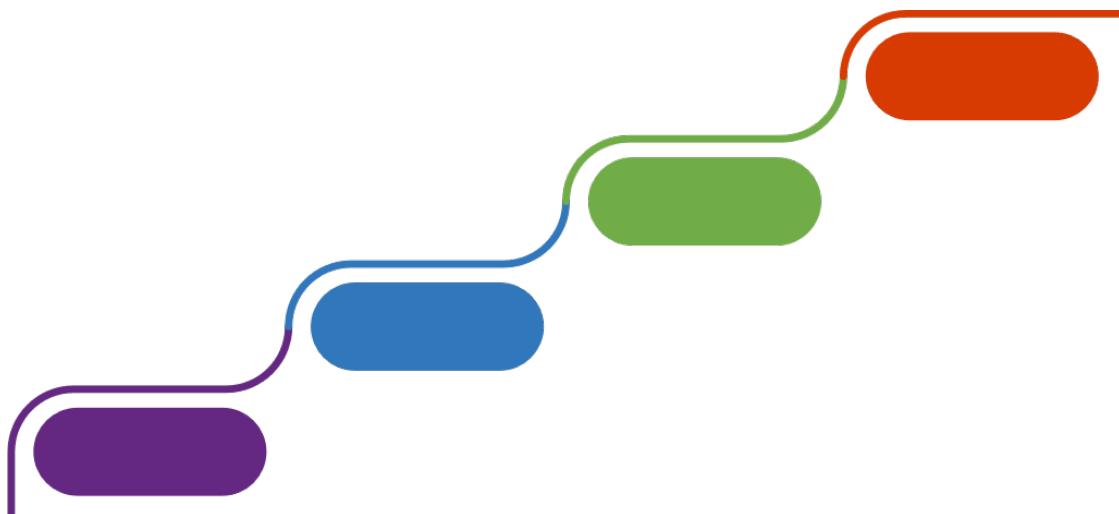




Designing a New York State Standards-Based Educator Evaluation and Professional Support (STEPS) Plan

A PRELIMINARY GUIDE



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PURPOSE OF THE GUIDANCE

Background

On Friday, June 28, 2024, Governor Kathy Hochul signed Chapter 143 of the Laws of 2024, which amends Education Law §3012-d and establishes Education Law §3012-e. Accordingly, school districts and Boards of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) will transition to new teacher and principal evaluation systems beginning in the 2024-25 school year.

NYSED'S VISION FOR THE EDUCATOR EVALUATION SYSTEM UNDER EDUCATION LAW §3012-E

The New York State Education Department (the “Department” or “NYSED”) believes that well-designed and implemented evaluation systems can help to support teachers and school leaders by encouraging reflection and goal-setting; creating opportunities for collaboration among educators; providing timely, actionable feedback that supports growth and development; identifying personalized professional learning opportunities; and recognizing excellent educators and creating opportunities for great teachers to remain in the classroom, while advancing their careers through teacher leadership roles such as school-based teacher educators, mentor teachers, instructional coaches, and other differentiated roles.

The enactment of Education Law §3012-e provides an opportunity for school districts and BOCES to reflect on their current educator evaluation practices and to develop new locally designed systems consistent with NYSED's vision and our shared goal of supporting teacher and leader development across the career continuum. These new Standards-based Educator Evaluation and Professional Support plans (“STEPS plan”) should support all educators' professional growth as a part of a comprehensive, systematic approach to advancing excellence in teaching and learning aligned to our [New York State Teaching Standards and Educational Leadership Standards](#), including the [Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Education Framework](#). Through multiple measures, including observations, educators will receive meaningful feedback on their practice and intentional professional learning and growth opportunities.

The purpose of this guidance is to assist LEAs in developing a comprehensive plan for evaluation and for supporting professional learning in preparation for designing a NYS-STEPS plan.

TRANSITIONING TO A STEPS PLAN

The STEPS plan and evaluation system is an integral part of NYSED's [Educator Effectiveness Framework](#) and the [Sustaining Educator Pipeline](#). Accordingly, a STEPS plan should be designed as part of a comprehensive, systematic approach to meeting these state-wide goals for teaching and leadership.

This guidance document recommends a preliminary process for designing a STEPS plan, which includes an assessment of the LEA's needs, goals, resources, and existing processes, using a theory of action informed by local priorities. It also includes an annual review of outcomes to ensure continual improvement of the system.

STEP 1: CONDUCT A NEEDS ASSESSMENT

A critical first step is to identify the LEA's priority needs and understand the root causes of those needs. This process, called a needs assessment, can assist school leaders in identifying, understanding, and addressing challenges in educational systems. An effective LEA-wide needs assessment will articulate specific, desired outcomes and impact goals, including student growth and educator growth goals. The [Needs Assessment Guidebook](#) included in the [Appendix](#) may serve as a valuable tool in starting the process.

GUIDING QUESTIONS FOR THE NEEDS ASSESSMENT MAY INCLUDE:

- What are the LEA goals (long-term; annual) for students, teachers, principals, and other school stakeholder groups?
- How does the LEA know what needs to be improved?
 - What data will be reviewed?
 - Are both qualitative and quantitative data being considered?
- What framework, if any, will the LEA use to help structure the needs assessment?
- Which stakeholders will be involved in the needs assessment process?
- For which indicators/content areas has the district/school/program not met its goals or made sufficient progress?
 - Have any subgroups been identified as needing special attention?
- What implementation barriers exist to achieving your goals?
 - Are the barriers resource-related or school culture-related?



STEP 2: REVIEW YOUR EXISTING EVALUATION PLAN AND PROFESSIONAL LEARNING PLAN

LEAs have built institutional knowledge about what is meaningful in their districts and programs for improving teaching, leadership, and learning. A careful analysis of the current Educator Evaluation Plan and Professional Learning Plan should be incorporated into the development of the LEA's STEPS plan.

GUIDING QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW OF YOUR CURRENT EDUCATOR EVALUATION PLAN:

- Does your current Educator Evaluation plan support and achieve the LEA's specific goals?
 - Is the LEA collecting meaningful evidence of instructional and leadership practices?
 - Is the LEA addressing an educator's professional growth and learning opportunities?
 - Have results from your current plan been examined for validity and reliability?
- How can your STEPS plan work in service of the LEA's needs and growth goals?
 - Closely review the [NYS Teaching Standards](#) and [Leadership Standards](#) which highlight the practices, qualities, and values of teaching, learning, and leadership that contribute to the success of students.
 - Consider incorporating tools and resources for teacher and leader practice aligned with the [Culturally Responsive-Sustaining \(CR-S\) Education Framework](#), as well as additional resources related to emerging multilingual learners, family engagement, social-emotional learning, and students with disabilities/neurodiverse learning.

REVIEW YOUR LEA-WIDE PROFESSIONAL LEARNING PLAN

An LEA's Professional Learning Plan (PLP), developed in accordance with Subdivision (dd) of Section 100.2 of the Regulations of the Commissioner of Education, may include processes that can be incorporated into a STEPS plan.

Section 100.2 of the Regulations requires that PLPs outline the goals, objectives, strategies, activities, and evaluation standards for professional learning. A careful review of the LEA's PLP will provide an overview of existing priorities for professional learning which can be incorporated into the design of the formal professional development system in your STEPS plan. In addition to reviewing the LEA's PLP, a [Professional Learning Plan Guidance Document](#) and a guide to [New York State Professional Development Standards](#) can be found in the [Appendix](#).



GUIDING QUESTIONS FOR DEVELOPING A FORMAL PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM FOR YOUR STEPS PLAN:

- What professional learning (PL) is required to meet the goals identified in the LEA's needs assessment and from annual evaluation data?
- Is the PL culturally responsive and does it reflect the needs of the community?
- Is the PL tailored to the needs of educators that are directly related to student learning outcomes?
- Is there alignment with NYS teaching, leadership, and learning standards, assessments, student needs, adult learning theory, and current research in education?
- Is there PL across grade levels and content areas?
- Does the LEA have a formal process to evaluate the impact of the PL offered on the intended goals?
- What are the expectations for educator participation in the PL being offered?
 - Are expectations for educator participation clearly communicated?
 - Are there continuous and sustainable opportunities and efforts?
 - Are the delivery methods effective and appropriate approaches for adult learners?
- Does the PL include training on school violence prevention and intervention, child abuse recognition, the needs of children with autism, and the Dignity for All Student Act (DASA)?
- Are there any additional opportunities to support professional growth (e.g., coaching, induction, professional learning communities)?

STEP 3: CONSIDER USING A LOGIC MODEL AND A THEORY OF ACTION TO DRIVE YOUR STEPS PLAN

Once the needs assessment is complete and goals have been identified, LEAs may consider developing a logic model and/or a theory of action to ensure their STEPS plan is a meaningful part of a larger school wide plan.

LOGIC MODELS

Logic models are a graphic way to organize information and display thinking by describing the planned action and its expected results.¹ Logic model structures vary based on the characteristics or complexity of the initiative for which it is developed, and often include, but are not limited to, the following elements:

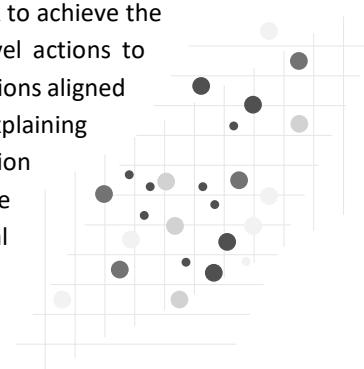
- *Activities* are the tasks and operations that staff and others engage in to achieve initiative goals.
- *Inputs* are the resources the initiative uses to start and sustain it. Inputs may include the staff, resources and stakeholders that are part of the initiative.
- *Outputs* are the direct results or products of initiative activities. Outputs are the most immediate indicators that the activities being implemented.
- *Outcomes* are the results of initiative activities. Logic models may distinguish between short-, mid-, and long-term outcomes.
- *Review of Outcomes* is the annual process to determine if adjustments need to be made to your activities, inputs and outputs in your logic model.

Here is a written example of a simplified Logic Model based on New York State's Equity Plan:

- **IF** schools/districts use multiple measures of educator effectiveness (including observations, student performance data, and feedback loops) to assess and support differentiated professional learning needs (*activities/inputs*),
- **AND IF** strategic staffing decisions ensure equitable access to highly effective educators (*inputs*),
- **THEN** educators will implement more effective instructional practices (*outputs*),
- **RESULTING IN** improved student outcomes and reduced achievement gaps (*outcomes*).

THEORY OF ACTION

A theory of action is a framework that conceptualizes how a STEPS plan will work to achieve the LEA's goals by establishing a logical chain of reasoning that connects high-level actions to improved outcomes. In this process, the LEA articulates its goals, identifies key actions aligned with these goals, and ensures that all structures focus on the same objective. By explaining how specific actions are expected to produce desired results, a theory of action fosters a common understanding and creates the buy-in necessary to meet the LEA's goals, ultimately leading to improved student outcomes (Haertel, National Academy of Science, 2009).



¹ *Developing Logic Models for Teacher Leadership Initiatives*, <https://education.ohio.gov/getattachment/Topics/Teaching/Teacher-Leadership/Ohio-Teacher-Leadership-Toolkit/Ohio-Teacher-Leadership-Process-Model-Design/DevelopingLogicModels.pdf.aspx?lang=en-US>.

Below is a visual example of a **theory of action** for how the evaluation system will improve teacher practice and student outcomes:

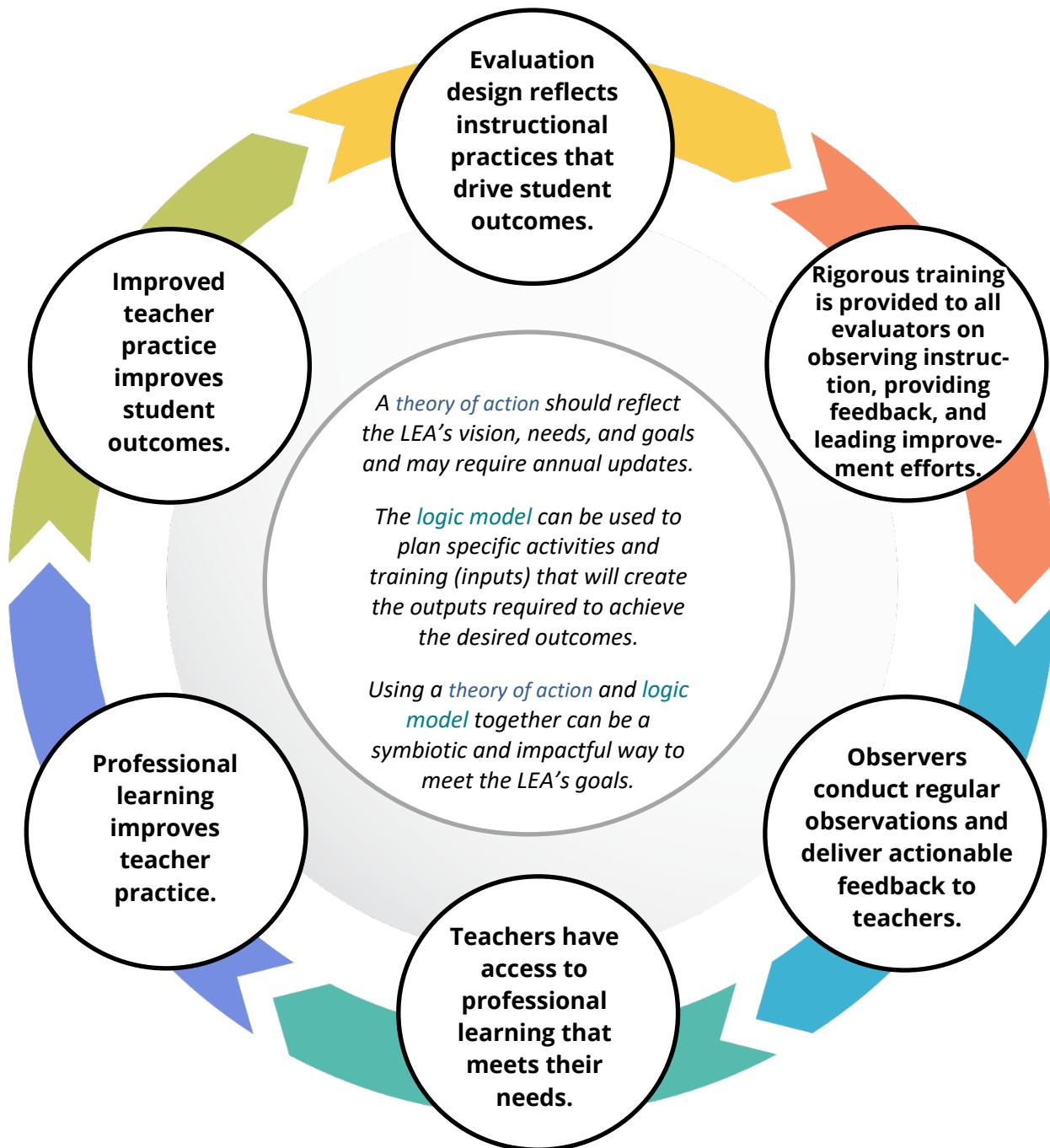


Figure 1: Visual Example of a Theory of Action of the Evaluation System

The resources listed in the [APPENDIX](#), which include toolkits published by the Regional Educational Laboratory on [Evaluating Professional Learning, Program Evaluation](#) and a [Theory of Action for Community School Transformation](#) may assist LEAs through the process of creating a logic model or a theory of action which can be strategically measured and evaluated for its effectiveness in meeting desired goals.

STEP 4: DESIGN A CYCLE OF CONTINUOUS ASSESSMENT AND IMPROVEMENT

INCLUDE AN ANNUAL REVIEW OF OUTCOMES COMPONENT IN THE LOGIC MODEL

An end of year review of outcomes will ensure the LEA has a systematic process for planning, documenting, and assessing the implementation and outcomes of the plan. Further, such a process will identify catalysts for success and any barriers to effectiveness. Analysis of the outcomes at the end of the year can pave the path for continuous improvement of the whole system.

GUIDING QUESTIONS FOR A REVIEW OF OUTCOMES OF THE STEPS PLAN

Guiding questions may be formed to address specific areas of the STEPS plan and organized as shown below.

1. EFFECTIVENESS OF STEPS PLAN IN ADDRESSING MAJOR COMPONENTS

COMPREHENSIVE MEASUREMENT OF STANDARDS

- Does the plan include clear methodologies that rigorously assess the NYS Teaching and Leadership Standards?
- Are the methodologies and tools used for evaluation calibrated to ensure reliability in measuring effective practices?

ALIGNMENT WITH LEA EXPECTATIONS

- Are the components of the STEPS plan reflective of the LEA's expectations for effective teaching, learning, and leadership practices?
- How is the alignment between the STEPS plan and LEA goals regularly monitored and adjusted?

IDENTIFICATION OF EXPERTISE AND SUPPORT AREAS

- Does the plan include a robust, data-driven process for identifying areas of educator expertise and areas requiring further development or support?
- How frequently are these areas reviewed and updated to reflect evolving educator and student needs?

INTEGRATION OF EVIDENCE BASED-PRACTICES

- How well does the plan integrate evidence-based processes and practices that are already yielding positive outcomes within the LEA?
- Are new evidence-based strategies piloted and evaluated for their impact on teaching and leadership effectiveness before full implementation?

TARGETED EDUCATOR SUPPORT

- Is there a system in place to ensure that educators consistently receive tailored, actionable feedback that is both timely and relevant?
- How does the plan ensure that this support leads to measurable improvements in teaching and leadership practices?

EQUITABLE ACCESS FOR STUDENTS

- Does the plan ensure that all students, regardless of background or ability, have access to highly effective teachers and leaders?
- What processes are in place to ensure students are developing the necessary knowledge, skills, and abilities for success in college, careers, and citizenship?

2. EVALUATION OF STEPS PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

TRACKING EFFECTIVENESS

- Is the STEPS plan functioning as intended across all components?
- Are you collecting data to assess its performance in real-time?

SUCCESS INDICATORS

- What specific indicators of success will you monitor? These could include student data, teacher evaluations, professional development outcomes, and leadership effectiveness metrics.
- How will you ensure that these indicators provide meaningful insight into the plan's success?

FEEDBACK LOOPS

- How are stakeholders involved in providing feedback about the plan's effectiveness?
- Are there regular opportunities for teachers, leaders, and other stakeholders to offer insights or suggestions for improvement?

3. CONTINUAL IMPROVEMENT OF THE SYSTEM

ENHANCEMENT OF PLAN COMPONENTS

- What processes are in place to regularly review and refine the STEPS plan to ensure it continues to meet LEA goals?
- How do you plan to address gaps or weaknesses in the system that are revealed through data or feedback?

SCALABILITY AND ADAPTABILITY

- How will you adjust the STEPS plan to respond to changes in student needs, staffing, or policy requirements?
- Are there mechanisms for scaling successful strategies and phasing out underperforming elements?



A well-designed *logic model* and *theory of action* with an *annual review of outcomes* will assist your LEA in monitoring the progress, and with the continuous improvement of your STEPS plan.

The Office of Accountability at NYSED has developed tools and resources to support continuous improvement in all schools and districts. While not developed for the purpose of educator evaluation, these resources may assist you in designing a STEPS plan and in completing the steps outlined in this document.

Please see the [Appendix](#) for additional resources and guidance on building a supportive model grounded in continuous improvement.

NEXT STEPS

After you have collaboratively identified local priorities and your LEA's vision using this process, the next step is to review the forthcoming guidance documents and resources that will be released once the Regulations of the Board of Regents are adopted during the 2024-2025 school year.

For more information, LEAs are encouraged to schedule a meeting with the Office of Educator Quality and Professional Development by e-mailing educatoreval@nysed.gov.

APPENDIX

[State Support Network Needs Assessment Guidebook](#)

This guidebook is designed to support state and local leaders in the first step in the improvement process, the development and facilitation of a needs assessment. The guidebook reviews some of the major school-improvement-related needs assessment requirements found in ESEA, as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA); introduces the elements of a successful needs assessment; presents a practical approach to addressing those elements across the phases of needs assessment implementation; describes supports that states can provide to districts, and districts to schools, in the implementation of effective needs assessments; and discusses the role of needs assessment within a continuous improvement process.

[Culturally Responsive-Sustaining \(CR-S\) Education Framework](#)

This guide published by NYSED provides a framework for culturally responsive-sustaining education which is a product of the collective work by the New York State Board of Regents, NYS Education Department Offices of P-12 Education and Office of Higher Education as well as a panel of experts and stakeholders. The framework is intended to be used by a variety of education stakeholders, including but not limited to students, teachers, school and district leaders, families and community members, higher education faculty and administrators, and Education Department policymakers.

[Social Emotional Learning: A Guide to Systemic Whole School Implementation](#)

This guide published by NYSED features strategies and resources for LEAs to implement systemic whole-school social-emotional learning, through multiple components which include, but are not limited to the alignment of an LEA's personnel policies and practices, school culture and classroom environment, support for adults in the school community and professional development for administrators, teachers and other instructional staff, specialized instructional support personnel, non-instructional staff, and staff from partner organizations.

[New York State Professional Development Standards](#)

New York State Professional Development Standards provide a blueprint for high-quality professional development for all educators to improve instruction and student achievement. These standards promote and sustain continuous development, growth, and examination of practice. They also provide clearly defined expectations and commitment to change. They are aligned with New York State Learning Standards and are based on an analysis and adaptation of the National Staff Development Council's Standards for Staff Development as well as other national, state, and professional standards. The New York State Professional Development Standards are based on fundamental knowledge about contextual factors from converging research about effective professional development and its ultimate impact on student learning.

[Professional Learning Plan Guidance Document](#)

This guidance document was developed by the New York State [Professional Standards and Practices Board](#) to assist schools, school districts and BOCES in the design and writing of their Professional Learning Plans. The document is formatted to highlight the required components of Professional Learning Plans and includes suggested items that might be included to ensure you are meeting the requirements of the plan.

[REL's Evaluating Professional Learning: A Tool for Schools and Districts](#)

This toolkit introduces practitioners involved in the management of professional learning at the school, district, regional, or state level to key concepts of professional learning evaluation. It guides users through a process for developing an evaluation plan and includes activities, tools, and other resources for monitoring professional learning initiatives. A multidisciplinary team that includes teacher leaders, professional learning managers, data managers, and other administrators can use this tool to develop a logic model, develop evaluation questions, use existing and new data to address evaluation questions and use existing and new data to make sense of the data.

[REL's Program Evaluation Toolkit and Quick Start Guide](#)

This toolkit presents a step-by-step process for conducting your own program evaluation. The [Quick Start Guide](#) will help you decide if you are ready to use this toolkit and where to start.

[NYSED Accountability Website for Continuous Improvement](#)

As NYSED has shifted the focus to a continuum of support in which all schools in NYS are engaged in a support model that is grounded in continuous improvement, NYSED has committed to provide increased and diverse opportunities for educators and stakeholders to learn about improvement science and the research behind it.

[Theory of Action for Community School Transformation](#)

Published as part of the Community Schools Forward project, this guide provides visual theory of action models to assist with creating a Theory of Action for Continuous Improvement.