Cycles of Inquiry for Finding and Solving Instructional Problems

Video #1 What is a *Culture of Instructional Inquiry?*

Cycles of Inquiry was created by Dr. Shelby Cosner
Professor and Director of the Center for the Study of Educational Policy
University of Illinois - Chicago

Adapted by *Leading Ed Partnerships*

Purpose of the *Cycles of Inquiry* Video Series

- This learning design features

  (a) A **six session video series** that is followed by,

  (b) **workshops** that allow you to explore and apply the video content more deeply; and
  (c) **coaching** with a designated leadership coach.

- Throughout this video there are embedded "pause points." You are **encouraged to reflect and respond to thought provoking prompts. Please come prepared to share your written responses during the workshops AND with your leadership coach following the video.**

- You will likely have questions during the video. Be sure to **record questions** that can be more deeply explored during the workshops or with your leadership coach.

THEORY OF CHANGE

Partners to Lead and TEAM Lead Projects

TIME MANAGEMENT

Principals increase the amount of time they spend on instructional improvement efforts

TIME

LEADERSHIP FRAMEWORK

The increased time allows the principal to develop organizational routines to engage teachers

PROCESS

CYCLES OF INQUIRY

Organizational routines provide a platform from which teams address instructional problems of practice

FOCUS

LEADERSHIP COACHING

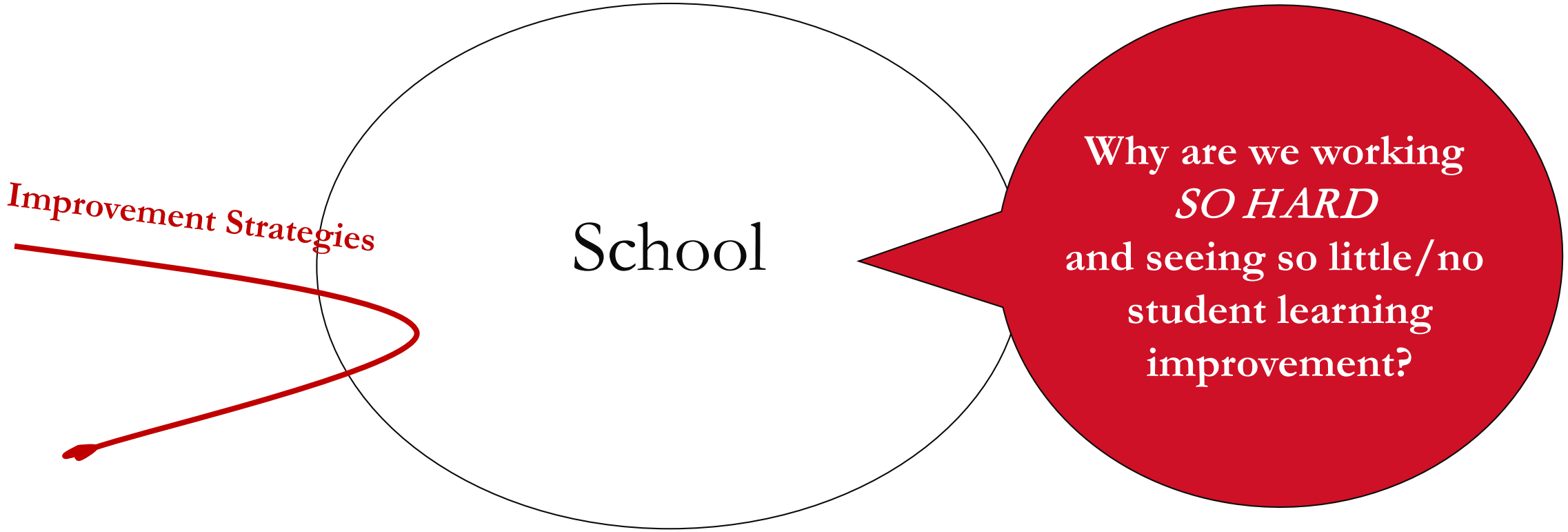
Improvement in instructional quality and increases in student learning

Participant Learning Objectives

Participants will . . .

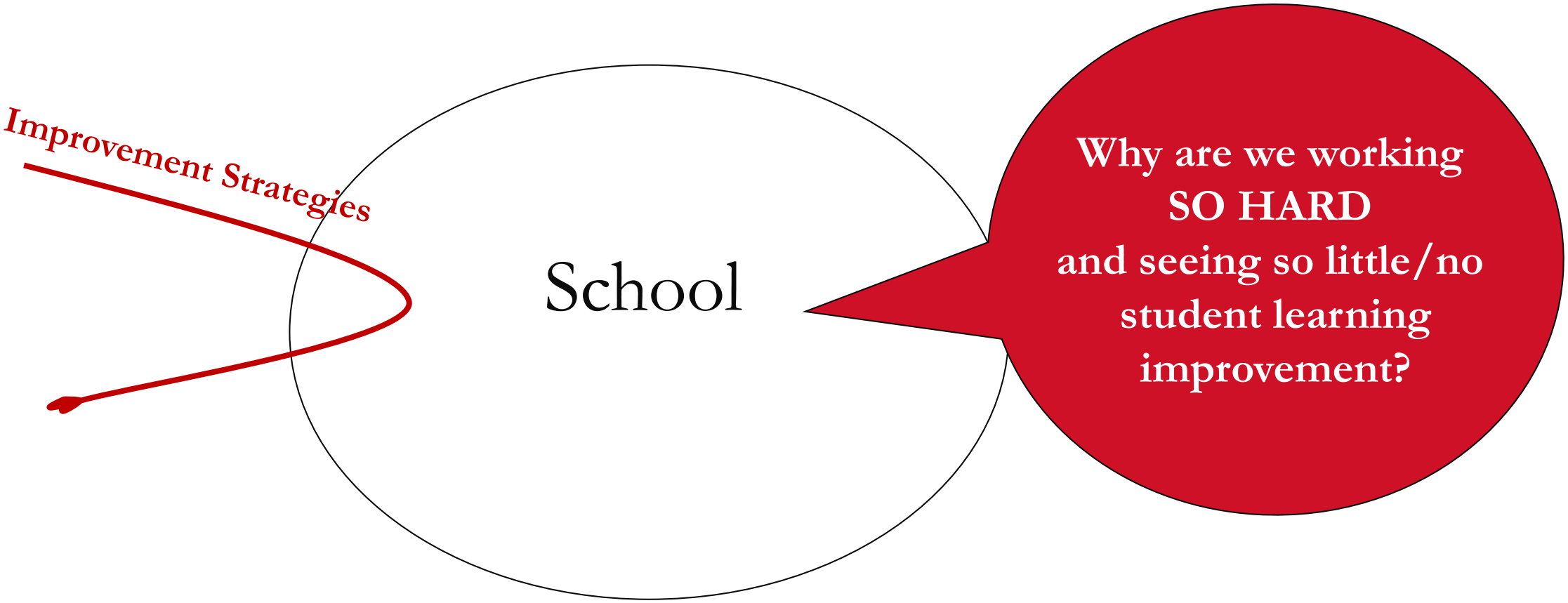
- Understand the importance of being a deeply inquiring organization; *Culture of Instructional Inquiry (CII)*
- Review within-school factors that impact student learning
- Identify the component parts of a CII and plan for an informal diagnosis of CII in your school
- Use *Teach, Model, Engage,* and *Reinforce* strategies to plan for, diagnose and develop a CII
- Appreciate the unique features of *Cycles of Inquiry* continuous school improvement and how it differs from other processes
- Recognize the advantages of *Cycles of Inquiry* as a mechanism for improvement of instruction/student learning

Typical Improvement Efforts within Schools



Reflection and Writing:
What are your thoughts about why this occurs?

Typically strategies enacted are ***NOT responsive***
to the most pressing student learning problems.



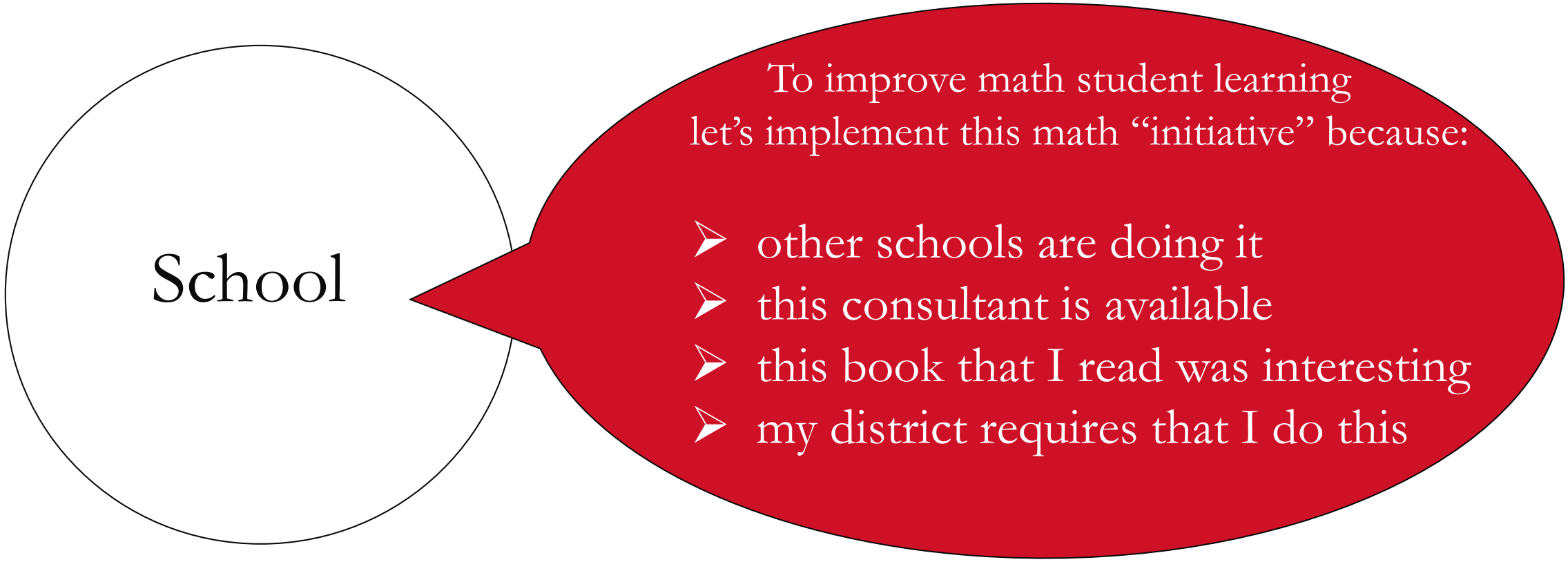
Why aren't strategies ***responsive?***

Problem-finding only examines *Broad Student Learning Outcomes*

School

Let's focus on *math* improvement because:
we have too many students who are not demonstrating proficiency
at the meets/exceeds level in mathematics on standardized assessments

What often follows is a quick external *"environmental scan"* for solutions.



With an overly broad understanding that student learning in **"math"** is the problem, there is a quick environmental scan for any sorts of math-related "solutions."

Reflection and Writing

- Have you previously led school-wide improvement efforts?
- What problems were being addressed by the strategies selected for attention?
- Why were those improvement strategies selected?
- What informed strategy selection?
- **Review your school's current improvement plan** with the above mentioned considerations in mind.

What are *Responsive* Improvement Strategies?

Responsive Strategies

Selected to address the most pressing problems that are currently impacting student learning.

Deeply Inquiring Schools:

Explore/Investigate

What are our most pressing student learning problems (*more precise understanding*) AND what is impacting/contributing to these problems (*root causes*)?

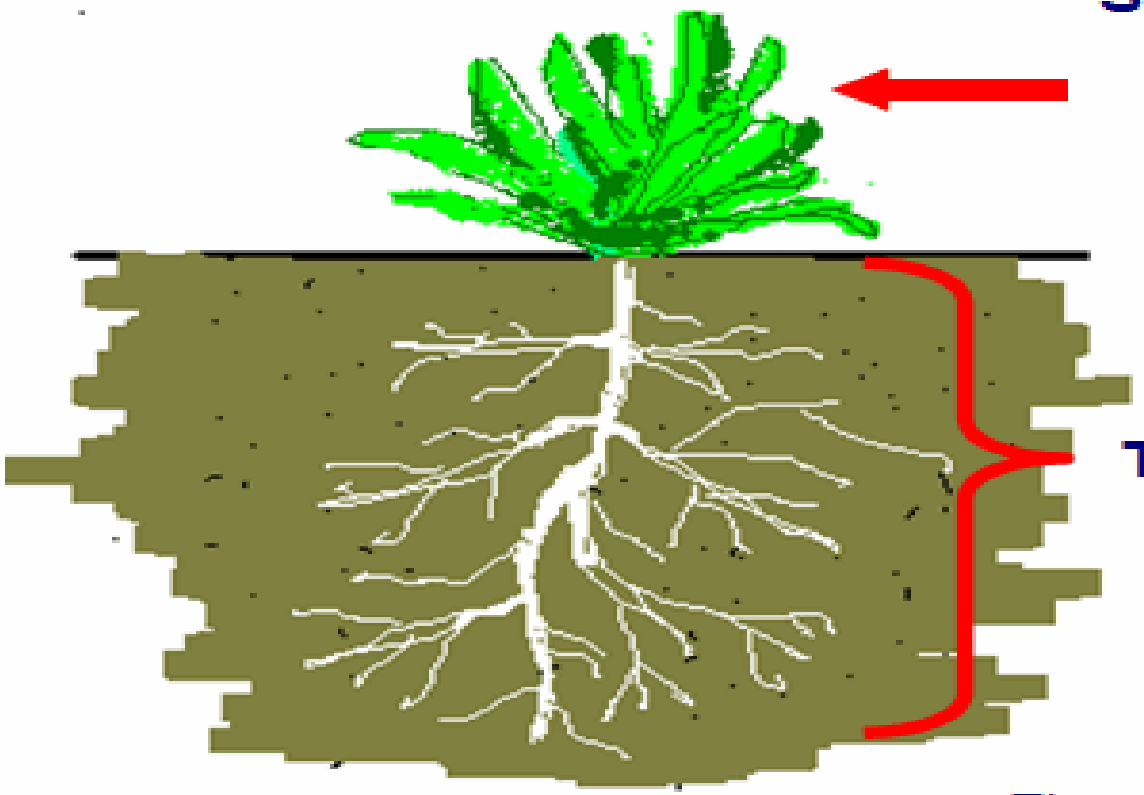
Failure to "deeply inquire" undermines problem finding and improvement strategy selection by . . .

Schools that do not deeply inquire . . .

do not explore.

- Allowing individuals within the school to make claims about problems without actual evidence/support. These kinds of statements are actually ***"speculations"*** and *NOT* claims.
- Failing to identify more specific student learning problems AND failing to explore ***"root causes"*** to those problems.

Root Cause Analysis Basics

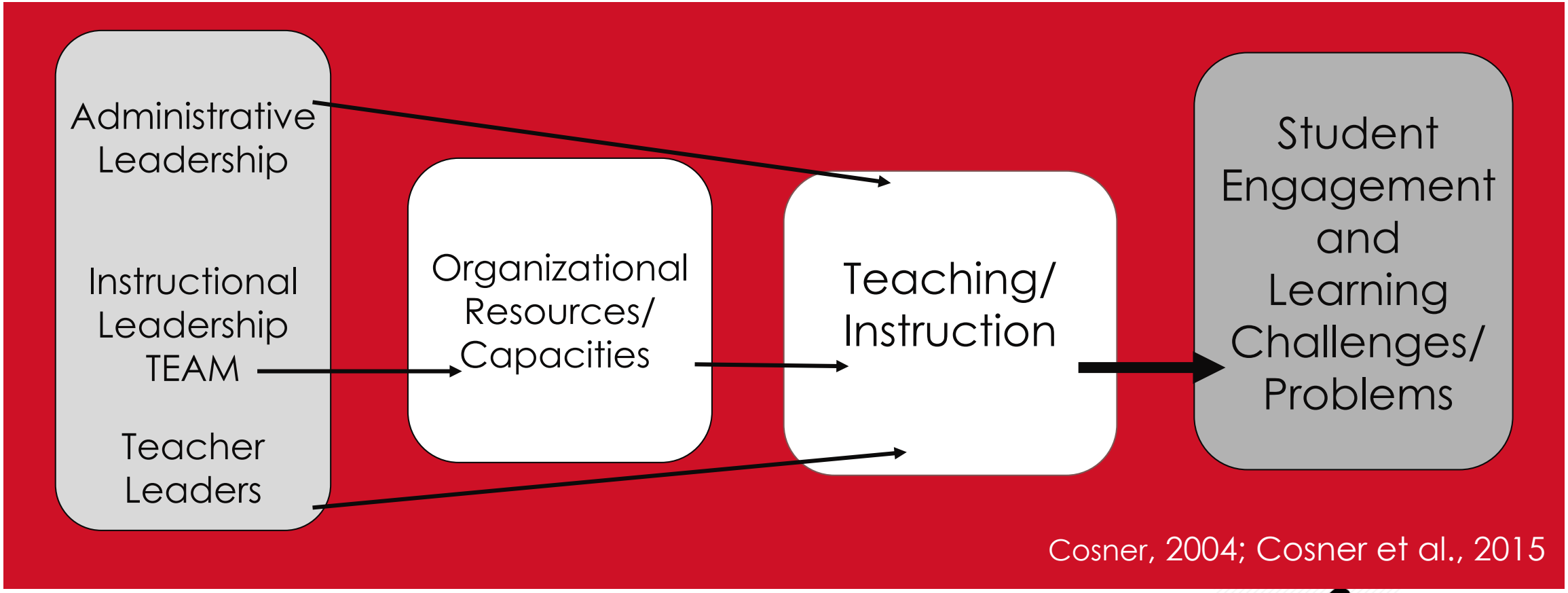


Symptom of the problem.
"The Weed"
Above the surface
(obvious)

The <u>Underlying Causes</u>
"The Root"
Below the surface
(not obvious)

The word root, in root cause analysis, refers to the underlying causes, not the one cause.

Deep Inquiry Within a School
Within-School Factors that Impact Student Learning

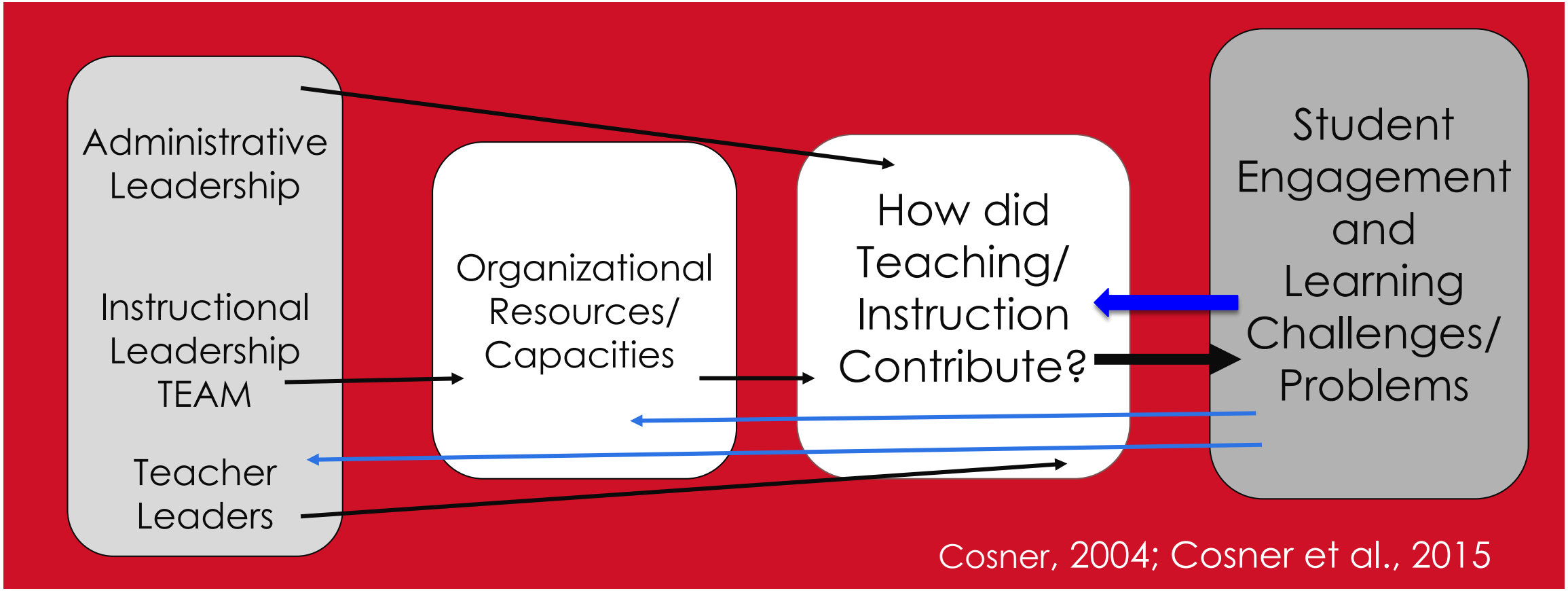


Cosner, 2004; Cosner et al., 2015

Reflection and Writing:

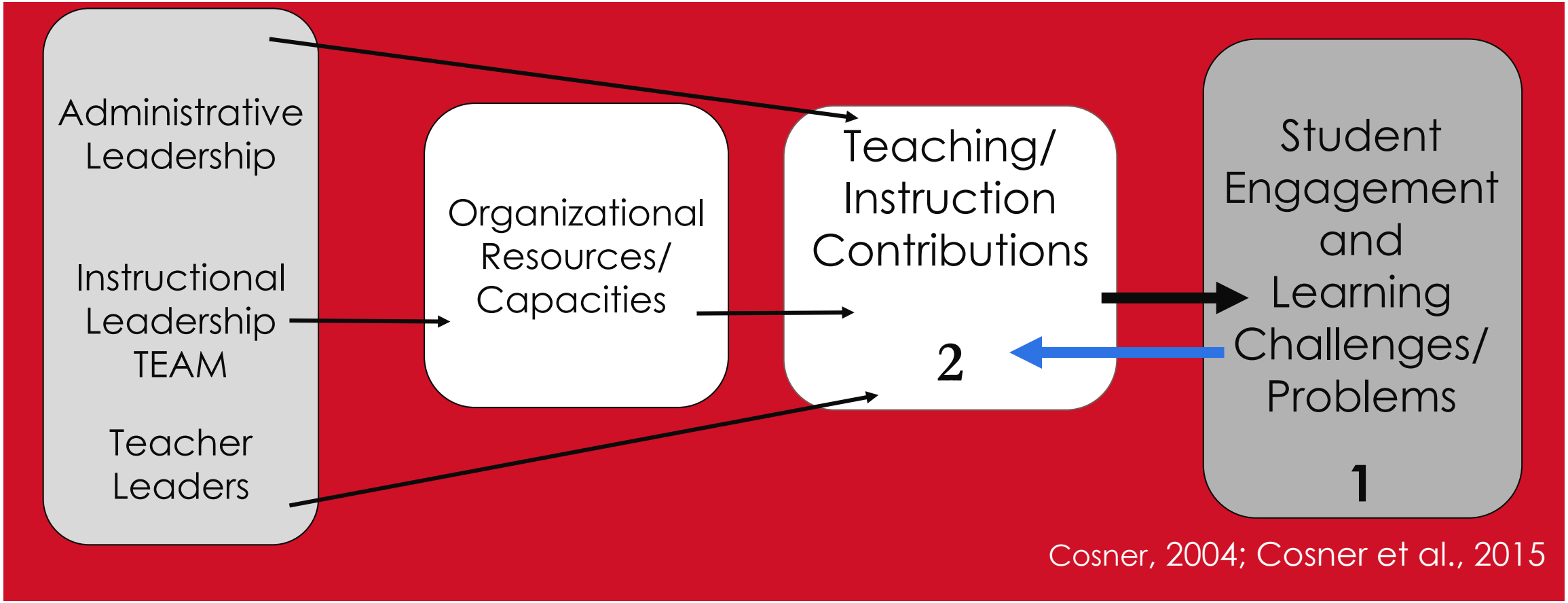
What do you notice as you examine this graphic?

Instruction: Direct Impact on Student Learning and Root Cause/Contributor to Be Explored



Cosner, 2004; Cosner et al., 2015

Deep Inquiry involves coming to more deeply and specifically understand student learning problems AND instructional *root causes* that contribute to those student learning problems.

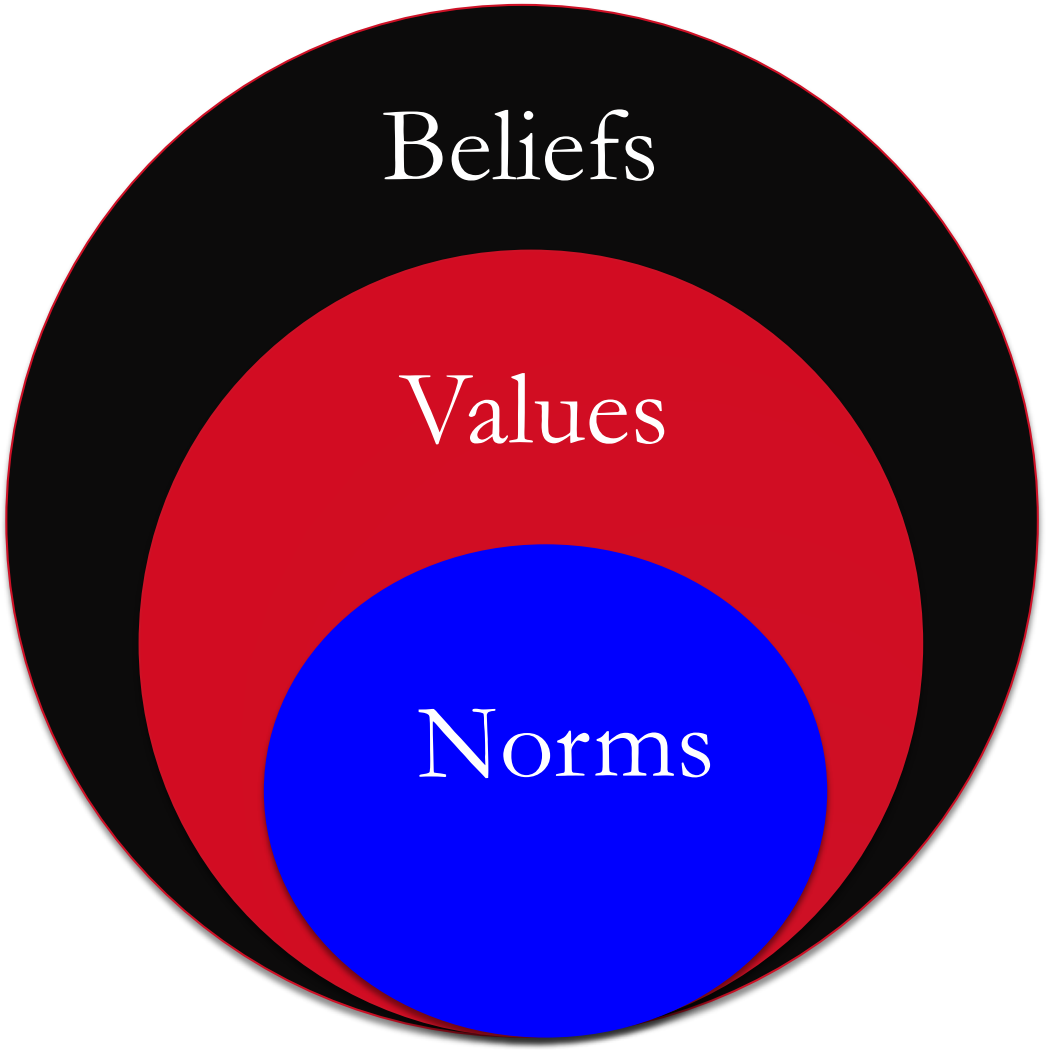


Cosner, 2004; Cosner et al., 2015

Deep Instructional Inquiry is supported by a School's Culture

What is a school culture?

- Beliefs, values, and norms (Deal & Peterson, 2016)



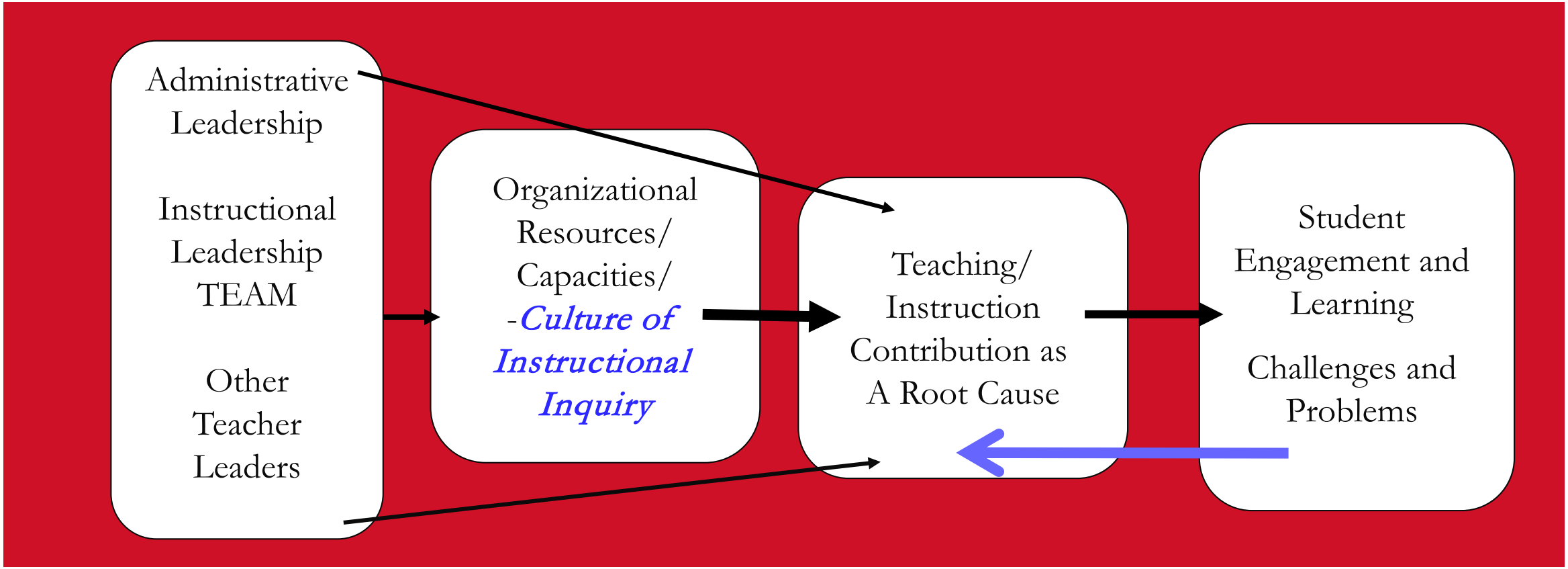
Conceiving of Culture as Positive or Negative is *NOT* Very Useful . . .

- Some beliefs, values, and norms are particularly important for schools that are seeking to improve student learning. We can think of these as specific ***attributes*** of the culture.

- What are the ***beliefs/values/norms*** that matter most if a school is going to be successful with the ongoing improvement of instruction and student learning?

Why is a *Culture of Instructional Inquiry* vital to school improvement?

The Importance of a *Culture of Instructional Inquiry*



***Culture of Instructional Inquiry*:** Teachers believe that their instruction contributes both positively and negatively to student learning. When students struggle, teachers examine their past instruction as a potential contributor to these challenges.

What is a school-wide *Culture of Instructional Inquiry*?

In a Culture of Instructional Inquiry . . .

- Teachers acknowledge that their instruction is contributing to student learning results (both successes and struggles), AND actively seek to investigate how their instruction may be contributing to student learning challenges.
- Teachers value exploration/investigation when expected results are not achieved.

A *Culture of Instructional Inquiry* is NOT a "*Culture of Blame.*"

A *Culture of Adult Learning* is different from a *Culture of Instructional Inquiry* within a school.

A *Culture of Adult Learning* is evidenced when teachers are interested in their own learning. However, this learning may never actually draw in or upon their past teaching practice nor encourage inquiry about their own instructional practices.

Illustration: Teachers may participate in a "book study" about "teaching for rigor" but may never critically reflect about their own "teaching for rigor" by:

(a) using new understandings to critically examine/identify less-well-developed elements of their past practice; and / or

(b) inviting a colleague to observe and provide feedback on their early attempts to apply learning from the "book study" to their "teaching for rigor" as a mechanism to foster critical reflection.

A *Culture of Instructional Inquiry* is different from a *Culture of Adult Learning* within a school.

A Culture of Instructional Inquiry is evidenced when teachers regularly ***critically examine their prior instructional practices*** in the face of student struggles for the purpose of:

- identifying limitations of existing instructional approaches (critical reflection) and;
- considering *NEW* instructional approaches beyond "re-grouping" and "re-teaching."

The Teacher Evaluation Process
(pre conference, observation, post conference)

Consider this evidence from a post-observation conference which illustrates an absence of a *Culture of Instructional Inquiry:*

- The teacher does not identify struggling students and a deeper consideration of their struggles; what does the struggle reveal about their understandings and needs?

- The teacher does not consider instructional practices in relation to these struggles and fails to consider alternate approaches that may be of value.

"I was really pleased with this lesson. I wouldn't really change anything. The students who had blank exit tickets are always disengaged during class.."

The Teacher Evaluation Process
(pre conference, observation, post conference)

Is the ***teacher evaluation process*** conceptualized and regularly enacted as a time for teachers to engage in deeper instructional inquiry where:

- questions about *instructional efficacy* are explored?
- *linkages between student learning struggles and instruction* that preceded those problems are examined?
- teachers *critically reflect on prior instructional decisions/actions and reconsider future practice*?

Teacher Teams (Grade-level, Course/Department) -or- Smaller Professional Learning Communities

Are ***Teacher Team Meetings*** or ***Professional Learning Communities*** conceptualized and regularly enacted as spaces for instructional inquiry where:

- teachers *regularly identify student learning challenges* and *critically consider prior instructional decisions*/actions in relation to those challenges?
- *discussion* / *protocol-based instructional inquiry routines are regularly facilitated*/enacted to support instructional inquiry and critique?

Teacher Teams (Grade-level, Course/Department) -or- Smaller Professional Learning Communities

Consider evidence from the observation of two teacher teams that are enacting a "data driven" decision-making routine. Which is the stronger of the two? Why?

Problem
- Student Learning Problem

Solution
- *Response* Re-group Re-teach

Student Learning Problem → *Inquiry* What might I do to contribute? What might I do differently? → *Response* Changed Instructional Practice

Peer Observation

Are ***Peer Observations*** conceptualized and enacted as a space for *instructional inquiry where* . . . .

- the <u>observed teacher</u> (even the most veteran teacher) is doing so to support his/her practice development; where he/she expects to receive critical feedback and advice to help strengthen practice?

- the <u>observing teacher</u> is expected to provide critical feedback and advice and where a meaningful exchange between the two individuals further promotes professional dialogue?

Peer Observation

Consider evidence from a peer observation and the exchange that follows:

- The observation is enacted to position the observed teacher as an ***exemplar*** modeling a practice for others to see.
  (This is a stance as an expert rather than a stance as an inquirer.)

- The post observation dialogue is structured to encourage the observer to provide largely positive feedback and/or where ***questions for deeper instructional inquiry are never surfaced*** between the observing teacher and the observed teacher.

The Need for *Culture of Instructional Inquiry*

Diagnosis AND Development

The principal is both a "diagnoser" and a "developer." To diagnose is to informally collect a representative sample of data to answer the question:

To what extent does a vibrant *Culture of Instructional Inquiry* currently exist in your school?

Use Cosner's *Culture of Instructional Inquiry* Rubric for "Diagnosis" AND "*Development.*"

Diagnosing COII in Your School: There are settings and situations in your school where the presence/quality of instructional inquiry is likely to be visible for diagnosis. Consider the following.	**Indicators (what to look for):** **More robust culture of instructional inquiry (What you might see or hear) indicators**	**Culture in development but not yet robust**	**Less robust culture of instructional inquiry**
Teacher Evaluation: Pre- and Post-observation Conferences	• Throughout the evaluation process, nearly all teachers demonstrate interest in and actively seek to explore questions about their instructional efficacy • Teachers regularly encounter or experience several instructional evaluation artifacts/tools associated with the pre- or post- observation conference that prompt: a) the receipt of targeted critical feedback and advice from principals in areas specified by the teacher, or b) critical reflection by teacher following the lesson regarding student learning challenges and instruction that preceded these challenges	• Throughout the evaluation process, some teachers demonstrate interest in and actively seek to explore questions about their instructional efficacy; issues of instructional efficacy are likely to be presented/discussed in relation to student limitations by some teachers. • Teachers regularly encounter or experience an evaluation artifact/tool associated with either pre- or post-observation conference that prompts: a) the receipt of targeted critical feedback and advice from principals in areas specific by the teacher, or b(critical reflection by teacher following lesson regarding student learning challenges and instruction that preceded these challenges • Some teachers are regularly engaged in inquiry questioning routines during the post-observation conference that encourage teachers to identify student learning problems, link learning problems to instruction, consider and test alternate instructional approaches	• Throughout the evaluation process, many teachers demonstrate little interest in and do not actively explore questions about their instructional efficacy; issues of instructional efficacy are likely to be presented/discussed in relation to student limitations by many or most teachers. • Teachers do not regularly encounter or experience instructional evaluation artifacts/tools associated with the pre- or post-observation that encourage targeted critical feedback by principals or critical reflection by teachers • Just a few teachers are regularly engaged in inquiry questioning routines during the post-observation conference that encourage teachers to identify student learning problems, link learning problems to instruction, consider and test alternate instructional approaches

Reflection and Writing:
Develop an "Entry Plan" for Informal Diagnosis

Teacher Evaluation Process	Peer Observation	Teacher Team Meetings
What would you look/listen for from a representative sample of these events as evidence of the *nature and quality of instructional inquiry* within the context of the *teacher evaluation process*?	What would you look/listen for from a representative sample of these events as evidence of the *nature and quality of instructional inquiry* within the context of *peer observations*?	What would you look/listen for from a representative sample of these events as evidence of the *nature and quality of instructional inquiry* within the context of *teacher team meetings*?

Why might a *Culture of Instructional Inquiry* be absent or less well-developed in many schools?

Reflection and Writing:

Have you ever discussed the importance of a *Culture of Instructional Inquiry* within your school?

Have you ever taken actions to shape such a culture in your school (if so what)?

Why might a *Culture of Instructional Inquiry* be absent or less well-developed in many schools?

- **Personal Beliefs –** "I view myself as an *expert,* particularly because of my years of experience; thus, instructional inquiry is not necessary for me."

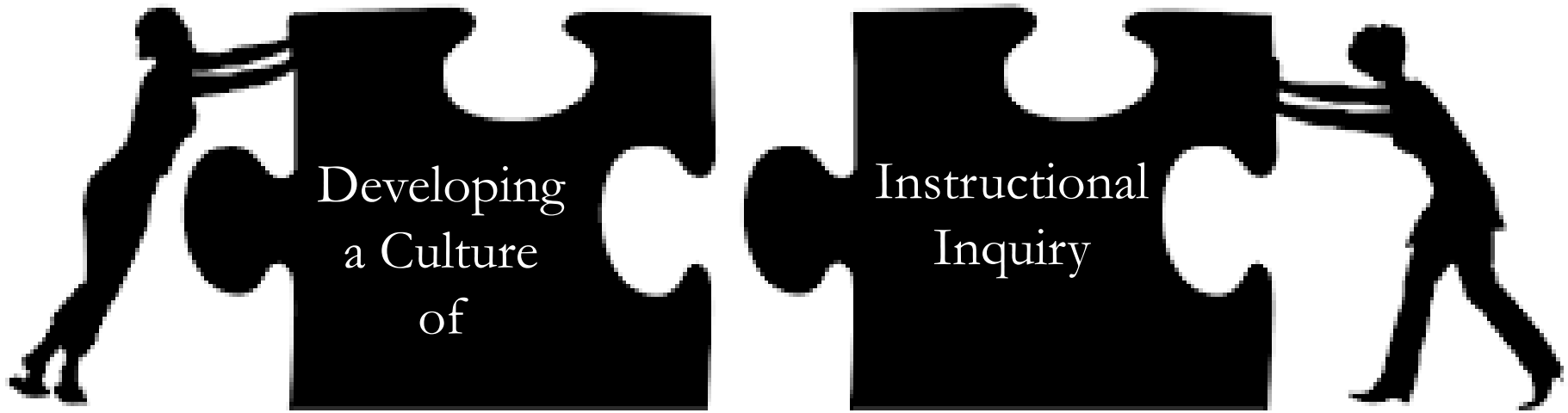
- **Personal Fears** – "I have a fear of being *instructionally vulnerable*. "

  Lack of "Psychological Safety" - Edmondson (1999)
  Lack of "Trust"- Tschannen-Moran (2014)

- **Organizational History -** Actions that have for years reinforced teachers taking on "expert" identities and that discourage/limit being instructionally vulnerable (not encouraged or expected as a part of regular collaborative routines such as peer observation, teacher team meetings, teacher evaluation processes)

The Common Need for Culture Development

Development: Taking very **deliberate actions** over a period of time to strengthen the existing *Culture of Instructional Inquiry* across the school.



Cultivating a Culture of *Instructional Inquiry*

Several key leadership actions (Deal & Peterson, 2009)

Teach: Help teachers understand (teach/educate) the importance of a *Culture of Instructional Inquiry* to the improvement of student learning; make regular connections between student learning and prior instruction.

Engage: Engage teachers in instructional inquiry during staff meetings, professional development, teacher evaluation, teacher team meetings, mentoring/coaching/peer observation (manage and gradually increase levels of vulnerability).

Model: Model a *Culture of Inquiry* with respect to your leadership practices by engaging in inquiry to examine school-wide issues that require attention.

Reinforce: Privately and, as appropriate, publicly (praise/cheerlead/reinforce instances of instructional inquiry).

When a *Culture of Instructional Inquiry* is largely absent . . .

- **Teach**
- **Model**
- **Reinforce** (where it already exists)
- **Engage** - Manage vulnerability by starting small but gradually increase vulnerability (Kochanek, 2005); Adopt routines that are predictable and recur with sufficient frequency so that engagement results in *institutionalized practice*.(Spillane, 2011)

A Related Cultural Attribute that will be of Value: Trust

- Trust between teachers **(collegial trust)** and trust between **teachers/administrators** are BOTH important "resources" that support culture building by reducing or **discouraging feelings of vulnerability.**

- You can begin to learn about the presence and nature of trust in your school by reviewing **5 Essentials Survey Data** (leader trust, collegial trust) or other related school climate/culture data with trust indicators.

The Five Step Cycles of Inquiry Process

1. Problem Identification
Student Learning
AND
Root Cause Instructional Problems

2. Select Responsive Instructional Improvement Strategies

and

Plan for Strategy Enactment

3. Set Process and Outcome Goals and Plan for Goal Assessment

4. Enact Strategy Action Plan
(Yearlong Plan for Teacher Learning)

5. Diagnose Process and Outcome Goal Progress and Adjust as Needed

Cosner et al., 2015

How is it likely to differ from other processes with which you may be familiar?

Box #1 Problem Finding is critical and oftentimes done poorly or overlooked.

1. Problem Identification
Student Learning
AND
Root Cause Instructional Problems

2. Select Responsive Instructional Improvement Strategies

and

Plan for Strategy Enactment

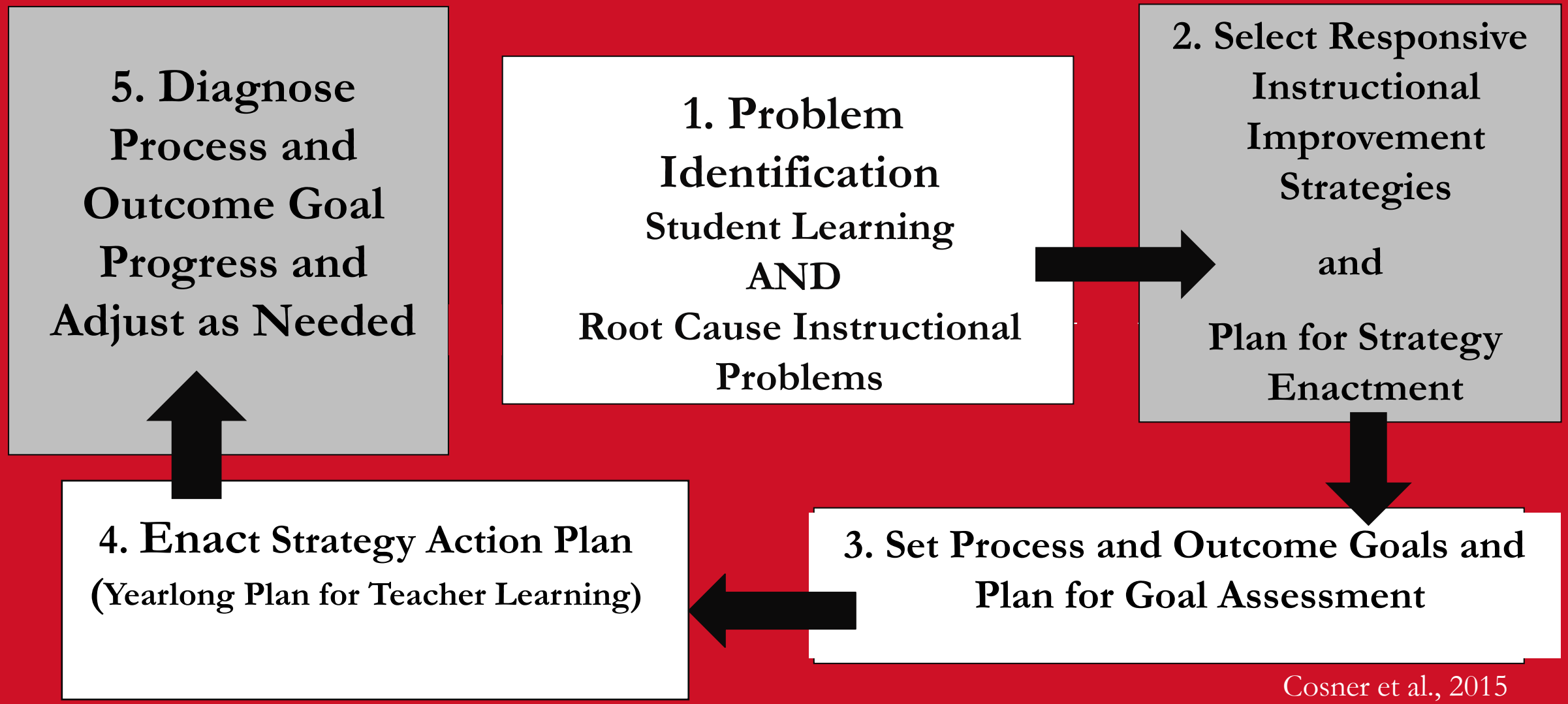
3. Set Process and Outcome Goals and Plan for Goal Assessment

4. Enact Strategy Action Plan
(Yearlong Plan for Teacher Learning)

5. Diagnose Process and Outcome Goal Progress and Adjust as Needed

Cosner et al., 2015

Boxes #2 - #5 also involve important work that may have been overlooked in other school improvement processes. We'll explore these issues throughout this video series.



Cosner et al., 2015

When critical aspects of the work are overlooked, desired student outcomes are *NOT* typically achieved.

1. Problem Identification
Student Learning
AND
Root Cause Instructional Problems

2. Select Responsive Instructional Improvement Strategies

and

Plan for Strategy Enactment

3. Set Process and Outcome Goals and Plan for Goal Assessment

4. Enact Strategy Action Plan
(Yearlong Plan for Teacher Learning)

5. Diagnose Process and Outcome Goal Progress and Adjust as Needed

Cosner et al., 2015

Your school likely has an improvement process in place and could be at various stages in the process that may align with *Cycles of Inquiry*.

1. Problem Identification
Student Learning
AND
Root Cause Instructional Problems

2. Select Responsive Instructional Improvement Strategies
and
Plan for Strategy Enactment

3. Set Process and Outcome Goals and Plan for Goal Assessment

4. Enact Strategy Action Plan
(Yearlong Plan for Teacher Learning)

5. Diagnose Process and Outcome Goal Progress and Adjust as Needed

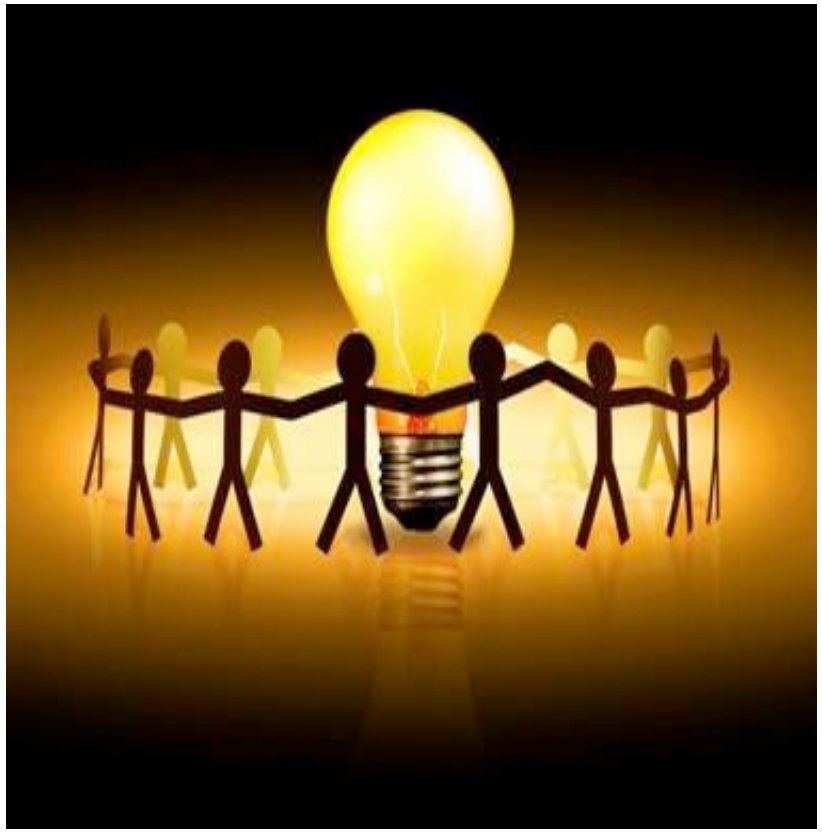
Cosner et al., 2015

The six-session video series will more deeply explore the work involved with the **first two boxes of this cycle**. We will spend the remaining sessions on these two boxes because this work is complex and it sets the foundation for your school's future improvement work.

If you haven't already done so, you will want **to learn about your school's current improvement work**. What you learn through this video series is intended to strengthen and advance that work.

You engaged in several **reflection and writing activities** during this video and those notes should be **saved for sharing** during the regionally facilitated workshops and leadership coaching sessions.

Session Citations



- Cosner, S., Tozer, S., Zavitkovsky, P., & Whalen, S. P. (2015). Cultivating exemplary school leadership preparation at a research intensive university. *Journal of Research on Leadership Education*, *10*(1), 11-38.
- Cosner, S. A. (2004). High school principals and school capacity: An exploratory study of capacity building from a social and human capital perspective.
- Deal, T. E., & Peterson, K. D. (2016). *Shaping school culture*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Edmondson, A. (1999). Psychological safety and learning behavior in work teams. *Administrative science quarterly*, *44*(2), 350-383.
- Kochanek, J. R. (2005). *Building trust for better schools: Research-based practices*. Corwin Press..
- Spillane, J. P., Healey, K., Parise, L. M., & Kenney, A. (2011). A distributed perspective on learning leadership. *Leadership and learning, 159*.
- Tschannen-Moran, M. (2014). *Trust matters: Leadership for successful schools*. John Wiley & Sons.

THANK YOU
WELALIN
GRAZIE
CHOKRANE
RAIBH MAITH AGAT
MULTUMESC
NIRRINGRAZZJAK
MOCHCHAKKERAM
MATUR NUW
MERCI
OBRIGADO
SPASIBO
ASANTE
СПАСИБО
VINAKA
ZIKOMO
KHUBLEI
QUYANAQ
SAAGHA XALDA HWA
THANK YOU VERY MUCH
MATONDO
SUWUN
EIO
MAAKE
МНОГО ВИ БЛАГОДАРЯ
БАЯРЛАЛАА
MOCHCHAKKERAM
MATUR NUWUN
MURAKOZE
PILAMA
GRAZIE
SUW
KIITO
MATONI
VINA
MOCHCHAKK
WELALIN
GRAZIE
CHOKRANE
RAIBH MAITH AGAT
MULTUMESC
NIRRINGRAZZJAK
MOCHCHAKKERAM
MATUR NUW
MULTUMESC
THANK YOU VERY MUCH
QUYANAQ
SAAGHA XALDA HWA
どうも
KIITO
MATONI
VINAKA
ZIKOMO
MULTUMESC
ASANTE
СПАСИБО
OBRIGADO
SPASIBO
MERCI
MATONDO
SUWUN
ZIKOMO
СПАСИБО
EIO
WELALIN
THANK YOU VERY MUCH
SAAGHA XALDA HWA
SUWUN
СПАСИБО
どうも
ZIKOMO
БАЯРЛАЛАА
MOCHCHAKKERAM
MAAKE
SPASIBO
VINAKA
MULTUMESC
SAAGHA XALDA HWA
RAIBH MAITH AGAT
MULTUMESC
VINAKA
МНОГО ВИ БЛАГОДАРЯ
EIO
MAAKE
MATUR NUWUN
MURAKOZE
SUWUN
ZIKOMO
СПАСИБО
EIO
VINAKA
ZIKOMO
EIO