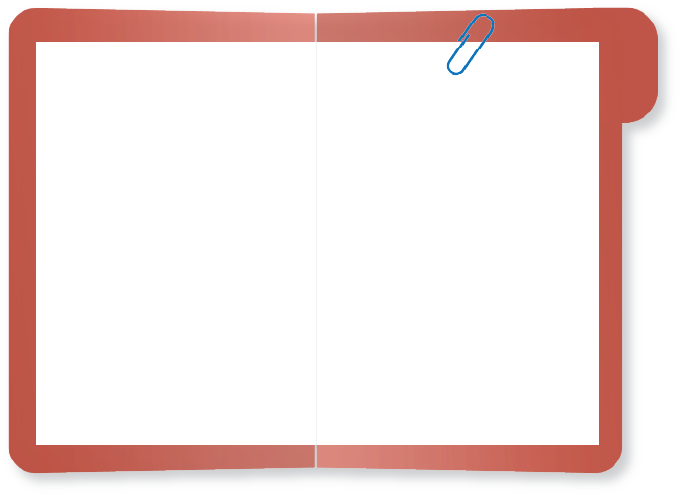
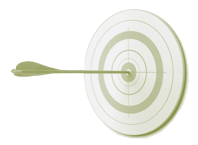
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| 4.2A – Why? Why? Why? Protocol |



*To identify causes of problems in a relatively quick, informal way.*

Through successive answers to the question “why?” the data team will reach agreement on the likely cause(s) of the problem under investigation.

About 45 minutes



Identifying causesin education rarely results in a single factor being identified that can easily be resolved. Protocols such as this one help a group of educators collaboratively discuss the most likely root causes of the problem under investigation. This discussion will help the team come to agreement about what is the most significant factor within the district’s and/or school’s control to address.

## Directions:

### Part 1: Identifying Plausible Causes

1. Write the evidence-based problem developed in tool **4.1 Writing Problem Statements** on chart paper.
2. Each member of the team will then write one or more responses to the question: “why might this be happening?” Each response should be written on a separate sticky note.
3. Place the sticky notes in a row across the chart paper under the problem. Discuss the responses and eliminate any that duplicate the same basic idea. Add any that appear to be missing.
4. Rank-order the ideas from most plausible causes to least plausible. As you do this, think about factors that are under the district’s/school’s control and which, if addressed, will solve the identified problem. If the team has difficulty determining significance and control, they may want to consult tool 4.3A Determining Significance and Control that is designed to help the team determine which causes are most significant AND most influenced by the district or school. This should be done after all potential causes have been suggested.

### Part 2: Discuss Why

1. For the most plausible reason, again write possible explanations of why this is happening on sticky notes. Place these in a row below the most plausible cause. You can revisit the other reasons later.
2. Again, rank-order the causes. Review all of the causes that you have associated with the initial, most plausible cause, and reach consensus on what the team believes to be the most likely cause.
3. The next step is to gather and analyze data to test the cause to ensure that it is valid (**4.4 Identifying**, **Collecting, and Displaying Data to Test the Cause** and **4.5 Testing the Cause**).