

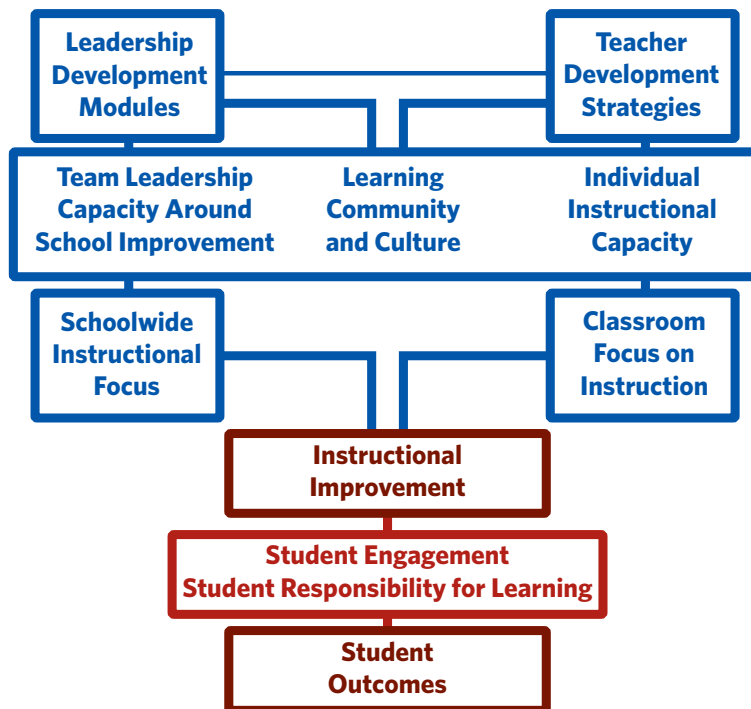
Success at the Core: Theory of Action

SaC builds on research that shows how instruction,¹ school leadership,² and learning culture and community³ impact student outcomes. Its design evolves from findings that indicate quality professional development is effective when it is available to educators on-demand at their schools.⁴

The SaC theory of action builds on the assumptions that participating schools will dedicate time to engage fully with materials; have a core of leaders who are committed to improving instructional and student outcomes; are already engaged with improving English language arts, math, or science; and have capacity to convene and facilitate effective meetings.

Theory of Action

How *Success at the Core* Impacts Student and School Outcomes



The steps in the graphic (in *italics* in this text) depict the flow from use of SaC materials towards increased school and student outcomes. There are two entry points.

¹See Sanders and Rivers (1996); Elmore (2002); Cohen and Ball (2001).

²See Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, and Wahlstrom (2004); Hallinger and Heck (1996); Bryk, Sebring, Allensworth, Luppescu, and Easton (2010); Williams, Kirst, Haertel, et al., (2010).

³See Hord (1997); Joyce and Calhoun (1996); Louis, Marks, and Kruse (1996); McLaughlin and Talbert (2001); Newman and Wehlage (1997).

⁴See Guskey (2003); Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, and Yoon (2001); National Staff Development Council (2010).

- School-based teams that engage in *Leadership Development modules* build *team leadership capacity* around school improvement. The combination of readings, videos, and reflective activities develop knowledge about issues that leverage student outcomes and build team members' skills to work on those issues together. The pilot evaluation reports that modules also impact on *learning community and culture*. The materials help frame and facilitate conversations that are conducive to collaborative learning and problem solving. Together, enhanced team capacity and culture lead to improving *schoolwide instructional focus*, which is known to have the greatest predictive strength in improving student outcomes.⁵ That instructional focus translates, for example, to strategic school plans implemented with fidelity, more collective problem solving to improve instruction, and support structures that facilitate learning, all of which lead to *improved instruction*.
- The *Teacher Development strategies* teach instructional practices (e.g., cooperative learning) by providing images of the strategy enacted, showing actual steps through video, and offering guidance about how to organize practice through supporting materials. By building knowledge and skills, these materials strengthen *individual capacity to improve instruction*. Like a well-scaffolded walkthrough, these materials build a shared *learning community and culture*, resulting in an improved *classroom focus on instruction*. This results, for example, in using specific strategies in the classroom with students, procuring and organizing instructional materials, rethinking of physical space in a classroom, and implementing particular lesson plans. These actions lead to *improved instruction*.

Instructional improvement leads to *student engagement* and *students taking responsibility for their own learning*, two central contributors to achievement.⁶ Improved *student outcomes* are the final result.

⁵ See Williams, Kirst, Haertel et al. (2010).

⁶ See Cooney and Bottoms (2003); ACT (2007, 2008).

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