SUPPORT SYSTEMS
TOOLS FOR SCHOOLS AND DISTRICTS

OVERVIEW

This Extended Learning Guide is designed for your team to use in conjunction with the videos on taisresources.net to review current practices, establish baseline information, and plan for continuous improvement. Each guide includes suggestions for discussion, protocols for investigation, and one or more Call to Action activities.

Support Systems are the components represented by the second-most outer ring of the Texas Accountability and Intervention System (TAIS) process diagram, and consist of:

- Organizational Structure
- Processes and Procedures
- Communications
- Capacity and Resources

Note that the components of the TAIS framework don't function in isolation. Your team should consider reviewing each component, beginning with the ones that seem most relevant to your current situation.

1

ORGANIZATION

In addition to these Extended Learning Guides, each Support Systems component on taisresources.net features an *Expert video* in which a professional with expertise in the subject offers important points to remember and tips for success.

Each component also offers one or more *From the Field videos* highlighting Texas schools that have used the component effectively in their continuous improvement process. These videos will help your team see and discuss what the component looks and sounds like in action.

USING THIS GUIDE

As a principal, superintendent, district leader, teacher leader, or Professional Service Provider, you can use the videos and Learning Guides to provide an ongoing learning experience for teams tasked with implementing continuous school improvement. The Learning Guides provide a framework for using the online videos to promote discussion and improvement.

EACH GUIDE INCLUDES

- A component definition, called "Build a Common Understanding"
- Discussion questions covering the *Expert* and *From the Field* videos
- Suggested activities to promote reflection, deep thought, discussion, and action planning
- Info about the target audience, time required, and needed materials
- One or more Calls to Action to help the group move from "knowing" to "doing"
- References for further study

SUPPORT SYSTEMS
CAPACITY AND RESOURCES

Building a Common Understanding

The organization strategically utilizes internal and external human capital and necessary resources to meet all needs for a successful learning environment. Expertise is purposefully cultivated and sustained through targeted recruitment, retention, and succession planning.[1,2]

Target Audience

Campus or District Leadership Team

Time Needed

90 minutes is recommended. (The module can be broken into two sessions if needed.)

Materials Needed

- Videos at www.taisresources.net/capacity-and-resources/
- Charts to record responses

STEP 1

Watch the *Expert video* with your campus or district team. Consider Ervin Knezek's advice regarding the development of human capital. Note the important points made in the video and discuss your thoughts as a team.

STEP 2

Think about how your district or school purposefully builds capacity to accomplish specific goals. Then complete the following chart. As you fill in your responses, discuss where the district or campus is now, where it wants to be, and the next steps it must take to get there.

Consider	Where We Are Now:	Where We Want To Be:	Next Steps:
How do you currently find the right people? Is your method effective?			
What process do you use to recruit for overall strengths as well as for diversity strengths?			
How might you build a diverse staff with regard to education, experience, and expertise?			
What process might you put in place to coordinate talents and recruit to complement the team and fill gaps strategically?			
How do you currently keep the right people? Discuss specific efforts to retain the best staff.			
How do you plan for succession of teachers and leaders?			
How do you balance the need for diversity to build synergy while establishing a common purpose and operating structure?			

STEP 3

As a group, think about staff strengths. In the chart below, list each person in your district department or on your campus. Consider their strengths and opportunities for growth.

When filling out the chart, consider how purposeful you are in sustaining efforts over time in spite of turnover and inevitable changes. Using these questions to guide your responses:

- How do we develop and maintain the skills of our staff over time?
- How do we involve new staff in the work?
- What are the next steps in our continuous improvement cycle?
- Who can help us? Do we have the internal capacity to take these steps, or do we need outside help?
- How do we target, focus, and coordinate outside support to be sure that staff members are not confused?
- How do we address relational needs in building technical capacity?

Position	Person(s)	Education/ Certifications/ Special Training	Tenure in Field	District/ Campus Tenure	Unique Attributes/ Liabilities	Retention Potential

STEP 4

Watch the *From the Field* videos. Discuss how Lee High School and Hanna High School employ capacity and resources to address their unique needs.

STEP 5

Answer the questions in the following chart, and then describe how your responses apply to the work of your campus or district.

Meeting Every Need: Lee High School

Question:	Application to Our Work:
What is their primary focus?	
How was that communicated?	
What kinds of resources do they need to address the challenges their students face?	
In what ways does Lee High School redefine the role of a traditional high school to provide resources and coordinate community agencies, and why is that important?	

Cultivating Leadership: Hanna High School

Question:	Application to Our Work:
What is their primary focus and how is it different than that of Lee High School?	
What structures did they put in place to communicate the focus and enable collaboration?	
Thinking of time and talent as resources, how did they use each one used to improve student learning?	
In what ways does Hanna High School redefine the leadership roles from those often found in a traditional high school, and why is that important?	

STEP 6

Discuss and describe the ways your school or district purposefully builds capacity and provides resources to meet identified areas of challenge. Use the chart below to conduct a SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) to refine your thinking.

Challenge Area: _____		
Internal	Strengths: • What do you do well? • What unique strengths can you draw on? • What do others see as your strengths?	Weaknesses: • What could you improve? • In which areas do you have fewer resources than others? • What are others likely to see as weaknesses?
External	Opportunities: • What opportunities are open to you? • What trends could you use to your advantage? • How can you turn your strengths into opportunities?	Threats: • What threats could harm you? • What shifts, changes, or trends pose a potential threat? • To what threats do your weaknesses expose you to?

NOTES

1. Andy Hargreaves, interview by Ruth Nelson, "Professor Andy Hargreaves Shares Impactful Information on Sustainability," *Hope Foundation*, 2013, http://www.hopefoundationorg/professor-andy-hargreaves-shares-impactful-information-on-sustainability/.

2. Gene Bottoms and Jon Schmidt-Davis, "The Three Essentials: Improving Schools Requires District Vision, District and State Support, and Principal Leadership," *The Wallace Foundation*, last modified August 2010, http://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/school-leadership/district-policy-and-practice/Pages/Three-Essentials-to-Improving-Schools.aspx.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Barth, Roland. *Improving Schools from Within*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass
      Publishers, 1990.

Bottoms, Gene, and Jon Schmidt-Davis. "The Three Essentials: Improving
      Schools Requires District Vision, District and State Support, and Principal
      Leadership." *The Wallace Foundation*, last modified August 2010. http://
      www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/school-leadership/
      district-policy-and-practice/Pages/Three-Essentials-to-Improving-
      Schools.aspx.

Gordon, Gary. *Building Engaged Schools: Getting the Most Out of America's
      Classrooms*. New York: Gallup Press, 2006.

Hargreaves, Andy. Interview by Ruth Nelson. "Professor Andy Hargreaves Shares
      Impactful Information on Sustainability." *Hope Foundation*, 2013. http://
      www.hopefoundationorg/professor-andy-hargreaves-shares-impactful-
      information-on-sustainability/.

Lambert, Linda. *Leadership Capacity for Lasting School Improvement*.
      Alexandria: ASCD, 2003.