



Dr. Smith, superintendent of Soothe School District (SSD), has worked with his school teams and district team for the past three years to create a goal of closing the opportunity gap. Dr. Smith just can't seem to figure it out though, he has seen no movement on test scores and has little to show for all the years of work with his school board.

For the past three years, he has instructed his principals to make sure that all teachers, “know everything about implicit bias,” he also asked his principals to “begin doing the work with the ILT.” He made sure that the district had allocated funds each year to invest in closing the opportunity gap.

Dr. Smith feels ready to approach his board and spent last night writing out a list of things to present in his memo to the Board.

Memo to the Board:

“Soothe School District has taken on the strategic goal of closing the opportunity gap. To date here is all of the work that our principals have done as an administrator council:

1. Training on using data: Datawise
2. All administrators were asked to create a school improvement plan that includes diversity and equity.
3. The district provided leaders with a definition for equity: “Giving all students what they need and deserve.”
4. Provided administrators with training on implicit bias, cultural relevance and social emotional learning. All training happened twice a year, totalling 2 hours each session.

Our school leaders provided a list of initiatives and strategies that they have done with their teaching teams:

1. All staff goes through a once a year training on implicit bias.
2. All staff were required to read a book: Why are all the Black kids sitting together in the cafeteria by Beverly Daniel Tatum.
3. Professional learning communities are a goal but they have not been established yet due to challenges with the master schedules.

Our school teams are exhausted and do not have much time to engage in long term change. The exhaustion makes it hard to own the work and our leaders are doing the best that they can. I believe that more time spent processing learning will really help our leaders implement their learning.”

What Dr. Smith cannot tell his board, however, that he still has not built value on the work; he is struggling to name the end goal for his leaders and many people are starting to complain and he's not sure why. Before anything else, a communication strategy feels ideal.



Processing our case:

1. What are the adaptive opportunities that you are seeing in this case?
 - a. What adaptive challenges can you identify?
 - b. Technical?
 - c. Adaptive and Technical?
2. Do you see any opportunities here to re-shape or shift our interpretation of Dr. Smith's current reality?
 - a. Technical → Adaptive
 - b. Benign → Conflictual
 - c. Individual → Systemic
3. What technical and adaptive work do we think that we can do to support SSD?
4. What next step would you take if you were Dr. Smith?