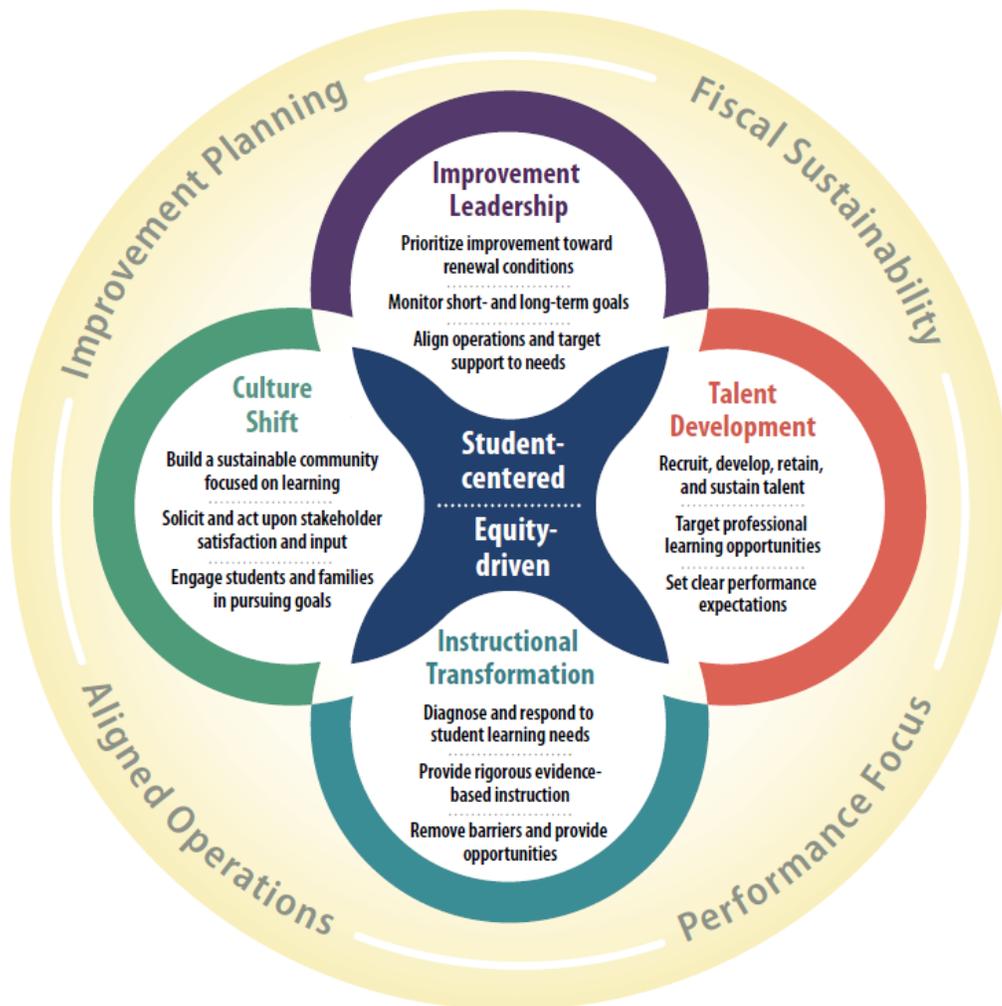


# National Charter School Resource Center A Strategic Approach to School Improvement Using the Four Domains for Significant and Sustainable Improvement



A webinar for Charter Management Organizations and Independent Charter Schools  
Summer, 2020

## Introduction

As the charter sector evolves and seeks new ways to ensure equity of access to high-quality charters, some states and authorizers are now recommending significant school improvement for those charter schools that aren't meeting expectations. There are critical areas charter schools should assess to guide improvement efforts. Originally developed by the Center on School Turnaround at WestEd for traditional public schools and being used by more than 25 states to guide their systems of support to low performing schools, WestEd has adapted *The Four Domains for Rapid School Improvement: A Systems Framework (Four Domains)* to situate the work within the public charter school context and includes key practices in the areas of: **improvement leadership, talent development, instructional transformation, and culture shift.**

*The Four Domains for Significant and Sustainable Charter School Improvement* considers charter school autonomy, market considerations and unique needs and practices effective for charter schools engaged in turnaround. This framework is designed to provide guidance for state education offices, authorizers, charter leaders, and organizations that support school improvement in thinking through strategies for charter school improvement. Research and practice with sustainable school improvement shows that the keys to success are not exclusively about leadership, instruction, culture, or talent. Referencing the evidence base related to what works, it's clear that successful school improvement is more likely when many promising practices are working together - systemically from the state, authorizer, board and school - to create conditions for success. This framework is meant to organize and design a cohesive and comprehensive strategy to support systemic thinking around school improvement.

*This webinar is offered to Charter Management Organizations and independent charter schools to apply a comprehensive framework to school improvement activities.*

## Key Consideration Questions:

1. In what ways does the pandemic affect school improvement efforts that are already underway?
2. How can you use a comprehensive framework and approach to improvement to strategically plan how to initiate or adjust school improvement actions in the:
  - a. **Immediate** (within next 3 months)
  - b. **Short-term** (start up of 20-21 SY)
  - c. **Long-term** (20-21 SY and beyond)

## Improvement Needs

<b>What is your top school improvement concern?</b>
<b>Do you anticipate budget cuts? If so, by how much?</b>



## Getting Started:

<p>1. What does measuring student learning look like in the Fall?</p>	<p>2. What does instructional feedback look like in the Fall? How will teacher feedback occur?</p>
<p><b>What are your biggest immediate challenges in the longer term? (e.g. academics, SEL, technology)</b></p>	<p><b>How can we be proactive and intentional about meeting these needs?</b></p>
<p>Over the summer?</p>	
<p>Fall 2020?</p>	
<p>Spring 2021?</p>	

**How can we be intentional about school improvement efforts given the need to plan for the long term while addressing immediate needs?**

# Strategic Improvement Plan Development

For your convenience, this portion of the workbook is also offered via [google slides](#) so you can review and reflect as a team.

## Directions:

1. Determine the component(s) of focus: *improvement planning, performance/equity focus, aligned operations, fiscal sustainability*
2. Determine the time frame: *immediate* (0-3 months); *short term* (2-8 months) or *long term* (6-12 months)
3. Sort current programs, strategies and major activities into the **Continue, Pause, Stop, Emerging, Unknown** categories
4. Use the questions to guide and examples to spark ideas for potential supports

## Strategic Improvement Components:

- **Improvement Planning:** Start with a **needs assessment** to gauge strengths and challenges in each domain
- **Focus on Student's Performance:** Determine what is needed for students, individually and collectively
- **Alignment of Operations:** Coordinate fiscal and human resources based on student need
- **Fiscal Sustainability:** Project potential budget implications and plan accordingly

## Questions to Guide Strategic Improvement

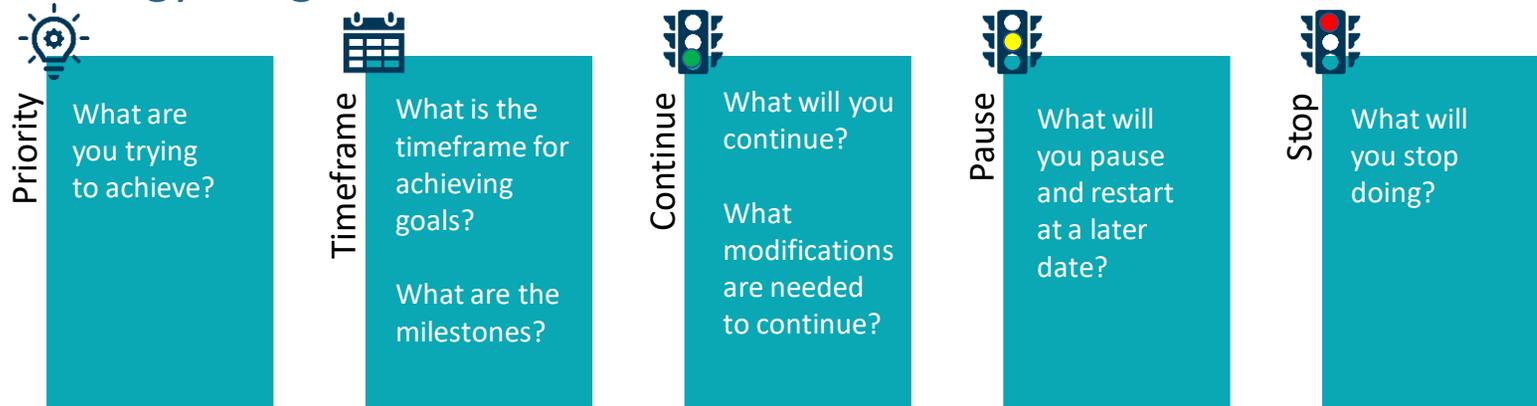
Improvement Components	Guiding Question
<b>Improvement Planning</b>	How will we successfully drive improvement to meet the needs of all students?  How will we be intentional about school improvement efforts given the need to plan for the long term while addressing immediate needs?
<b>Performance/Equity Focus</b>	What can we plan to do now to be ready to identify students, skills, and content that need additional support?  How will we address student learning gaps?
<b>Aligned Operations</b>	How will we build a coalition of support for systemic change: (state, authorizer, CMO/EMO, CSO, boards, and schools) to align resources to need?
<b>Fiscal Sustainability</b>	How will we prepare for funding shortfalls?

## Strategic Improvement Examples

Improvement Components	Immediate (0-3 months)	Short Term (2-8 months)	Long Term (6-12 months)
<b>Improvement Planning</b>	Conduct needs assessments, surveys, strategic improvement planning processes, and restructure student schedules.	Shore up ongoing and frequent progress monitoring.	Plan for and execute resource investments in activities that would support learning recovery lost over the spring and summer of 2020.
<b>Performance/Equity Focus</b>	<p>Ensure student needs are still being met in lieu of “formal accountability.”</p> <p>Implement 4-6 weeks of additional summer instruction for at-risk, English learner and special education students.</p>	<p>Establish data collection mechanisms to understand emergent patterns of need in your communities.</p> <p>Mobilize student support services (counselors, partner agencies) to engage students.</p>	Identify and assess the “hardest hit” communities; use traditional measures of equity (e.g., at-risk, Wi-Fi access), and other measures of equity to assess (e.g., essential service workers, single parent homes).
<b>Aligned Operations</b>	Support leaders to resolve equity gaps exacerbated by distance learning through increased time allocation of classroom/intervention staff, mental health supports, and helping families navigate available public services.	<p>Anticipate and strategize about increases in compensatory supports needed for at-risk students and those receiving special education services, including innovative approaches for using those resources effectively.</p> <p>Leverage cross-agency collaboration to increase availability of supports.</p>	Engage stakeholders to set priorities for resource allocation based on the needs of students and their families for the short-, mid-, and longer-term.
<b>Fiscal Sustainability</b>	<p>Use Federal Funding opportunities, flexibility, and funding reserve changes to apply carry-over funds to students’ arrival back into traditional or alternative learning schedules/ environments.</p> <p>Seek, identify and apply for additional funding if needed.</p>	<p>Anticipate a likely revision to the state budget in the fall and seek support from the state and authorizer to prepare.</p> <p>Strategically plan how to allocate resources using one-time CARES Act vs. ongoing expense/funding decisions. Understand how funds can be blended/braided and the flexibility that’s available to assist in resource allocation.</p>	Establish a prioritization list to prepare for potential FY22 budget reductions.

# Strategic Improvement Triage Tool - Example

## Strategy Triage Tool



**Emerging**  
What is a new or emerging priority that needs to be addressed through your work?



**Unknown**  
What is unknown? What is in too much flux to make a decision about now?

Source: Author Adaptation of Strategy Lift 2020

# Strategic Improvement Triage Tool



Priority



Timeframe



Continue



Pause



Stop



Emerging



Unknown

