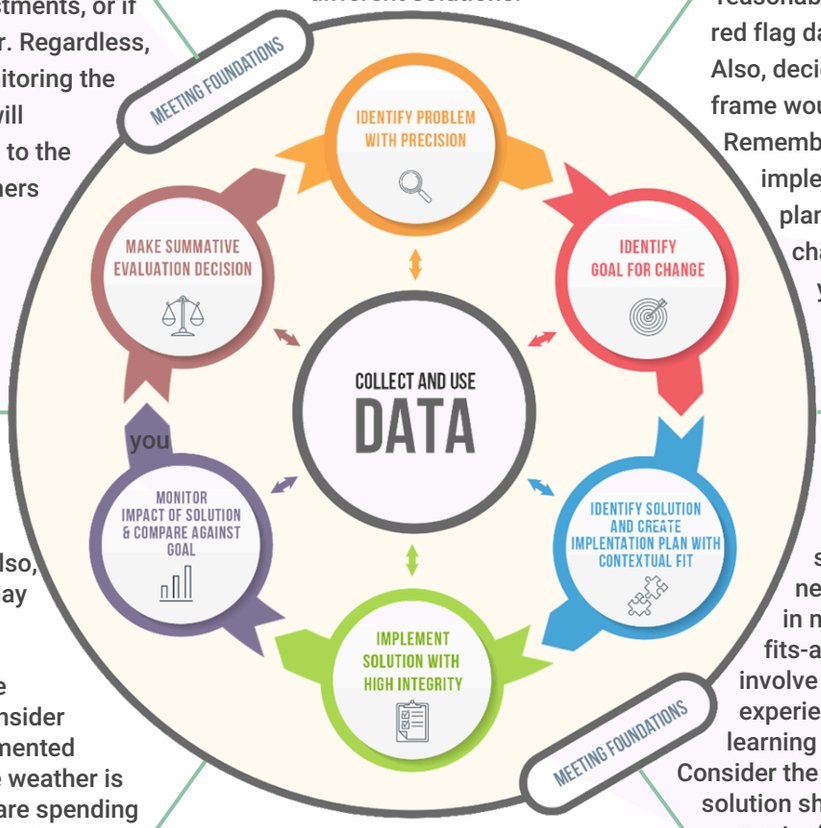
Problem Solving Cycle

In the problem-solving cycle, you typically begin by Identifying a Problem with Precision. This involves conducting thorough "deep dives" into the data to detect any anomalies or red flags. Look for patterns and identify where these patterns are disrupted. Pay attention to anything that makes you wonder or raises questions. Consider analyzing referral data, attendance records, teacher reports, nurse visits, fidelity of PBIS implementation, or any other relevant data. Examine the levels, trends, peaks, and valleys in the data and compare it to the previous year's data. Ask yourself what our data is not revealing and how our school's data compares with other schools in the county or with our expected benchmarks. Once you have identified a specific problem to address, delve deeper by asking Who? What? When? Where? and Why? about the initial problem. This approach will help you craft a precise problem statement to guide your efforts. It's important to avoid broad statements, as they can lead to confusion and overwhelm. Repeat this process as needed, recognizing that similar issues may require different solutions.

Once you have your precise problem statement, you need a precise goal statement. Your goal statement should also include Who? What? When? Where? Why? to help make sure you have a measurable and attainable goal. Consider what would be a reasonable change that would help the red flag data point better fit the pattern. Also, decide what a reasonable time frame would be to see the change. Remember, it could take time to implement the solutions you are planning and more time to see a change in your students, so give yourself enough time to reach the goal you set and make the goal reasonable as well.



After some time of collecting data and monitoring the impact, it is time to make a summative decision about the solution. Ask yourselves whether the goal was reached. If it was not, was it because the solution was not implemented long enough or was it another factor? Decide whether you should continue implementing as is, with adjustments, or if a new solution would be better. Regardless, never stop collecting and monitoring the data. Also consider how you will communicate the conclusions to the staff members. It will help others see the importance of the decisions and changes that are being made and can help increase buy-in for future initiatives.

In this phase, you need to identify potential solutions and develop a plan to implement the chosen solution(s) that best fit your needs and circumstances. Keep in mind that there is no one-size-fits-all solution. The process may involve trial and error, intuition, experience, consulting research, and learning from others' experiences. Consider the appropriate level at which the solution should be implemented. Are most of the office discipline referrals (ODRs) coming from the classroom or from a small group of students? Remember that the changes should be straightforward, manageable, and controllable so that you can assess their impact on the outcomes. Additionally, think about the training and resources that you may require, as well as any potential obstacles that may arise.

Reviewing your data will help you assess if the solution is effective. Pay attention to whether you are making progress toward your goal. Also, consider other factors that may be influencing your data. For instance, if the number of disciplinary referrals from the playground is decreasing, consider whether it's due to the implemented changes or if it's because the weather is getting colder, and students are spending less time on the playground. If the changes are minimal, also refer to fidelity data to assess whether steps to increase staff commitment and buy-in need to be reviewed, or if there are other obstacles to implementation. Gathering data over time will allow you to identify patterns and avoid feeling overwhelmed when it's time to review it.

As you start implementing your solution, keep in mind your timeframe, especially if there are multiple steps involved. Another important aspect is how you communicate the rollout of your solution to both the staff and the students. An obstacle you might face is getting the buy-in from staff members. To gauge their openness to change, consider using data such as surveys or interviews. It's important to note that commitment and buy-in are different but essential. Commitment ensures that the staff is dedicated and will implement the changes faithfully, while buy-in involves getting the staff to believe that the changes will make a difference. You can use acknowledgements to support commitment and professional development, research, or other means to gain buy-in. Make sure to teach students any new expectations associated with the changes and plan how it will be acknowledged. Before starting, plan fidelity measures so that data can be collected from the beginning. Decide what data will be collected, how often, and by whom. If you need to collect specific data related to the implementation, plan accordingly. Lastly, don't be discouraged if you don't see immediate changes.

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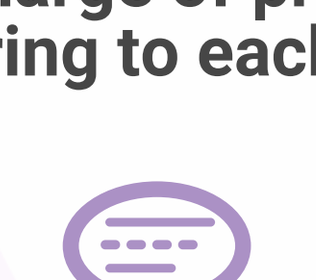
Considerations to be Made for "Clean Data"

1) Is everyone submitting data to the same place? Is everyone submitting data in general? Is the data being stored and presented in a way where we can look at trends?

2) Does everyone have the same definitions of the data elements?

3) Do you have a data team? Are there set times to specifically look at data at least monthly? Who is in charge of preparing materials to bring to each meeting?



4) Does your team have norms and expectations to promote positive, data-lead discussions?

References: Chaparro, E. A., Horner, R., Algozzine, B., Daily, J., & Nese, R. N. T. (April 2022). How School Teams Use Data to Make Effective Decisions: Team-Initiated Problem Solving (TIPS). Center on PBIS, University of Oregon. www.pbis.org