



CIM for CCEIS - Root Cause Analysis with a Cultural Lens: Fishbone



Significant Disproportionality Compliance and Improvement Monitoring (CIM) for Comprehensive Coordinated Early Intervening Services (CCEIS)

Root Cause Analysis with a Cultural Lens (Fishbone Diagram – Ishikawa Cause and Effect)

These materials are designed to work with the Ishikawa Cause and Effect Diagram, commonly known as the Fishbone diagram for performing a root cause analysis and should be performed with a trained facilitator. Before starting on the root cause analysis process, it is important to ensure that the team members are using a cultural lens when analyzing the data and when defining the issue and the possible solutions.

“Looking through a cultural lens means stepping back and considering the cultural implications of policy and practice for all members of our community. Our perspectives, values, and viewpoints are formed by the context in which we grew up as well as the one in which we live. Often miscommunication or ineffective actions can result when culture is not taken into consideration as we research, plan, and implement policy and practice. For example, if a group of students has been consistently taught at home and in their community that working together is the most important value then introducing incentives that only reward individual achievement may not be an effective approach. [SPP-TAP Applying a Cultural Lens](#)”

Please take a moment to review the information below that provides background and a framework for team members when progressing through the root cause analysis process.

Six Key Features of an Equity-focused Root Cause Analysis in Education

The information below is an excerpt from the article on [Six Key Features of an Equity-focused Root Cause Analysis in Education](#). In the article the author states, “An equity-focused root cause analysis in education takes on a critical perspective to better understand how historical inequities have shaped a problem and led to inequitable outcomes.” Before starting the root cause analysis process, take a moment to review the information below and use this background information to inform your thinking and reflection.



California Department of Education, Special Education Division's special project, State Performance Plan Technical Assistance Project (SPP-TAP) is funded through a contract with the Napa County Office of Education. SPP-TAP is funded from federal funds, (State Grants #H027A080116A) provided from the U.S. Department of Education Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Opinions expressed herein are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the position of the U.S. Department of Education.

1. Incorporate multiple points of view and sets of knowledge.

Effective root cause analyses bring in different kinds of people with different kinds of expertise from inside and outside an organization to work together to improve a specific problem.

2. Gather detailed sets of data.

Effective root cause analyses gather, inspect, and interpret lots of different kinds of information related to the outcome that they want to change.

3. Challenge assumptions.

Effective root cause analyses have teams that challenge assumptions and biases about what the factors are that are contributing to the thing they want to change. These are some things that *all* effective root cause analyses have in common, including root cause analyses in education. However, in all aspects of education, equity should be a top priority, so it's not enough to stop with these three traits.

What does an equity-focused root cause analysis look like?

In addition, an equity-focused RCA should:

4. Address implicit biases.

Implicit biases are an unintentional form of bias that operate deep in our psyche – so far that we can't even readily be aware that they exist. Yet they have a powerful influence over our decisions and behavior (Staats, 2016). Implicit biases surface in educators' explanations for certain negative outcomes and might sound like, "These students don't take school seriously." Judgmental viewpoints about the abilities of certain groups like this are known as *deficit perspectives*. Educators need opportunities for guided reflection on their backgrounds and experiences to redress the implicit biases they may unknowingly hold about certain groups of students.

5. Embrace "We, not They" (focus on what YOU can change).

A powerful shift happens when we frame our thinking in terms of what we as educators can do to face challenges with student learning instead of what *they* do. The "they" here could be any of several entities: students, their families, society at large, or local governments, just to name a few. Research shows a direct link between framing problems of learning as addressable *within a school* and productive strategies for learning (Horn, 2007; Jackson et al., 2017; Skrla et al, 2004). As with implicit biases, framing problems in terms of "they" not "we" can encourage a deficit perspective, and decreased likelihood of finding solutions within a school to improve student learning. An equity-focused root cause analysis steers attention to what teachers can do to support learning.



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6. Recognize and use equitable learning opportunities.

A traditional one-size-fits-all approach to learning doesn't acknowledge or respect the unique experiences of different learners. An equity-centered root cause analysis recognizes this and pushes educators to look for strategies to support specific minoritized student groups. For example, an educator looking for more equitable learning opportunities may learn from their students that the students don't see or hear themselves in selected texts. In response, schools can work with students to increase the cultural relevance of texts.

Background Information on Root Cause Analyses with a Cultural Lens

Source: Web page University of Pittsburg- Bridges to Learning

Author Aaron Anthony

Setting the Frame for the Root Cause Analysis Process

Below are five factors to consider before starting with the Root Cause Analysis.

1. Interpersonal – The quality of the interactions between and among participants during the root cause analysis process.

How will the team establish norms of equity of voice and positive intent during the root cause analysis process?

2. Consequential – The social and cultural considerations and consequences of the definition of the problem and the root cause analysis.

What social and cultural considerations were taken when defining the main problem and contributing factors in the root cause analysis process?

3. Experiential – Acknowledging the lived experiences of participants in the educational community and its impact on the data gathering, analysis, and root cause processes.

How will the team individually and as a team reflect upon the lived experiences of the school community and how they impact the data gathering, data analysis, and root cause analysis?

4. Methodological – The cultural appropriateness of the methods used for data gathering and the root cause analysis processes.

How will the team review and analyze the data with a cultural lens to ensure that the root cause analysis is culturally appropriate?



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5. Programmatic – The social and cultural considerations of the underlying program, evaluation, and implementation decisions in the possible solutions.

How will team members check their biases and center their thinking on students and the solutions under which they have control? For example, is demonstrating knowledge in English a higher valued commodity than demonstrating the same knowledge in another language?

Adapted from [The Role of Culture and Cultural Context in Evaluation](#)

Pre-Root Cause Considerations:

1. Who helped to decide on and gather the different types of qualitative and quantitative data for the root cause analysis?
2. Were all the educational partners and those most affected by significant disproportionality represented in the data gathering?
3. What areas or priorities will you focus on based upon the analysis of the qualitative and quantitative data you have gathered? Possible areas are:
 - a. Instruction
 - b. Assessment
 - c. Climate and Culture
 - d. Health and Wellness
 - e. Discipline
 - f. Social Emotional Behavior
 - g. Other
4. What stands out as a strength for the district? What are some of the success gaps in the district?

Directions on using the Ishikawa Fishbone Root Cause Analysis:

Only proceed with this process once you have appropriate representation in the meeting and have established norms to ensure equity of voice.

1. Defining the main issue. *Is the main issue framed in a manner that addresses what we as educators can do and does not place blame or take a “what they need to do” approach? Make sure team members check their biases and center their thinking on students and the solutions under which they have control.*
2. Agree on the major categories of causes of the issue. (e.g., curriculum, policies, procedures, discipline, assessment etc.).*
3. Brainstorm possible causes and ask, “Why does this happen?”



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4. As each idea is given, the facilitator writes the causal factor as a branch from the appropriate category (places it on the fishbone diagram). Causes can be written in several places if they relate to several categories.
5. The facilitator again asks, “Why does this happen?” about each cause. Write sub-causes branching off the cause branches.
6. The facilitator continues to ask “Why?” and generate deeper levels of causes and continue organizing them under related causes or categories. This will help you to identify and then address the root causes of the main issue. Check for framing of all generated causes, subcauses and categories to ensure they are not phrased in a manner that places blame on students, families, or a community.

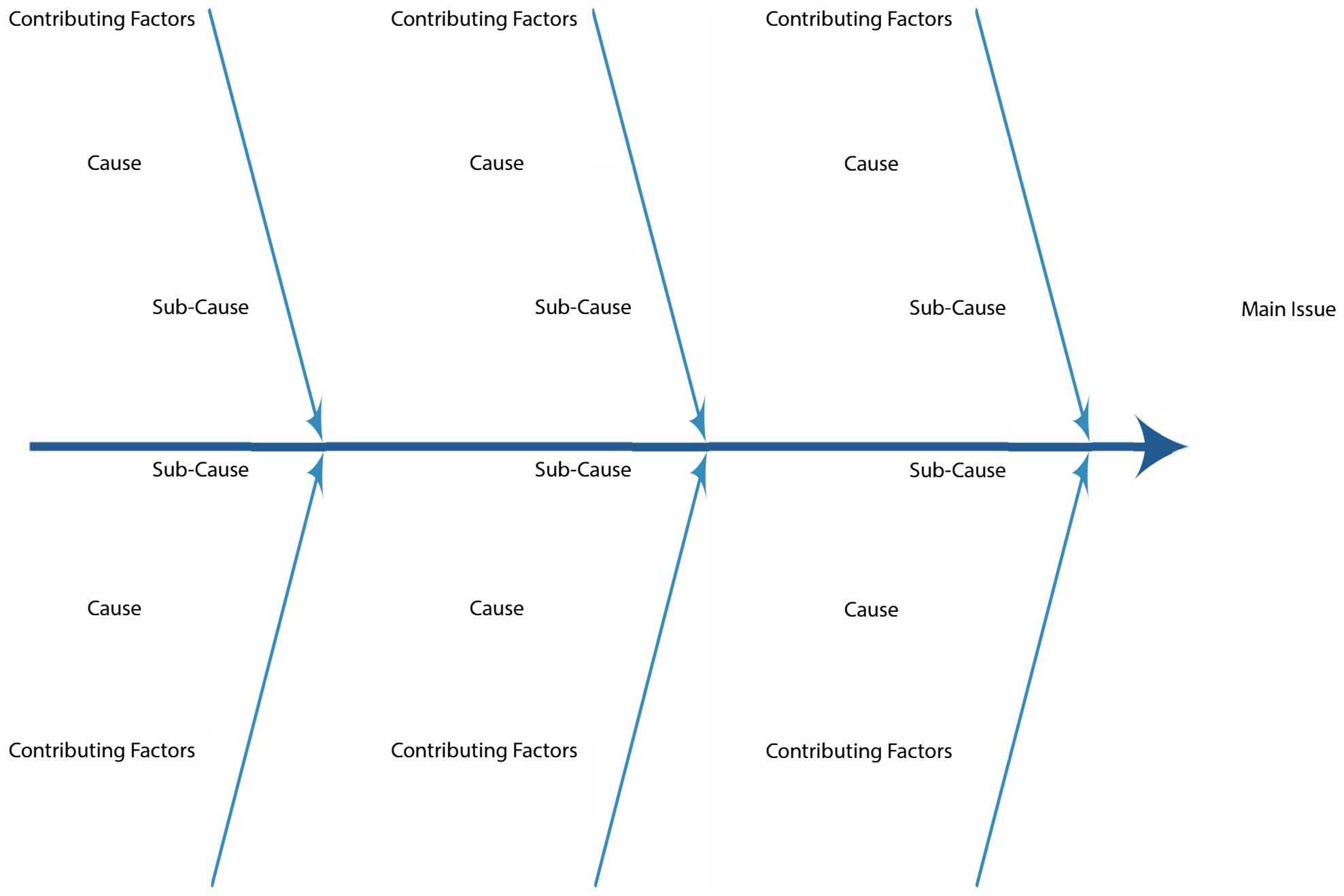
Adapted from [Quality Assurance and Program Improvement \(QAPI\)](#)

*If using the Success Gaps Rubric you can align the categories with:

- Data-Based Decision making
- Cultural Responsiveness
- Core Instructional Program
- Assessment—Universal Screening and Progress Monitoring
- Interventions and Supports



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Contributing Factors

Cause

Sub-Cause

Sub-Cause

Cause

Contributing Factors

Contributing Factors

Cause

Sub-Cause

Sub-Cause

Cause

Contributing Factors

Contributing Factors

Cause

Sub-Cause

Sub-Cause

Cause

Contributing Factors

Main Issue

Process Double Check:

- *Did the team establish norms and ensure equity of voice and positive intent during the root cause analysis process?*
- *What social and cultural considerations were taken when defining the main issue and contributing factors in the root cause analysis process?*
- *How did the team individually and as a team reflect upon the lived experiences of the school community and how they impact the data gathering, data analysis, and root cause analysis?*
- *How did the team review and analyze the data with a cultural lens to ensure that the root cause analysis is culturally appropriate?*
- *How did team members check their biases and center their thinking on students and the solutions under which they have control?*

Action Steps:

Action Steps Double Check:

1. Do your action steps indicate who is responsible for each action element?
2. Do your action steps involve a plan for communicating to relevant stakeholders?
3. Are the various elements of your action steps connected to a time frame? When will each piece be accomplished? Are deadlines set?
4. How will you assess whether the changes brought about by your actions will have made a difference? How will you know if you solved the issue?