

# TESTING ASSUMPTIONS

A Workout for Continuous Improvement

*Workout 2 in a Series of 4  
Find all workouts at [impactfl.link/workouts](https://impactfl.link/workouts)*



# THIS WORKOUT HAS 3 SECTIONS:

## DEFINING THE PROBLEM

This workout will help everyone understand the problem you will be investing time + energy into solving. Your team may be motivated and ready to address the problem, or meeting for the first time. Either way, *Defining the Problem* is a great place to start aligning on exactly what the problem is!



60 minutes



1 to 10 people



Workout 1 of 4

**STEP ONE:** Share the Data Sources

**STEP TWO:** Predict What the Data Might Reveal

**STEP THREE:** Review the Data and Observe Trends

**STEP FOUR:** Discuss Inferences About the Data

**STEP FIVE:** Define Your Understanding of the Problem

**STEP SIX:** Create Your Problem Statement

Protocol adapted from [http://scholarshipinitiative.org/docs/data\\_driven\\_inquiry.pdf](http://scholarshipinitiative.org/docs/data_driven_inquiry.pdf)

## DEFINING THE PROBLEM: EXAMPLE



### SCENARIO:

Angela is a school leader at a Florida high school. She has been reviewing many different data sources and is alarmed by the increase in absenteeism she is seeing over the past two years.

While she believes that looking at other data sources, like academic performance and school climate, are also important in the discussion, Angela knows her team's input and analysis of the situation are key to ultimately planning and implementing a solution.

By the end of the meeting today, Angela hopes her team can align on what they see as the problem they would like to take on this year.

### Every workout includes:



**Workout Overview:** A rundown of the workout, including what it is, how long it might take, and when a team might line up and leverage this workout.



**Mantras for the Moment:** To help teams get their heads in the game, we've included mantras we think will help your team stay centered on performing at optimal levels and keep pace when faced with challenges.



**Coaching Tips:** Think of these as your pep talks before + after the workout! Some tips, reminders, + inspiration to support the team and keep everyone focused on what matters most.



**Pulse Checks:** Throughout the workout, we have moments to pause + check in. These questions will help you and your team quickly assess form, feeling, and progress towards the finish.

## COACH'S CORNER

FACILITATION TIPS AND HELPFUL HINTS

The goal of this workout for continuous improvement is to build strength, improve endurance, and shed the mindsets and practices that are not serving you and your team as you work towards your goals of improvement.

While completing this workout solo is doable, we think we are better together! Activate a team that will push your thinking + motivates you to keep going. Find a comfortable space, project this workout, so everyone is on the same page, and get working!

**The Workout**  
*Slides 3 - 16*

**The Example**  
*Slides 17 - 26*

**The Facilitator's Guide**  
*Slides 27 - 32*

# THE WORKOUT

# TESTING ASSUMPTIONS

This workout will help your team understand the root cause of a problem before jumping into action. You know taking steps to learn the whole story, not just the one we want to hear, means you will need to create space to listen and reflect on the stories data reveals.



Two, 45-minute sessions



1 to 10 people



Workout 2 of 4

## PART ONE

**STEP ONE:** Align Your Team and Start Asking WHY

**STEP TWO:** Identify Potential Root Causes of the Problem

**STEP THREE:** Select Root Causes to Learn More

**STEP FOUR:** Plan to Learn More

## PART TWO

**STEP FIVE:** Synthesizing Stakeholder Engagement

**STEP SIX:** Brainstorm Potential Solutions

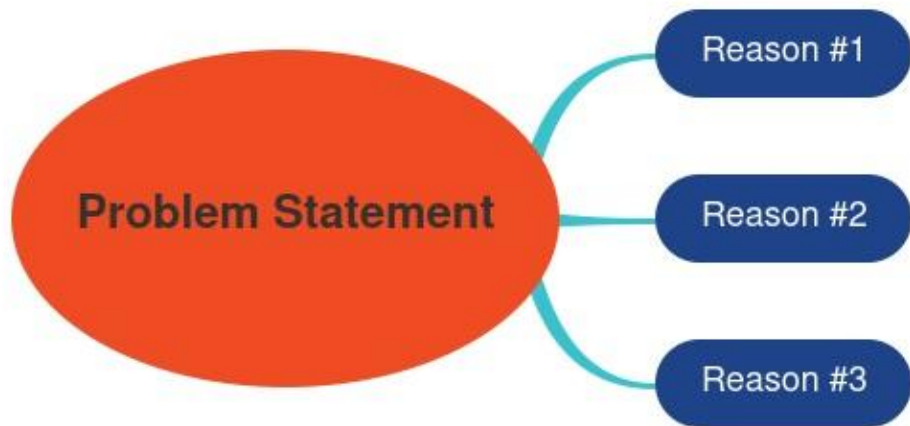
**STEP SEVEN:** Determine Feasibility of Proposed Solutions

**STEP EIGHT:** Commit to a Solution

# STEP ONE

## Align Your Team and Start Asking **WHY** 5 minutes

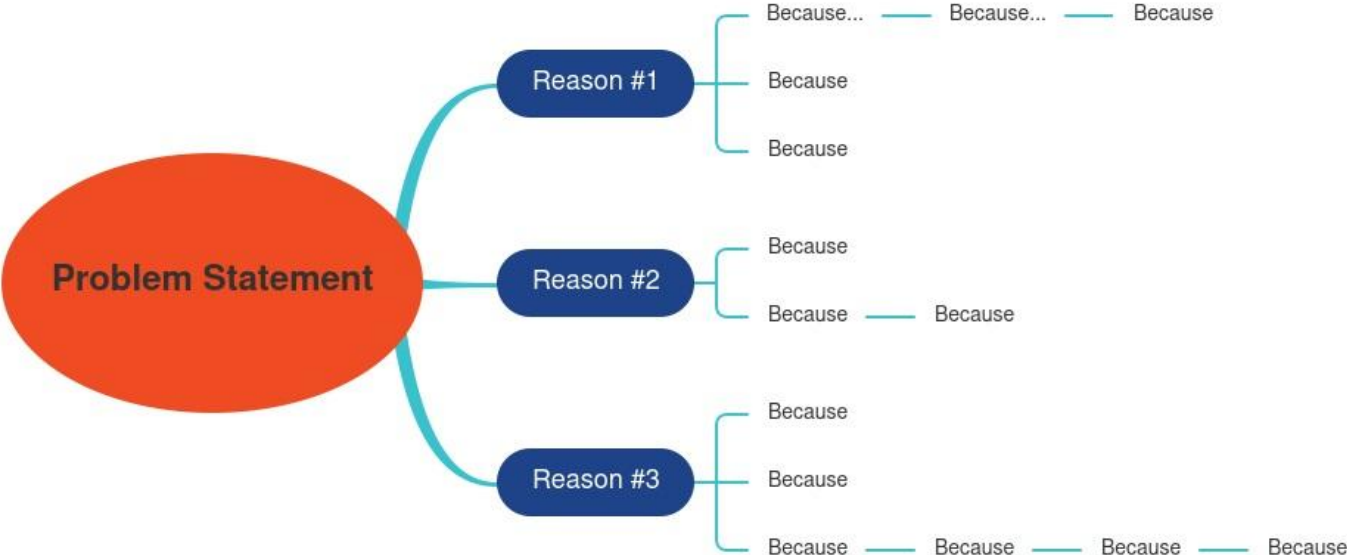
Share the problem statement your team is working to address and identify why that is a problem. *Don't have a problem statement? Checkout [Workout #1](#) and consider starting there first.*



# STEP TWO

## Identify Potential Root Causes of the Problem 15 minutes

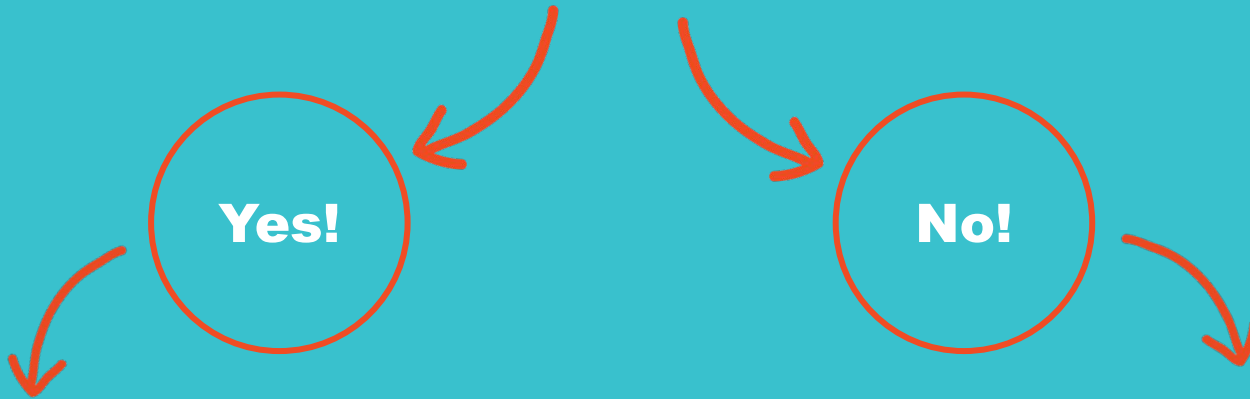
Create a mind map to identify potential root causes to the problem your team is working to improve. Remember, you are not jumping to solutions just yet.





# PULSE CHECK

Are your potential root causes focused on the source of the problem and not a solution?



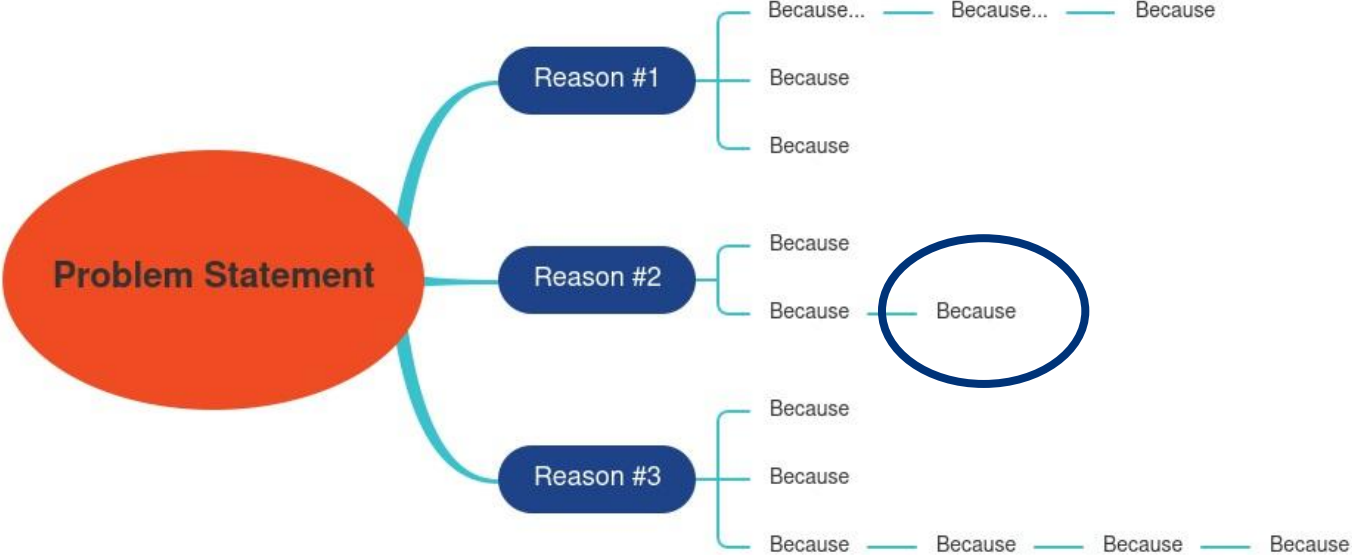
**Great job! Move on to Step 3 to select a root cause your team wants to learn more about.**

**Revisit Step 2 and make sure your team is not jumping to solutions as you identify what the root causes to your problem might be.**

# STEP THREE

## Select a Root Cause to Learn More 10 minutes

Select a root cause within your control that your team feels will have the biggest impact on addressing the problem and wants to validate through data and stakeholder engagement.





# STEP FOUR

## Plan to Learn More 15 minutes

Now that you think you know a root cause of the problem, it is time to validate that with data and stakeholders. As a team, select the way you will learn more from stakeholders and align on the who, what, when, where, and how so everyone leaves with clarity on the team's next steps.

**WHO** do you want to learn from?



*This might include families, students, teachers and staff, or community members*

**WHAT** will you ask?



*Align on the questions that will be asked to ensure you learn as much as possible about your problem*

**WHEN, WHERE, + HOW** will this happen?



*This might include in-person or virtually options and can range from 1:1 interviews to focus groups and town hall meetings*

# TIME OUT

Execute your plan to learn more. Reconvene when your team is ready to share their learnings and observations.

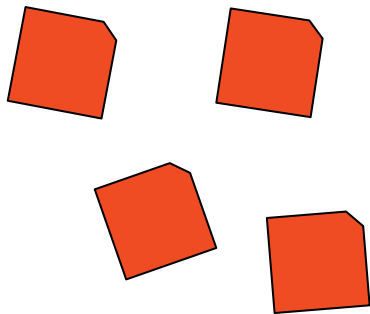


# STEP FIVE

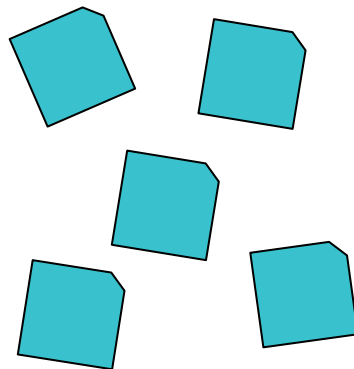
## Synthesizing Stakeholder Engagement 15 minutes

As a team, share out what stakeholders said when you connected with them. Based on what stakeholders said + felt, determine what your team should consider now that you have this insight.

**We heard...**



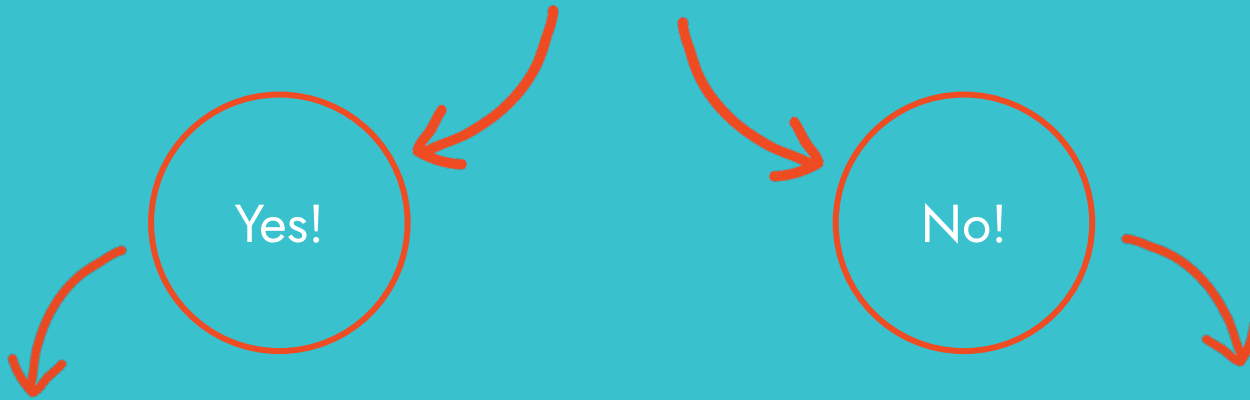
**So We Need to Consider...**





# PULSE CHECK

Does what you learned from stakeholders align to what your team identified as a root cause?



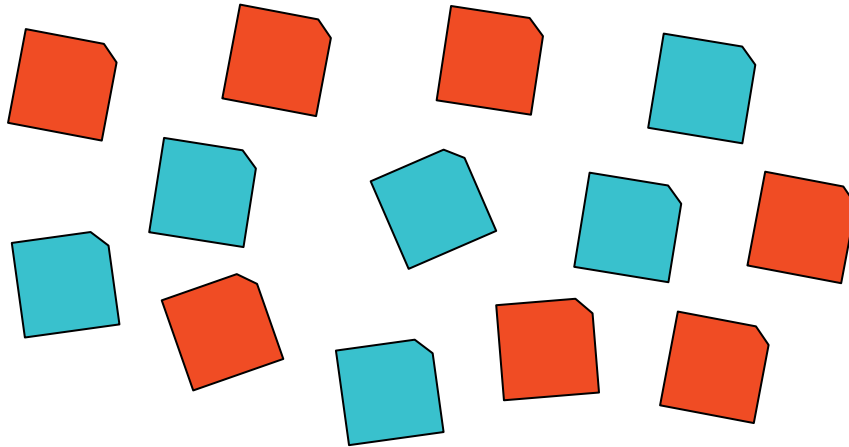
**Awesome! Move to Step 6 and brainstorm solutions that could address the problem your team is working to solve.**

**Review what stakeholders said and identify a root cause that aligns to their experiences and the data your team has gathered related to the problem your team is working to solve.**

# STEP SIX

## Brainstorm Potential Solutions 10 minutes

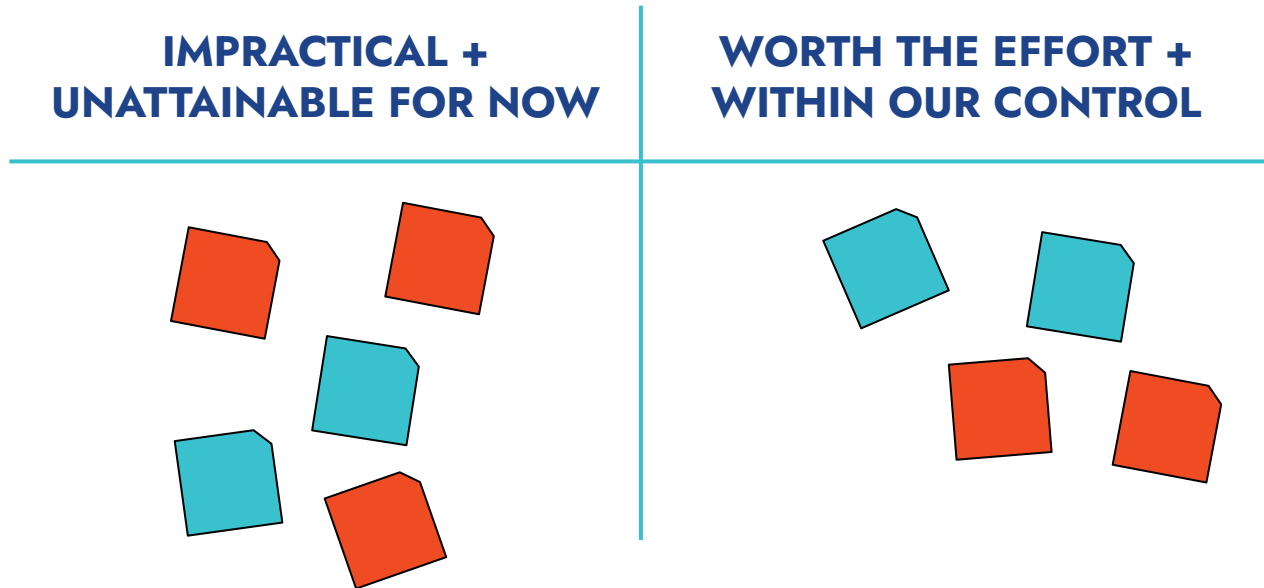
Brainstorm potential solutions that address the root cause of the problem your team is working to solve.



# STEP SEVEN

## Determine Feasibility of Potential Solutions 10 minutes

Prioritize your potential solutions based on the following criteria: Effort + Locus of Control.

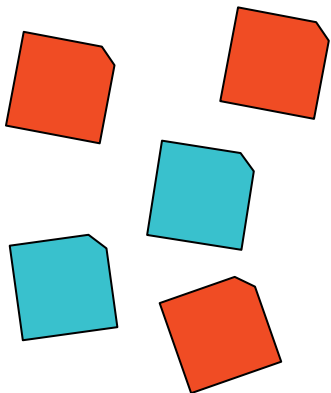


# STEP EIGHT

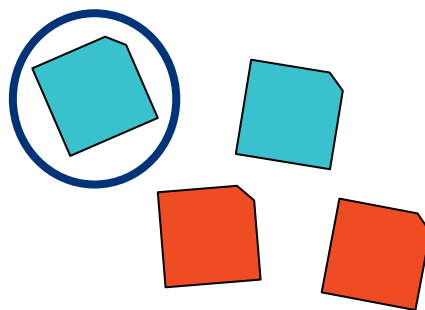
## Commit to a Solution 10 minutes

Choose at least one solution your team is excited to move forward with and put into action. Take a moment to celebrate this accomplishment + then checkout Workout #3 to see how you can implement this solution.

**IMPRACTICAL +  
UNATTAINABLE FOR NOW**



**WORTH THE EFFORT +  
WITHIN OUR CONTROL**



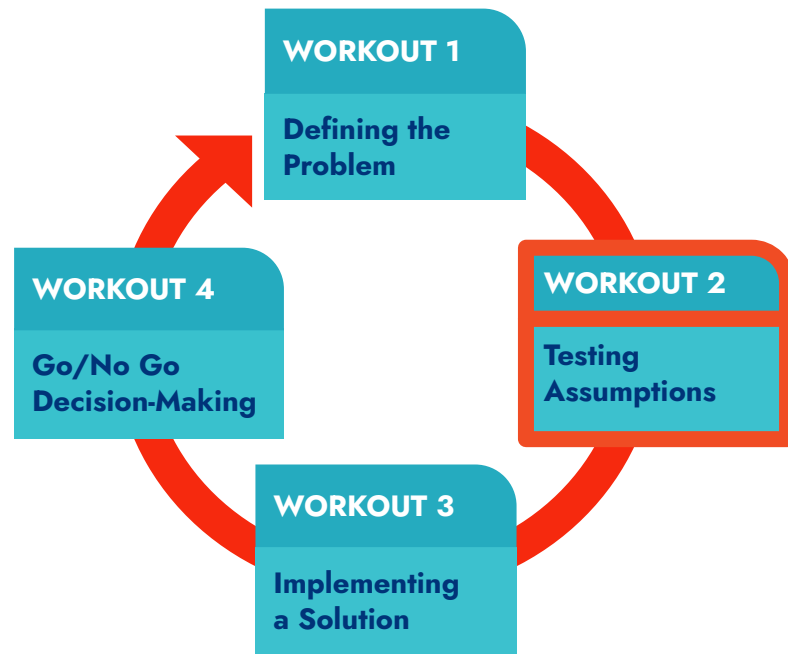
# IMPACT FLORIDA WORKOUTS

Inspired by the COVID Recovery Cadre, Impact Florida workouts are designed to guide teams to improve student experience and learning outcomes. They can be used as standalone tools or as a four-step process to implement a new practice, intervention, or initiative. This is workout 2 of 4.

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Impact Florida is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that believes excellent classroom instruction can move the needle for all students. We focus on supporting education leaders and teachers with the knowledge and resources they need to ensure that great teaching and learning is consistently realized in all Florida schools.

**More at [impactfl.org](https://impactfl.org).**



**How did it go?** Share your workout experience with us at [impactfl.link/workouts](https://impactfl.link/workouts).



# THE EXAMPLE

# TESTING ASSUMPTIONS: EXAMPLE



## SCENARIO:

Angela is a school leader at a Florida high school. She has been reviewing many different data sources and is alarmed by the increase in absenteeism she is seeing over the past two years.

Angela met with her team to get their input and analysis of the situation and together they leveraged data to align on what they see as the problem they wanted to address this school year.

Angela wants to use this two-part workout to identify root causes of the problem, validate those root causes with stakeholders, so that they can then ideate on potential solutions and commit to at least one idea that is worth the effort and within the team's locus of control.

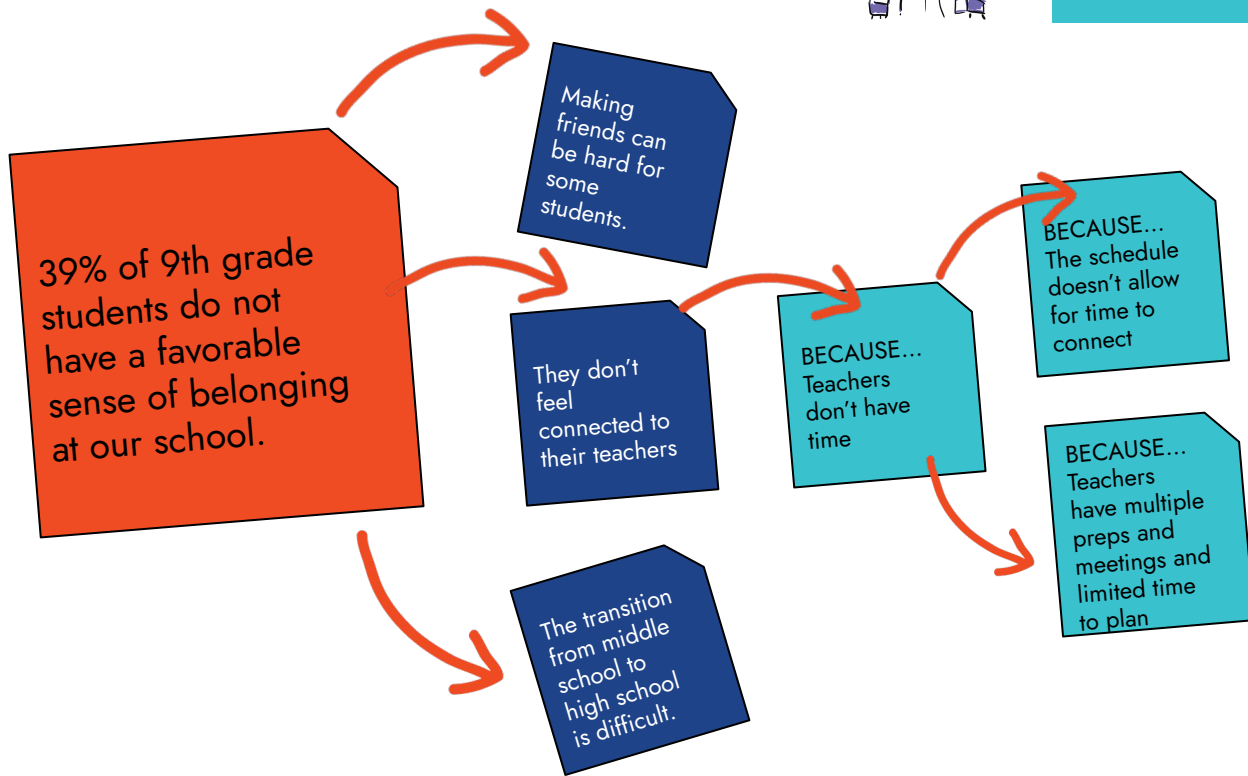
# STEP ONE: Align Your Team and Start Asking WHY

39% of 9th grade students do not have a favorable sense of belonging at our school.



Angela shares the problem statement the team came up with at their last meeting. This is helpful because there are two new team members present who weren't at the first meeting.

## STEP TWO: Identify Potential Root Causes of the Problem



Angela has the team collaborate on a mind map to identify potential root causes to the problem. As the facilitator she continues to ask, "Why?" to try and get to the root cause.

# STEP THREE: Select a Root Cause to Learn More

39% of 9th grade students do not have a favorable sense of belonging at our school.

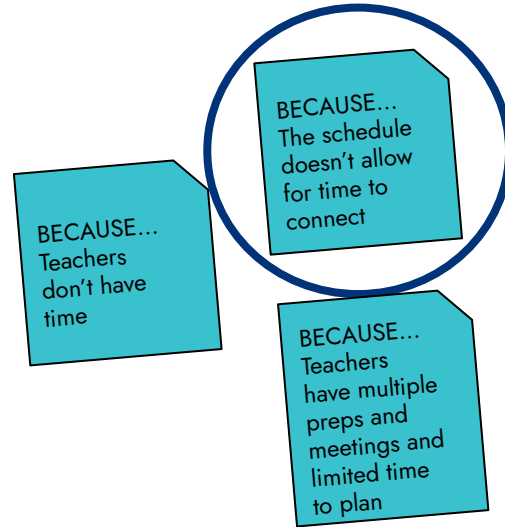
Making friends can be hard for some students.

They don't feel connected to their teachers

The transition from middle school to high school is difficult.



Angela has the team collaborate on a mind map to identify potential root causes to the problem. As the facilitator she continues to ask, "Why?" to try and get to the root cause.





The final step for the first part of this meeting is planning to learn more about the bell schedule and see if that contributes to a lack of belonging felt by these students.

WHO	WHAT	WHEN, WHERE, + HOW
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Students</li><li>● Teachers</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Questions for students:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Overall, how much do you feel like you belong at your school?</li><li>○ How connected do you feel to the adults at your school?</li><li>○ Do you have a teacher or other adult from school who you can count on to help you, no matter what?</li></ul></li><li>● Questions for teachers:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ What does a great day of teaching look like to you?</li><li>○ Overall, how much do you feel like students belong at your school?</li><li>○ How connected do you feel to the students you teach?</li></ul></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Focus groups in the conference room during lunch with a small group of students each day next week</li><li>● During next week's 1:1 coaching check-in's with teachers</li></ul>



After conducting 1:1 interviews with teachers and student focus groups, Angela and her team shared what they heard + considerations for the team as they continue to think about possible solutions.

## We heard...

"I wish we didn't have to learn something in every class. Why can't we just talk about problems and stuff?"

"I feel so guilty that the second the bell rings I am pushing students from one activity to the next to get everything we need accomplished before the class is over, the bell rings, and we repeat the process."

## So we need to consider...

Opportunities for teachers and students to connect during the school day

Supporting teachers with embedding moments of connection into their instruction

# STEP SIX: Brainstorm Potential Solutions



Next, the team brainstorms potential solutions that addressed the root cause of the lack of 9th graders feeling a sense of belonging.

Ask teachers and staff to eat in the cafeteria with students

Change the start time of school to have a 0 period and extend the school day

Consider reimagining the 9th grade study hall block as an advisory period

Planning a PD session on how to incorporate moments of connection into instruction



# STEP SEVEN: Determine Feasibility of Potential Solutions



Once the team had some ideas down, they classified them into two categories - Impractical + Unattainable for Now and Worth the Effort + Within Our Control.

## IMPRACTICAL + UNATTAINABLE FOR NOW

Ask teachers and staff to eat in the cafeteria with students

Change the start time of school to have a 0 period and extend the school day

## WORTH THE EFFORT + WITHIN OUR CONTROL

Consider reimagining the 9th grade study skills block as an advisory period

Planning a PD session on how to incorporate moments of connection into instruction

# STEP EIGHT: Commit to a Solution



The team agreed that reimagining the 9th grade study skills block would take a lot of effort logistically and it was worth it!

**IMPRACTICAL +  
UNATTAINABLE FOR NOW**

**WORTH THE EFFORT +  
WITHIN OUR CONTROL**

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# THE FACILITATOR'S GUIDE

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# WORKOUT OVERVIEW

## USE THIS WORKOUT WHEN...

you are clear on the problem your team wants to address, you've reviewed the data, and want to make sure you and deeply understand the root causes before jumping to action.

## USE THIS WORKOUT BECAUSE...

you know that incremental change means taking steps to learn the whole story, not just the one we want to hear. This means spending time listening and reflecting on the stories data reveals.

## YOU WILL NEED...

space to share ideas + engage in meaningful conversations, chart paper, sticky notes, markers, + wall space.

## AT THE END OF THE WORKOUT, YOU WILL HAVE...

identified potential solutions to test out based on the root cause your team identified and validated.

## SO THAT YOU CAN...

create an action plan to support your team with prototyping or piloting a potential solution.

# MANTRAS FOR THE MOMENT



## Be Reflective

We acknowledge we don't know it all!



## Be Patient

We are interested in learning from others before jumping into action!



## Be Compassionate

We believe everyone is doing the best they can, including ourselves!



# Pre-Workout Coaching Tips

- ✓ While this workout can be used with various data points, we recommend your team complete the [Defining the Problem Workout](#) and leverage this process to help identify and validate potential root causes of the problem.
- ✓ There is no “I” in team! Let go of titles + hierarchy and identify a facilitator and a timekeeper. Everyone else on the team will play the role of motivator.
- ✓ This is hard work, and we don’t want you to get overheated! There is nothing wrong with taking breaks along the way so you can catch your breath and refocus the team.
- ✓ Finding the right tempo is everything! We recommend having your favorite pump-up songs ready when you need them. Check out the Impact Florida team’s go-to’s when getting in the zone: [Songs With Impact](#).



# Post Workout Coaching Tips

- Vetted/Research based when it makes sense action (redesigning the car pickup line vs math intervention)
- Still need more time to decide on the potential solution that is safe enough to try? We recommend scheduling a date your team will come together and decide so that you keep the incredible work moving forward.
- Once your team has selected a potential solution you are excited about, checkout Workout #3 to support your team with creating a plan to implement at a small scale.
- Start recruiting your team of people that will be involved in testing out your potential solution and get them excited about all of the possibilities.





**impact**  
**FLORIDA**

Great Teaching Matters

**LEARN MORE AND FIND OTHER RESOURCES AT [IMPACTFL.ORG](https://www.impactfl.org)**

*This workout series was created in partnership with*

