



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.

ORGANIZATION

In addition to these Extended Learning Guides, each Support Systems component on [taisresources.net](https://www.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 ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

Building a Common Understanding

The organizational structure has clearly delineated roles and responsibilities for personnel that focus on teaching and learning, accountability, and impact on student achievement. District and campus leaders eliminate barriers to improvement, redefine staff roles and responsibilities as necessary, and empower staff to be responsive in support of improvement.^{1,2,3,4}

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/organizational-structure/
- Printed charts for activities
- Chart paper and pens, or a marker board and markers
- Highlighters
- Printed activity charts

STEP 1

Watch the *Expert video*, "Organizational Structure," featuring Dr. Heather Zavadsky with your campus or district team.

STEP 2

Discuss the video. One topic you might consider for discussion is Dr. Zavadsky's metaphor of a funnel to represent an organization.

STEP 3

On chart paper or a white board, diagram the organizational structure of your district and/or school. Per Dr. Zavadsky's description, your diagram should include not just "who's over who," but also the elements that represent the practices and culture of your organization.

- Use a symbol or color to mark elements you believe to be non-negotiable.
- Use a different symbol or color mark elements over which you have some control.
- Review the non-negotiable items to ensure they really belong in this category. Challenge one another to be sure you aren't including things because they are "just the way we do things here," when, in reality, they might really be negotiable.

STEP 4

Watch the Lanier High School and Belton New Tech *From the Field* videos. As you watch, think about how these schools purposefully crafted organizational structures to meet their goals.

STEP 5

Discuss the following questions as a team. Using the diagram below:

- On the left, list how the organizational structures were created or changed at these schools to meet their stated goals.
- On the right, list why, based on your knowledge, you think these changes were made.

How Were Organizational Structures Created or Changed to Meet the Schools' Goals?	Why Do You Think The Structures Were Created Or Changed As They Were? How Did This Support The Schools' Goals?

STEP 6

Discuss how an organization's structure is relevant to its needs, vision, goals and actions.

STEP 7

Using the diagram you created in Step 3, identify one negotiable element of your organizational structure that might be altered to enhance student performance:

- Choose the most pressing need in your organizational structure, or an element of it that would create the biggest impact if changed.
- Using the Plus/Delta chart shown below, do the following:
 - In the “Plus” column, list the items within the chosen element or area that your group feels are functioning well.
 - In the “Delta” column, list the items within the chosen element or area that may be barriers to success, and thus need to be changed.
- Discuss your findings. How could the items on the “Plus” side be continued or expanded to help achieve organizational goals? How could the items on the “Delta” side be changed or eliminated for the same purpose?

Plus	Delta

STEP 8

Develop a specific plan to adjust the area or element of your organizational structure your group analyzed in Step 7. Be sure to relate your proposed adjustments directly to the identified need. Use the Continuous Improvement resources at www.taisresources.net/continuous-improvement-resources/ to guide your planning.

STEP 9

Repeat the process outlined above with other identified needs. Focus on determining if the traditional elements or areas of your organizational structure inhibit or enhance the ability of your school or district to address identified needs.

NOTES

1. Richard Dufour and Robert J. Marzano, *Leaders of Learning: How District, School, and Classroom Leaders Improve Student Achievement* (Bloomington: Solution Tree Press, 2011).

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>.

3. Peter Senge and Michael Fullan, *All Systems Go: The Change Imperative for Whole System Reform* (Thousand Oaks: Corwin, 2010).

4. Meredith Honig et al., "Central Office Transformation for District-wide Teaching and Learning Improvement," *The Wallace Foundation*, last modified April 2010, http://depts.washington.edu/uwcel/news/ctp_cotdtli.pdf.

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Dufour, Richard, and Robert J. Marzano. *Leaders of Learning: How District, School, and Classroom Leaders Improve Student Achievement*. Bloomington: Solution Tree Press, 2011.

Fullan, Michael, Peter Hill, and Carmel Crevola. *Breakthrough*. Thousand Oaks: Corwin Press, 2006.

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