



**RESEARCH + PRACTICE
COLLABORATORY**

Strategies for Negotiating Problems of Practice with Partners

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Why Negotiate?

Individuals bring different understandings of the purposes and key strategies of the partnership.

- *Negotiation can identify commonalities and productive differences.*

Individuals bring different motives for investing their time and energy in the partnership.

- *Negotiation can identify deep motivations for participation that might be addressed through participation.*

Partner organizations' needs and priorities change.

- *After a proposal is developed, re-negotiation of the problem can sustain the partnership.*



Initial Goals

- Seek to understand the problem from your partner's point of view.
- Check your understanding with the person to whom you are listening.
 - Try re-voicing: “So you are saying that...Do I have that right?”
- Try and represent the problem back to your colleagues without using “deficit language.”
 - Focus on *their* goals and aspirations and obstacles from *their* point of view.



What Will You Write for “Slide 2”?

Slide 1

**Improving professional
development in
mathematics at scale**

Henri Poincaré
Mathematics Education Researcher

Slide 2

The Problem

Teachers do not...
Teachers lack...
School leaders fail to...
Districts hardly ever...



What Will You Write for “Slide 2”?

Slide 1

Improving professional development in

**If shown to your partners, will they agree that these are significant problems that your partnership is addressing?
Will they see their own challenges reflected in how you state “the problem”?**

Slide 2

The Problem

Teachers do not...
Teachers lack...
School leaders fail to...
Districts hardly ever...



Three Strategies

- Five Whys
- Fishbone or Ishikawa Diagram
- Stakeholder Interviews



Five Whys

- A technique used to guide design and to build greater awareness of commonalities and differences among different stakeholders
- Can be used to accomplish two key goals:
 - Establish common values and motivation for participation.
 - Establish a better understanding of root problems.



Five Whys

LEADING QUESTION: What is the key problem our partnership is trying to solve?

Why is this a problem? (Or, How did this come to be a problem?)

WHY #1

Why is this a problem? (Or, How did this come to be a problem?)

WHY #2

Why is this a problem? (Or, How did this come to be a problem?)

WHY #3

WHY #4 → **WHY #5**

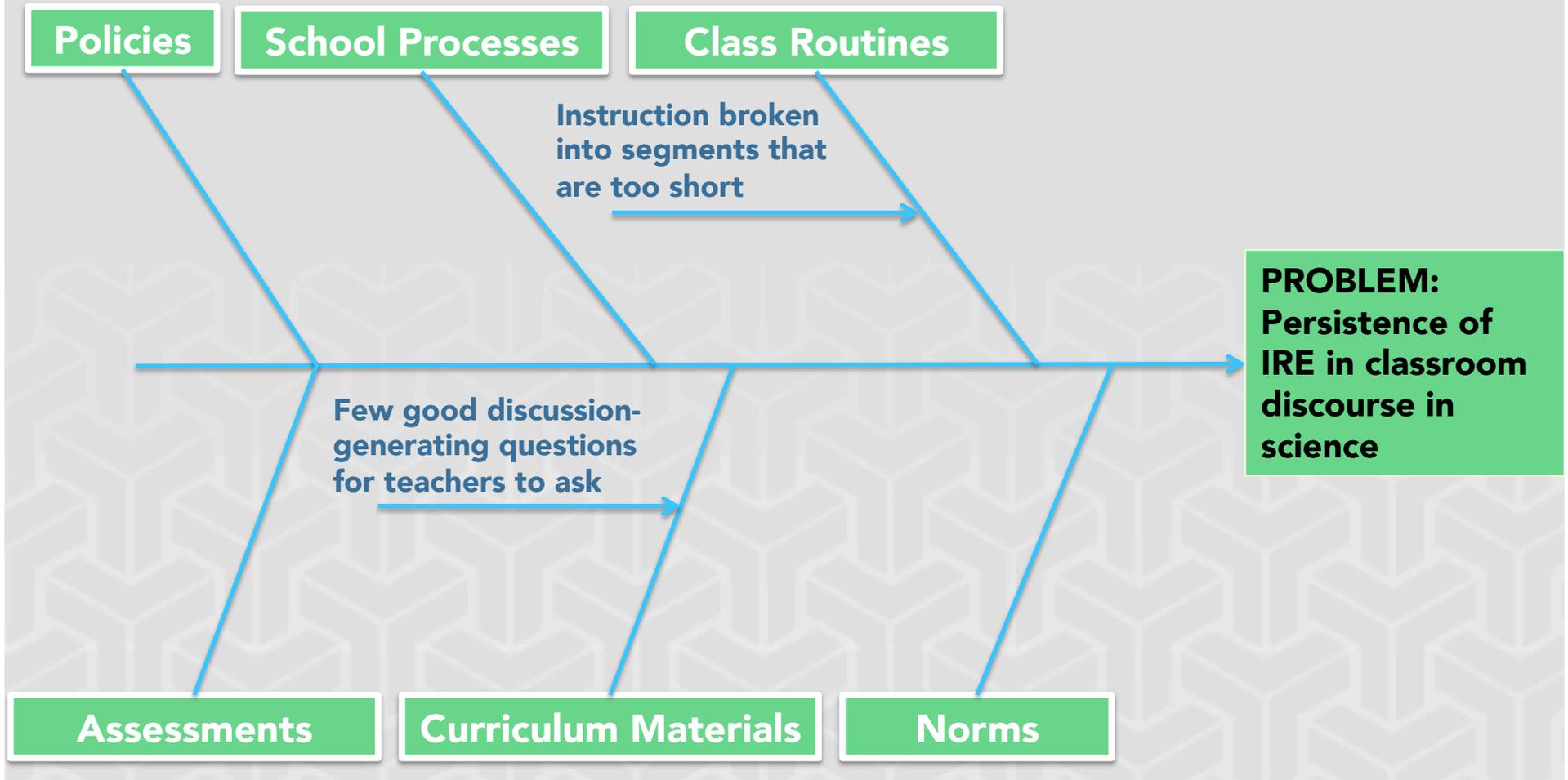


Fishbone Diagram

- Helps to identify multiple causes for a current situation.
- Facilitator writes down causes related to specific categories, which helps to discipline the process of considering different types of causes.
- Best to use when there is an initial problem statement that participants can agree upon.



Fishbone Diagram



Stakeholder Interview

- Provides a way to focus attention on individuals and how they interpret the problems, as well as the potential solutions to those problems.
- A structured protocol can help elicit ways that individuals find themselves in *double binds* with respect to conflicting goals for improvement.
- Can help partners envision how to individualize supports for implementation.



Potential Protocol Questions

Relating to the partnership

- What problems is the partnership trying to address?
- In what ways is it organized well to address those problems?
- In what ways could it be better organized to address those problems?

Relating to the district and school context

- With what district and school goals and policies are the partnership's goals congruent?
- What district or school goals and policies interfere with the partnership's goals?

Relating to the classroom context

- How well do the materials available to you support the partnership's goals?
- What aspects of the materials either don't address the problems the partnership is tackling or make it worse?

Relating to individual history and motivation

- How does the partnership's goals fit with your own goals for professional growth? What experiences – of professional development programs, curriculum projects, etc. – are most like the partnership's current efforts? What did you learn from that experience that is relevant to these current efforts?



Using a Tool to Define a Problem

Assemble a Team

Include a researcher, a teacher, an educational leader, and a subject matter expert.
Select a tool or tools to use and goal for team.

Use the Tool(s)

Invite broader group to meeting (Fishbone) or select participants (Five Whys, Interviews).
Create records of responses to bring back.

Interpret Results

Reconvene the team.
Review records of responses together.
Identify patterns, paying attention both to differences and similarities.

Develop a Problem Statement

Articulate the negotiated problem and related aim.
Describe process for arriving at statement.
Justify the problem's importance by relating to evidence in the process.

