

# Catalysts for Improving Diverse Student High School Graduation Rates in Positive Outlier Schools



Inform, Inspire & Improve

A Research-Practice  
Partnership Supported by  
the State of New York

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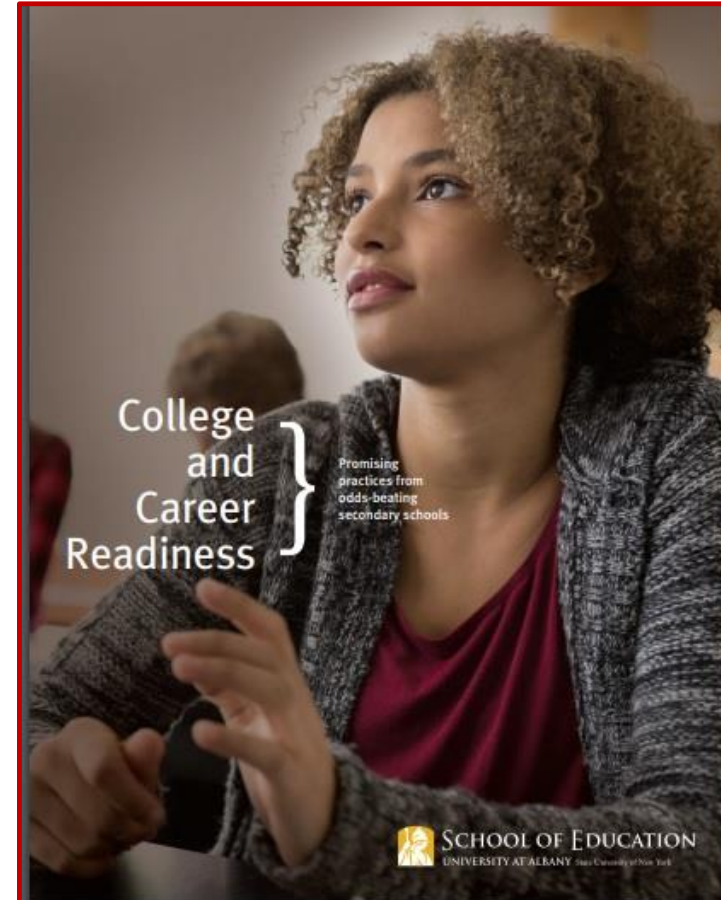
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*In collaboration with Freeport Unified School District, Malverne Central School District & Port Chester Central School District, New York State*

# Background/Rationale

Why do some schools undergo reform over and over again but improve little, while others manage to reverse a poor or downward performance trajectory?

How do some schools do this in the face of challenging policies and dramatic changes in their respective student bodies, workforces, and surrounding communities?



<https://ny-kids.org/>

# Theory of Improvement

***What can be done to help educators break free from sub-optimal routines and performance trajectories?***

**Elmore's (2008) recommendations remain in good currency and appear to be foundational for *Improvement Science*:**

**Step One:** Stop talking about *reform*; instead substitute *improvement*.

**Step Two: Focus on what is malleable**

- The ways that problems and priorities are framed;
- The choice of discourses that are used to explain expected behaviors and outcomes; and
- The decisions about which practices, routines, and policies are implemented in alignment with identified problems and priorities.



# Data and Measures

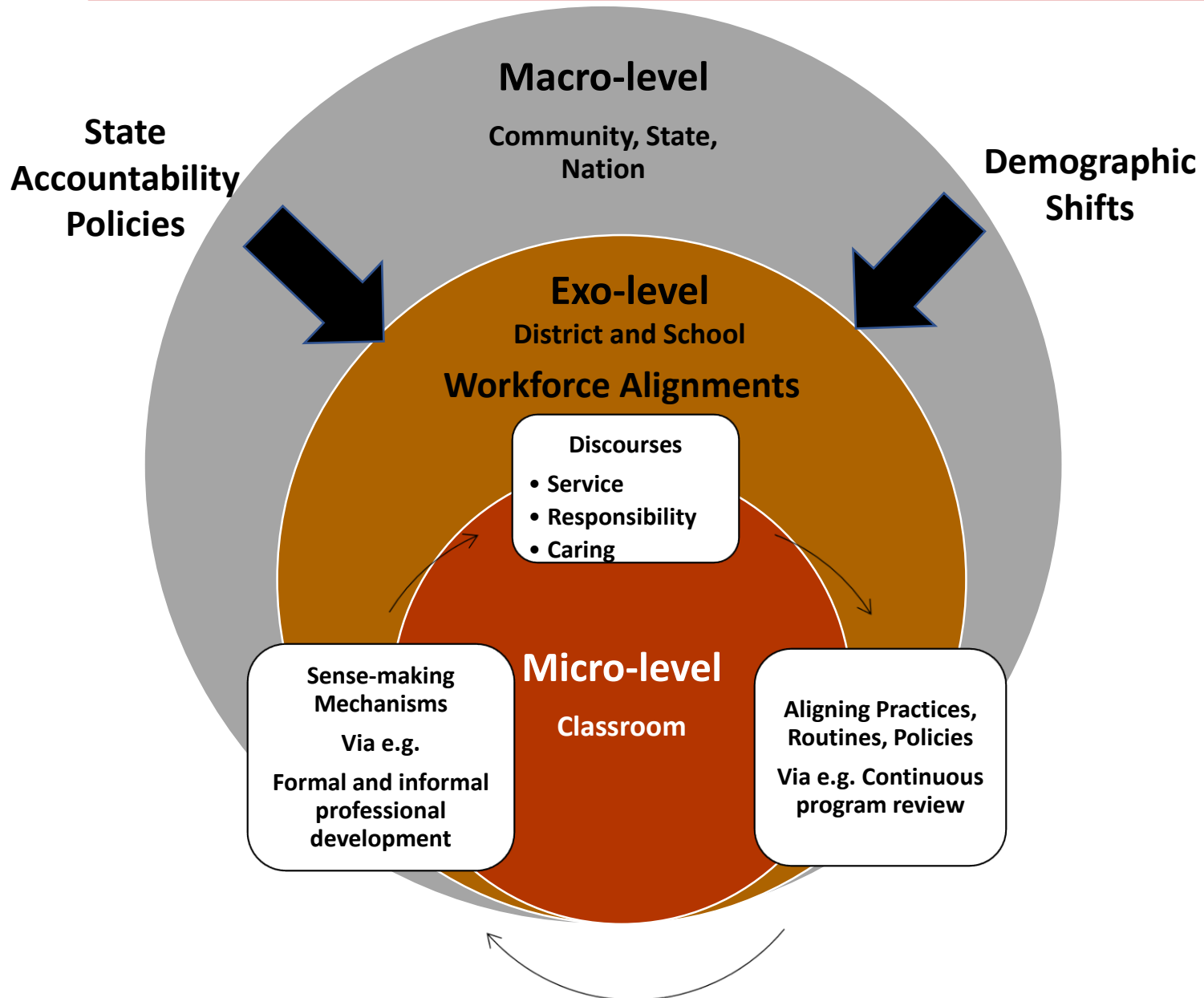
## Some examples of instrument questions:

- 1) Describe any reform or change in the past few years that has had a positive impact on students challenged by poverty or students of different ethnic and linguistic backgrounds. Who was involved with this change?
- 2) How long has this change been in place? How do you determine its effectiveness? What have been the major challenges to effective implementation? How have you and/or others surmounted those challenges?
- 3) Please describe any examples of changes related specifically to students challenged by poverty?
- 4) Please describe any examples of changes related specifically to students of different ethnic and linguistic backgrounds?

	Malverne	Port Chester	Freeport	Total
Interviews	3	2	7	12
Focus Groups	9	13	6	28
Documents	10	6	6	22
School Tour	1	1	1	3
Interpretive Memos	1	1	1	3



# Learnings/Findings





# Concrete Examples

**“I try to get people to want to work hard for me just by treating them respectfully and fairly. I try to show them that I care about their well-being day in and day out”. – Malverne Principal**

*“I think my leadership style is really... servant leadership, you know, to me I'm here to serve the kids. They are the most important people, for me, for my life. I do anything and everything that I can do to make them successful, happy people overall, and then become productive global citizens...As much I want to inspire, I want to be collaborative, work with my team. I'm here to support them in every manner to make sure the kids are successful. I want to believe in that we have done everything possible on our end”. -Freeport Superintendent*

*“The meetings gear towards: what are the improvements we need? What are we not doing anymore? How is it [improvement] measured? What can we add? And its meetings such as that [which] build leadership because nobody is going to come to the table unprepared. I'm going to speak the truth because everybody is going to know and they want their department to shine...I have to say that the Superintendent does the same thing...Meetings are very important in the district, and everything is pretty much data driven.” – Freeport District Leader*

*“When it comes to [our principal], we rely on him for the vision. What are the goals we are going to try to achieve for each academic year? And so what we try to do is we try to brainstorm ... it's always a team mentality because we understand that things only get accomplished when we work as a team. And each member of that team understands what their individual responsibilities are to make sure it can happen. Which is why we have our own specific roles that go ahead and make sure that everyone has his specific role in addition to managing their caseloads to make sure that we're achieving our goals.” -Port Chester Teacher*





## For more information

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