

**Indicator: The LEA has reoriented its culture toward shared responsibility and accountability. (5140)**

**Explanation:** The evidence review suggests when an LEA shares accountability, a willingness to allow all stakeholders to accept responsibility for all actions, it is more likely to experience rapid and sustained improvements. To reorient a previously silo-like environment or culture requires a distributive model for leadership that is committed to receiving input on and sharing responsibility for key district and school functions. Shared responsibility requires that all stakeholders contribute to and take ownership in all policy, procedure, and improvement efforts so that all may experience the successes and failures of those labors and build their capacities as a result.

**Questions:** How will the LEA examine its current practice to determine which if any of its policies, procedures, and improvement efforts are shared with and between stakeholders including all departments, staff, the school board, community, and caregivers? What process will the LEA employ to reorient its silo-like culture to a stakeholder inclusive environment? How will the LEA reorganize all its work to best support a shared accountability culture?

SEA culture should also be reoriented toward shared responsibility and accountability.  
Provide dedicated time, space, and autonomy for collective problem solving.

A schematic diagram of the Framework for District Capacity Building and Improvement – Rapid District Improvement Pathway is on p. 65 of *Exploring the Pathway to Rapid District Improvement* (Lane, 2009).

**Evidence Review:**

*A Conceptual Framework for District Capacity Building and Improvement*

The conceptual framework is a way of understanding a particular phenomenon, in this case how districts engage in rapid and sustainable improvement, by articulating a set of variables and the relationships among them (Sabatier, 1999). The conceptual framework presented here has three potential uses: (1) as a diagnostic tool, or as a self-assessment that can assist a district (or a state education agency) to better understand what a district needs to do to improve; (2) as a guide for districts actively engaging in district improvement; and (3) as a tool for researchers studying how districts improve as a way of testing hypothesis and advancing research around district improvement.

**The Framework for District Capacity Building and Improvement has three interrelated components:**

1. The **core district functions** that a district is responsible for fulfilling, and which are necessary for a district to be able to sustain improvement efforts. The core district functions include:
  - Management and Operations, focused on the basic functions that need to be carried out in order to operate the district, and
  - Teaching and Learning, which refer to functions that a district carries out and that are needed for schools and teachers to provide standards-based instruction and support students' learning.

2. A set of **Improvement Capacities**, consisting of district structures, policies, processes, and programs intentionally designed to improve overall organizational capacity and the quality of teacher instruction.

Districts develop their capacity for improvement by:

- Reorganizing the District Office to Support Improvement Efforts,
- Reorienting the Organization and Shifting Culture and Beliefs,
- Supporting Collective Problem Solving, and
- Building Leadership and Instructional Capacity.

3. A **Rapid Improvement Pathway**, depicting how a district initiates and sustains improvement efforts, including those strategies used to cultivate improvement capacities and improve core district functions.

- Phase 1 – Catalyzing Conditions for Rapid Improvement
- Phase 2 – Defining and Communicating a Districtwide Improvement Effort
- Phase 3 – Becoming an Improvement-Oriented Organization

(Lane, 2009, p. 9)

In 2014, the California Office to Reform Education (CORE) wrote a report on the *Local Educational Agencies' Request for Waivers under Section 9401 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965*. The report was submitted to the U.S. Department of Education in Washington, DC, with the explanation, "This form is being used by a consortium of eight local educational agencies (LEAs) in California to request waivers under section 9401 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended (ESEA). This form has previously been used by State educational agencies (SEAs) to request ESEA flexibility. The consortium of LEAs requesting this waiver are using this form for the sake of ease and convenience, given the significant similarity between the waivers requested and plans submitted by the LEAs to the waivers requested and plans typically submitted by SEAs requesting ESEA flexibility" (CORE, 2014, p. i).

In filling out the form, under overview of SEA's Request for the ESEA Flexibility, interestingly, CORE writes, "Recognition that CORE's application is unique given the lack of direct involvement from the state education agency, the CORE Districts have undertaken quite a bit of research into governance and mutual responsibility in consultation with the leadership from the Association of California School Administrators (ACSA). Through a common Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) the CORE LEAs will demonstrate their commitment to mutual accountability and transparency. The purpose of the MOU is to establish a framework of collaboration and shared accountability among all Participating LEAs, including the original CORE Districts, to articulate specific roles and responsibilities in support of implementation. Appendix A of this application has a copy of the proposed MOU. This application builds on the MOU framework with a strategic vision for aggressive education reform embodied in a clear and credible path to implementation. If at any point an LEA is unable or unwilling to uphold the commitments within the MOU, the commitment can be rescinded and the LEA returned to the existing California NCLB accountability workbook....At its heart, CORE's goal is to build a new system of accountability – the School Quality Improvement System – rooted in a moral imperative to educate all children and engineered on a foundation of transparent data sharing and mutual accountability. Within the peer driven system of the CORE waiver proposal, CORE will facilitate and provide a central point of contact for waiver activities for the LEAs and support the oversight panel and to help ensure good communication among the entire organization and consortium. The School Quality Improvement System will serve in a capacity to ensure LEA compliance and is further discussed

later in this document. Additionally expertise within CORE, its external partners/vendors and participating LEAs' schools and central offices will be used to provide accountability, support, and assistance across the system" (CORE, pp. 21–22).

Under Section 2.G, Build SEA, LEA, and School Capacity to Improve Student Learning, CORE has written, "As a collaborative endeavor, the Participating LEAs have and will sign formal MOUs that clearly spell out the agreements and accountability of all partners. Among those commitments is the agreement to build LEA and school capacity to improve student learning, particularly in priority and focus schools, by focusing on shared accountability and the use of student achievement data to inform instructional and curricular decision making as well as teacher and administrator supervision and evaluation systems for continuous instructional improvement" (CORE, 2014, p. 174).

And under Section 3.B, Ensure LEAs Implement Teacher and Principal Evaluation Support Systems, CORE has written, "To facilitate the development and implementation of high quality evaluation systems and ensure shared accountability, a preliminary rubric to measure development and implementation of the aforementioned teacher, principal and superintendent evaluation systems has been developed (see Appendix H). The rubric will be finalized during a convention of all LEAs' Professional Capital and teacher union representatives in early August 2013 and will be recommended to the CORE Board for adoption by the CORE Staff shortly thereafter" (CORE, 2014, p. 194).

In its 2013 Task Force Summary Report on Effective Teaching, the Oakland Unified School District lists four core values which have "bubbled up during our work that will enable the Oakland Unified School District to become education's employer of choice in the Bay Area: (1) grow together through quality relationships and feedback, (2) high expectations and empowerment, (3) honor expertise and collaboration, and (4) shared accountability" (Oakland Unified School District, 2013, p. 4). It later says, "Shared accountability must be ensured if we are to become the organization that we need to be. Teachers are willing to be held accountable for serving students and thrive when expectations are clear and they share with administration the responsibilities for the development and implementation of improvement plans and the conditions for success" (p. 6).

## References and Resources

- California Office to Reform Education (CORE). (2014). *Local Educational Agencies' Request for Waivers under Section 9401 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965*. Sacramento, CA: Author. Retrieved from <http://www2.ed.gov/policy/eseaflex/approved-requests/cacorewaiver92014.pdf>
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