

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WCPSS utilizes the inquiry process for School Improvement planning that includes four major phases: planning, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating the work.

- **Planning the work**: How will we organize our work so that it aligns with or goals and strategies?
- **Implementing the work**: How will we implement and monitor the progress of our work?
- **Monitoring the work:** What is the data telling us?
- **Evaluating the work:** What goals and strategies do we need to implement in order to impact our areas of concern?

The Comprehensive Needs Assessment (CNA) begins the planning process. The CNA is a process to assist school staff in determining their school's strengths and areas of concern based on an analysis of data. The CNA is intended to support deeper dialogue about the data and to enable school communities to draw thoughtful conclusions about the priority concerns. It is the foundation for writing SMART goals and driving the focus of the School Improvement Plan. Completion of the CNA is a necessary step prior to the creation of the School Improvement Plan. The basis of any strong school improvement plan is a thorough, unrelenting assessment of the current state of the school. Often, the true impact of a school's efforts on student learning is diffused over time. A need-driven approach to school improvement planning requires a review that considers both internal and external factors associated with the school. All aspects of the review should focus on student learning and the impact of instruction. An objective, effective needs assessment incorporates both quantitative and qualitative data, carefully gathered and triangulated to ensure accuracy.

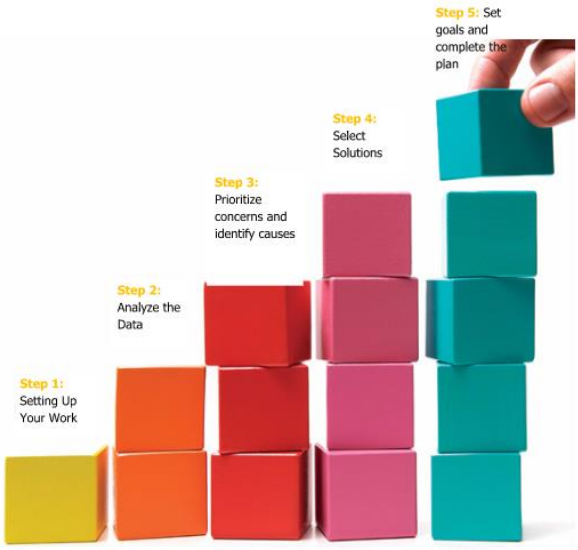
The process of completing the CNA enables a school to utilize four (4) major data components to create a more effective and focused School Improvement Plan. The four components include the following: Student Achievement Data, Process Data (which includes instructional practice and program data), Staff and Student Demographics Data, and Perception Data. Schools should review various data sources and probe deeper into each source to determine priority concerns and root causes.

The Comprehensive Needs Assessment showcases your overall school profile. The school profile serves as a data snapshot of your current status and helps illustrate the gaps between where your school is currently and where your school wants to be according to its vision of improving student achievement.

The CNA is an effective tool for schools to…

- Identify trends
- Identify strengths
- Identify priority concerns to be addressed in the School Improvement Plan
- Determine the basis of the school's professional development plan
- Comply with district, state, and federal requirements

5 Step CNA Process



Step 1:

Setting Up Your Inquiry Work

Preparation and set-up are crucial to making inquiry work well. The better you can plan, the deeper the work can go, especially if participants are inexperienced or reluctant about looking at data. Before beginning, preview the purpose and outcomes of the CNA with the team. To ensure buy-in from all stakeholders, we recommend that you organize personnel into small groups to analyze the multiple data sources.

Pre-planning

- ☐ Clarify your purposes, determine who will be involved and who will lead the work.
- ☐ Access the data for the multiple components you want to examine (district, state, and school data) and make copies for all participants. See Data Sources (pg. 5)
- ☐ Review the data, get an initial sense of it, determine what's most important to focus on and select the data that will best serve your purposes. Too much data is likely to overwhelm participants.

Set-up with your team: introducing the data and process

- ☐ Orient people to the actual data if they aren't familiar with it (e.g. What do the various WCPSS surveys measure? How do you read state data? What was the context for this question?)
- ☐ Decide on a process for reviewing the data: how much time, who looks at what data, how to record data statements.

Step 2:

Analyze the data:

Analyzing and understanding data allows school improvement teams to identify root causes for problems and take action to address them. All school improvement plans should be data-driven. The data is analyzed and synthesized to form conclusions. An objective, effective analysis of data incorporates both quantitative and qualitative data, carefully gathered and triangulated to ensure accuracy. Data should be compared over three to five years in order to identify patterns and trends.

When taking your team through this step:

- ☐ Read through the data for your component
- ☐ Pair/share responses to the data
- ☐ Complete the strengths and concerns section of the CNA
- ☐ Capture questions and further data needs/concerns
- ☐ Use Data Analysis Guiding Questions (pg.4)
- ☐ Use Tips for Writing Data Statements and Describing Trends to support data analysis (pg. 6)

Step 3:

Prioritize concerns and identify causes:

After developing a school profile of the school, school improvement teams should prioritize areas for improvement based on student achievement data for the top three to five identified needs – the most important problems to be addressed. Of course, a school may have more issues than these and may have multiple ongoing programs. However, the School Improvement Team (SIT) should limit discussion to prioritize the problems needing focused action. Limiting the plan to a few issues allows principals, teachers, and paraprofessionals to focus their efforts on a manageable number of activities. Tackling too many goals spreads effort too thinly, resulting in a lack of progress. Additionally, using the school improvement plan to

document a wide range of on-going activities makes it cumbersome and difficult to use effectively. Remember, *less is more*.

Root Causes:
When priorities are identified, schools should pursue an understanding of root causes. The definition of a root cause is: the deepest underlying cause, or causes, of positive or negative symptoms within any process that, if dissolved, would result in elimination, or substantial reduction of the symptom. Identifying root causes allows the team to address more than the easily-identifiable symptoms and achieve a long-term solution.

When taking your team through this step:

- Allow time for all 4 component groups to share their findings
- Prioritize the top 3 concerns from your 4 areas of the CNA (Priority concerns should be based on your school's Student Achievement Data)
- Use Criteria for Writing Priority Concerns (pg.7)
- Complete a root cause analysis
    - From your areas of concern, select a priority concern to explore for possible root causes.
    - As a group, brainstorm reasons why this concern might exist. List these reasons as possible root causes. When determining root causes, consider the four common places of education: Instruction, Curriculum, Environment and Learner (ICEL)
    - For each possible root cause, list the current data that support the possible root cause. Be sure to look at more than one data source as a concern can have more than one cause. Also include data that you need to further substantiate your possible causes.
- Use Guiding Questions for Identifying Root Causes (pg. 7)

Step 4:

Select solutions:
After examining the root causes of your priority concerns, schools should begin brainstorming potential solutions. These solutions/strategies should be research based and may include new ideas generated by the school improvement team or other teachers or administrators. Strategies should address the root cause(s) identified by the school improvement team.

It is more important to do a limited number of important things, than to scatter your efforts across numerous actions. Creating solutions allow everyone to get on the same page about your strategy. At the end of the school year, everyone should be able to say, "these are the actions we took… these are the reasons we took them… here's what we wanted to happen… now we are reflecting on how it worked and what results we got."

When taking your team through this step:

- Brainstorm potential evidence-based key processes or strategies to address priority concerns
- Use the Criteria for Key Process/Strategy Statement (pg. 7)
- Determine ways to measure the identified process/strategy

Use the four data components, priority concerns, root causes, and solutions to build an effective CNA data summary.

- Create CNA Data Summary (pg. 8)

Step 5:

Setting goals and complete the plan

- Develop targeted SMART goals based on the Comprehensive Needs Assessment
- List action steps needed to carry out the key process/strategy including: who, what, and when
- Identify champions to support the work

Data Analysis Guiding Questions

Each section of the CNA presents data and a series of questions that probe deeper into the data and information. Schools should review various local data sources, common assessments, and other data that informs instruction and utilize the probing questions to support deep analysis.

Student Achievement Data:

Analyze the following summative data sources for all content areas of EOG/EOC: AMO, EVAAS, mClass (K-2), mClass Dibels (3-5), Pathdriver, 9th grade passing rate, Dropout rate, Graduation rate, ACT and SAT (HS)

- What are strengths in proficiency? What are concerns in proficiency? How does our school's proficiency compare to WCPSS?
- In which areas are we showing growth? In which areas do we continue to not show growth? How does your school's 3 year growth trend compare to WCPSS?
- Which students are making their annual measurable objectives (AMO)? Which are not?
- What does the data indicate when disaggregated by sub-group? Are there existing gaps?
- What does the data reflect within and among content areas?
- What trends can you draw from the comparative data sources?

Process Data:

Instructional Practices:

- How is core instruction being assessed throughout the school?
- What are our strengths in implementing particular instructional practices? What data points support the strengths identified?
- What are our concerns in implementing particular instructional practices? What data points support the concerns identified?
- How are instructional strategies and activities aligned with student learning needs and expected outcomes for achievement?
- To what degree is rigor and student engagement occurring throughout the building?

Program:

- What are strengths and concerns from specialized programs in your school? (for ex., STEM, IB, PBIS, Summer Academies, etc.)

Demographic Data:

- What changes have occurred in student demographics?
- What are the teacher/student ratios? Are staff demographics a reflection of student demographics?
- What's the ratio of BTs? National Board certified teachers?
- How is new staff supported? What feedback do they provide? What is the mentor/mentee ratio?
- Staff turnover rate? Retention Rate? Staff Attendance?

Perception:

- What are strengths and concerns from the perception data?
- How do students describe the school climate? How does this compare to staff's perception?
- What does the data reflect regarding student behaviors, discipline, etc.?
- What does the student discipline data indicate regarding practices to support student behavior? How does this compare to classroom student achievement data?
- How does your school's perception data compare to WCPSS? State?

DATA SOURCES

Directions: Use the recommended data sources in the 4 component areas to help you answer the questions throughout the Comprehensive Needs Assessment.

Student Achievement Data:

Type	Source
AMO summary reports	http://quickr.wcpss.net/LotusQuickr/testingoffice/Main.nsf/ (password required)
Grade 3-5 reports by strand & grade level	http://quickr.wcpss.net/LotusQuickr/testingoffice/Main.nsf/ (password required)
EVAAS reports	https://ncdpi.sas.com/evaas/signin.jsf (password required)
Summative Benchmark Data Universal Screening and Case 21 Data	Case 21(High School), PathDriver, mClass, iReady, etc.
Graduation Data, Math Course Rigor, ACT Composite, and ACT WorkKeys	http://www.ncpublicschools.org/src/
Data and Accountability Reports-School Planning Database	http://www2.wcpss.net/departments/d-and-a/

Process Data: (Instructional Practices and Programs)

Type	Source
Walkthrough or Instructional Rounds Data	School and county-based documentation
Teacher Self-Assessments and Surveys	School-based documentation
PBIS Program Data	School Evaluation Tool (SET) scores, Benchmark of Quality (BoQ), Implementation Inventory and PBIS Surveys
School-Based Programs (*varies by school*)	This may include, but is not limited to, before and after school tutorials, Academy of Reading, Study Island, SuccessMaker, iReady, etc.

Staff and Student Demographic Data:

Type	Source
Enrollment, Percent Free and Reduced Lunch(F&R), Percent English as a Second Language (ESL), Percent Limited English Proficiency (LEP)	Data Dashboard http://www2.wcpss.net/departments/d-and-a/db/13-14-sp-db.html
Membership by Grade, Race, and Gender	PowerSchool (password required)
Attendance and Mobility	PowerSchool (password required) and Data Dashboard http://www2.wcpss.net/departments/d-and-a/db/13-14-sp-db.html
Teachers: Advanced Degrees, Years of Experience, Turnover	http://www.ncpublicschools.org/src/ and Data Dashboard http://www2.wcpss.net/departments/d-and-a/db/13-14-sp-db.html
Behavior Data	EASI (password required) http://www2.wcpss.net/easi/index.htm

Perception Data:

Type	Source
NC Teacher Working Conditions Survey-biannual	http://www.ncteachingconditions.org/
Wake County Staff and Student Surveys	http://quickr.wcpss.net/LotusQuickr/testingoffice/Main.nsf (password required)
PLT surveys	http://quickr.wcpss.net/LotusQuickr/testingoffice/Main.nsf (password required)
School-Based surveys	This may include surveys created within the school.

Tips for Writing Data Statements

In writing data statements, write broad data statements that note patterns and trends that exist over 3 years. When three years of data do not exist, note the patterns that exist throughout the school year. When writing data statements consider the following:

- **Keep it Simple-communicate a single idea about student performance.** *Include year, content area and overall data point.* For example- "7th grade reading achievement on the NCEOG increased 15% between the 2012-13 and 2014-15 school years."

- **Make the narrative statement short and easy to read.** For example- "The number of National Board certified teachers at our school increased from 15% to 25% between 2012-13 and 2014-15 school years."

- **Avoid evaluative statements-just describe what you see in the data, not why or what to do about it.** For example- "38% of parents state they do not receive information about ways to help their children learn at home based on the 2014-15 parent survey."

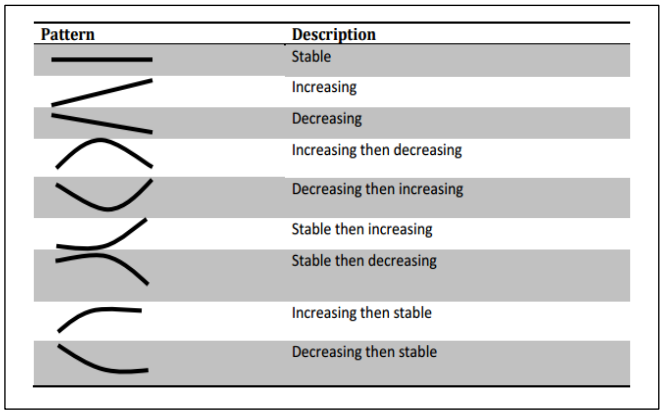
Describing Trends

How to identify trends:

The identification of trends involves analyzing at least three years of data.

Trends can be described in the following ways:

- Stable
- Increasing
- Decreasing
- Increasing then decreasing
- Decreasing then increasing
- Stable the increasing
- Stable then decreasing
- Increasing then stable
- Decreasing then stable



Pattern	Description
	Stable
	Increasing
	Decreasing
	Increasing then decreasing
	Decreasing then increasing
	Stable then increasing
	Stable then decreasing
	Increasing then stable
	Decreasing then stable

Adapted from Clark County School District

Criteria for Writing Priority Concerns

While schools may identify as many priority concerns as they deem appropriate, it is recommended that the two to three most important concerns are identified. When writing priority concerns consider the following:

- **Priority concerns are based on the school's performance concerns.** Priority Concerns are based on analysis of performance trends and are further validated by data from the other components.

- **Priority concerns should be based on performance indicators where the school did not meet federal, state, and/or local expectations.** There should be at least one priority concern for every indicator for which minimum expectations were not met (achievement, growth, growth gaps, graduation rate, etc.)

- **Priority concerns can be based on disaggregated subgroups.** For example- Following cohorts of students, within a grade level over time, or within a content strand.

Guiding Questions for Identifying Root Causes

Identifying root causes allows the team to address more than the easily-identifiable symptoms and achieve a long-term solution. Consider the following questions when identifying root causes:

- **Are the root causes focused on adult behavior?**

- **Are there data to support the root causes?**

- **Are the root causes within your control?**

- **Is the root cause likely to result in improved performance if you try to address it?**

Criteria for Key Process/Strategy Statement

- Begin each statement with "Teachers/Staff will…" (and/or which specific group of teachers and staff).

- Use an action verb of observable behavior which must be done.

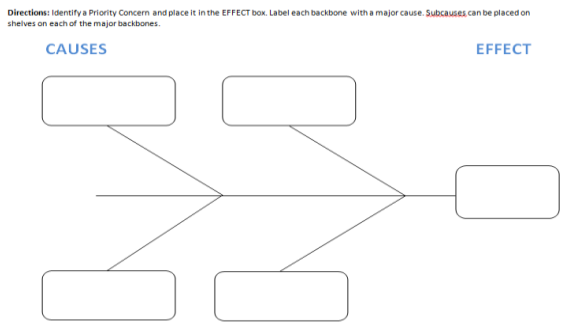
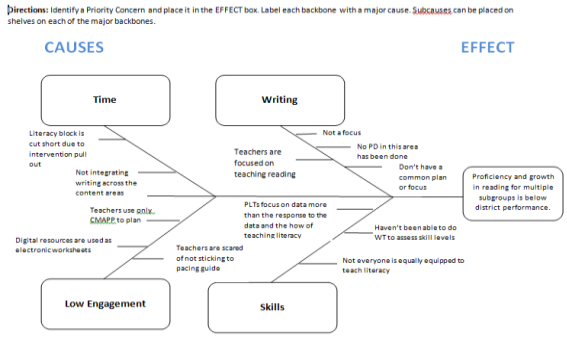
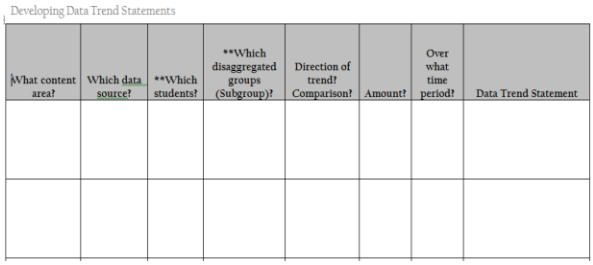
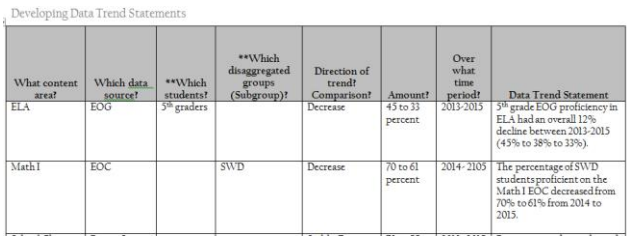
- Write clear, concise statements that describe what you intend to accomplish. (Be specific.)

- Make sure each teacher/staff strategy addresses the issue and connects back to the SMART Goal.

CNA Data Summary

Does your CNA Summary answer the following questions?

Who are we? ☐ Have we provided a school profile that is an accurate snapshot of the school? ☐ Is there a clear picture of what is and has been occurring at the school? ☐ Are trends identified?	**What are our areas of strength?** ☐ What is going well at the school? ☐ What successful area can we replicate?
What are our areas of concern? ☐ What priorities do the data suggest? ☐ What focused or narrowed area of student need and adult practice do we need to address? ☐ What do we know about the needs of various subgroups in the school?	**What are our proposed solutions to address the priority concerns?** ☐ What researched and evidence-based solutions will be implemented to address the priority concerns? ☐ What solutions will generate success? ☐ What is the ultimate aim (description of what will be put in place to increase student performance)?

Fishbone Diagram Worksheet	
Fishbone Diagram Worksheet Example	
Developing Data Trend Statements Worksheet	
Developing Data Trend Statements Worksheet Example	

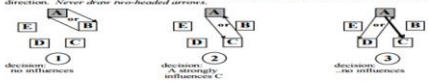
Developing Data Trend Statements

What content area?	Which data source?	**Which students?	**Which disaggregated groups (Subgroup)?	Direction of trend? Comparison?	Amount?	Over what time period?	Data Trend Statement

Developing Data Trend Statements

What content area?	Which data source?	**Which students?	**Which disaggregated groups (Subgroup)?	Direction of trend? Comparison?	Amount?	Over what time period?	Data Trend Statement
ELA	EOG	5th graders		Decrease	45 to 33 percent	2013-2015	5th grade EOG proficiency in ELA had an overall 12% decline between 2013-2015 (45% to 38% to 33%).
Math I	EOC		SWD	Decrease	70 to 61 percent	2014-2103	The percentage of SWD students proficient on the Math I EOC decreased from 70% to 61% from 2014 to 2015.

Narrowing Concerns Worksheet	Criteria for Priority Concerns are based on school's performance concerns, should be based on performance indicators where the school did not meet state, local and/or federal expectations, and can include disaggregated subgroups. Concerns: Student Achievement; Process; Demographic Student Achievement Priority Concerns | Additional Data that Validates this Concern
Narrowing Concerns Worksheet Example	Criteria for Priority Concerns are based on school's performance concerns, should be based on performance indicators where the school did not meet state, local and/or federal expectations, and can include disaggregated subgroups. Concerns: Student Achievement: • The overall student performance from 2013-2015 increased 9% (47% to 56%) • 5th grade EOG proficiency in ELA had an overall 12% decline between 2013-2015 (45% to 38% to 33%) • 2012-2015 Overall school growth declined as measured by EVASS (moved from Exceed, to Met to Not Met) Process: • 2012-2015 walkthrough data indicated that there was a decline in the percentage of teachers that included rigor and critical thinking in their instruction. (70% to 60% to 55%) • PLT self-assessment data indicated an increase then decrease in the use of critical thinking in lesson plans between 2013-2015. (70% to 75% to 60%) • Parent survey data indicated a stable then decreasing trend from 2013-2015 when asked if teachers challenged their students. (70% to 70% to 55%) Demographic: • The 2013-2015 data demonstrated an upward trend in the percentage of African American males that were suspended. (15% increase form 2013-2015) • From 2013-2015, the overall teacher turnover rate trend showed an increase of 7% (5% to 8% to 12%) Student Achievement Priority Concerns | Additional Data that Validates this Concern
Data Analysis Debrief via ICEL lenses	**Data Analysis Debrief via ICEL Lenses** — WAKE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM **Instruction**: Instruction is how curriculum is taught. How content is presented to students can vary in many different ways: •Level of Instruction •Rate of Instruction •Presentation of Instruction. Is the curriculum being differentiated to meet the needs of the learners? Consider: instructional techniques; presentation style; questioning; feedback technique; cooperative learning; use of graphic organizers; instructional conversations; development of academic language/ vocabulary **Curriculum**: Curriculum refers to what is taught. Scope and sequence would be included here as well as pacing within and between topics. Is curriculum appropriate for student? Consider: sequencing of objectives; teaching methods; materials provided; difficulty; presentation; length; format; relevance **Environment**: The environment includes the classroom/school, family/community, and peers. How is the environment impacting learning? Consider: what may distract or inhibit student learning; peers; home/family support; expectations; beliefs/attitudes; transience; attendance/tardies; class size **Learner**: The learner is who is being taught. This is the last domain that is considered and is only addressed when the curriculum and instruction are found to be appropriate and the environment is accommodating. Variables include motivation, attendance, prerequisite skills, organization/study habits, abilities, impairments, and history of instruction.
5 Whys Root Cause Protocol	Because → Why? → Because → Why? → Because → Why? → Priority Explanation Only select group of teachers trained. | Little Professional Development for CCSS. | New Common Core State Standards (CCSS). | Inconsistent standards based instruction. Possible Root Causes derive from "Because" Priority Performance Concern Because → Why? → Because → Why? → Because → Why? → Priority Explanation

Interrelationship Diagram	**INTERRELATIONSHIP DIAGRAM** **What it is:** An interrelationship diagram is an analysis tool that allows a team to identify the cause-and-effect relationships among critical issues. The analysis helps a team distinguish between issues that serve as drivers and those that are outcomes. **When to use it:** Use an interrelationship diagram when a team is struggling to understand the relationships among several issues associated with a process. The tool can also be useful in identifying root causes, even when objective data is unavailable. **How to use it:** **Develop the problem statement.** Make sure the issue is presented as a complete sentence and is clear to all team members. Write this statement at the top of a white board or flip chart. **Develop issues related to the problem.** These issues may be the result of a previous activity such as an affinity diagram or a brainstorming session, or the team may need to develop them now. **Arrange the issues in a circle.** Write the issues on the white board or flip chart. If the issues have already been recorded on sticky notes, arrange them in a circular pattern. **Identify cause-and-effect relationships.** Using any of the issues as a starting point, work through the relationships in sequence. For each pair of issues, determine if there is • no cause/effect relationship, • a weak cause/effect relationship, or • a strong cause/effect relationship. If the team determines there is a cause/effect relationship, determine which issue is the cause and which is the result. **Draw arrows to indicate directions of influence.** For each relationship pair, draw an arrow from the issue that is the cause to the issue that is influenced. For strong relationships, use a solid line. For weaker relationship, draw a dashed line. Although some relationships may seem evenly balanced, always determine which is the stronger influence and draw the arrow in that direction. *Never draw two-headed arrows.* 
Interrelationship Digraph Activity	**TIPS: Develop Hypothesis** **Interrelationship Digraph Activity** 1. Reduce number of root causes to **5** or fewer. 2. Place causes in a circle on chart paper. 3. Study relationship between each pair. Ask the following questions: a. Does a relationship exist? *Draw a line.*
Determining Significance and Control	**4.3A Determining Significance and Control** **Directions:** 1. Create a *Significance/Control Matrix* on a piece of chart paper similar to the one below. 2. Write each of the possible root causes identified in **3.5 Data Analysis (3.5A Data Analysis Protocol, 3.5B Data Carousel Protocol,** or **3.5C Placemat Protocol)** on a separate sticky note. 3. Place each possible cause in a quadrant of the matrix based on the team's judgment about its significance as a cause of the underlying problem. High Control ← → Low Control High Significance / Low Significance Quadrant I • Lack of academic support for traumatized children • Low use of proven instructional techniques Quadrant II • Parents were poor role models for students • Cultural factors did not support the importance of education Quadrant III • Inadequate facilities • Transfer policies Quadrant IV • Minority students • Mature faculty Figure 1. Charting Significance and Control
Tuning Your Comprehensive Needs Assessments Protocol	**Tuning Your Comprehensive Needs Assessment Protocol** Purpose: To update your current CNA with your team and revise components as needed. Time: 55 minutes Roles: Facilitator Time Keeper Note Taker Team Members Set Up: ☐ Collect and organize all necessary data from all 4 components. ☐ Divide into groups of 5. Assign team members based on data components. Steps: 1 - READING THE CNA (15 MINUTES) All team members should read silently the assigned CNA component and supporting data documents. Jot down any clarifying questions regarding the data set. 2 - CLARIFYING QUESTIONS (5 MINUTES) Participants pose and answer clarifying questions to ensure their understanding of the CNA and its components. The goal of this part of the protocol is to make sure there is common understanding of the plan. These questions are "matters of fact" and help us to determine basic understanding of what the

Proposed Norms for Looking at Data	**PROPOSED NORMS FOR LOOKING AT DATA** **Directions:** Before analyzing data, consider the following norms to help guide your work. ☐ **Describe only what you see.** Do not leap to conclusions or interpretations. Describe the data in front of you. Do not try to describe what you don't see; express what you don't see in the form of questions (to be charted.) ☐ **Resist the urge to work on "solutions"** until you are comfortable with what the data say and don't say. ☐ **Surface the "lenses" and experiences** you bring to the data. Effective teams use these as strengths.
Reflections on Your Initial Data Analysis	**REFLECTIONS ON YOUR INITIAL DATA ANALYSIS** **Directions:** The first response when reviewing data is often an emotional response. To help your team address emotional responses before digging deeper into the data, complete the following questions. What **CONFIRMS** your expectations? Why do you have these expectations? | What **SURPRISES** you?
How to Avoid Common Data Pitfalls	**HOW TO AVOID COMMON DATA PITFALLS** **Directions:** The process of looking at data often elicits certain habits or behaviors. We have identified several of the most common patterns that arise in looking at data along with suggestions for how to respond. Review the patterns and responses below to help guide your data work. **Common Patterns** | **What to Do** *Addressing issues the data do not show* — ☐ Chart data questions for later investigations. *Jumping quickly from looking at the data as a display to designing and planning interventions.* — ☐ Build a way to keep track of intervention suggestions. *Feeling the discussion is abstract and isolated from concrete next steps.* — ☐ Remind participants of the purpose of looking at the data—to address student achievement challenges. *Blaming students and assuming there is nothing can be done (i.e. "those kids just do not try; they do not want to learn").* — ☐ Ask strategically worded questions that seek understanding and clarification. ☐ Find the part that you can empathize with or validate and then propose another interpretation. *Discussing data we need instead of focusing on data we are looking at together.* — ☐ Chart data questions that arise. ☐ Continue to focus the group on what "is there" in the data. People will always find more if you are persistent. *Using data that is not disaggregated in ways that help* — ☐ Chart the data needs.