

Building Improved Accountability, Support, and Governance Systems

Presentation to Maryland's Commission on
Innovation and Excellence in Education

October 10, 2018

WestEd's Mission

WestEd is a *nonprofit, nonpartisan research, development, and service agency* that works with education and other communities to *promote excellence, achieve equity, and improve learning for children, youth, and adults.*



Bridge to Excellence in Public Schools Act



- A 2002 Maryland Public Schools reform provided substantial, additional resources to schools.
- Requires districts to develop “master plans” that document the use of additional funding to improve outcomes.
- MGT of America report found “that while there were modest student gains over the 2003–2008 phase in of the Act,” ***most districts and schools were not implementing changes in policy and practice for which there is clear evidence of effectiveness.***

Examining State Levers for Improvement



Developing State Roles

States have largely maintained their role as either **funder** or **monitor** relative to school districts.

Funder

Develops a comprehensive approach to the distribution of state/federal resources to incentivize improvement; establishes funding guidelines.

Monitor

Approval of school district planning tools; completion of needs assessments; periodic review of plans that range in quality; translation from policy to practice.

Promoter

Communication to promote and support the decisions and direction of school districts; provides 'air cover' for more difficult policy issues.

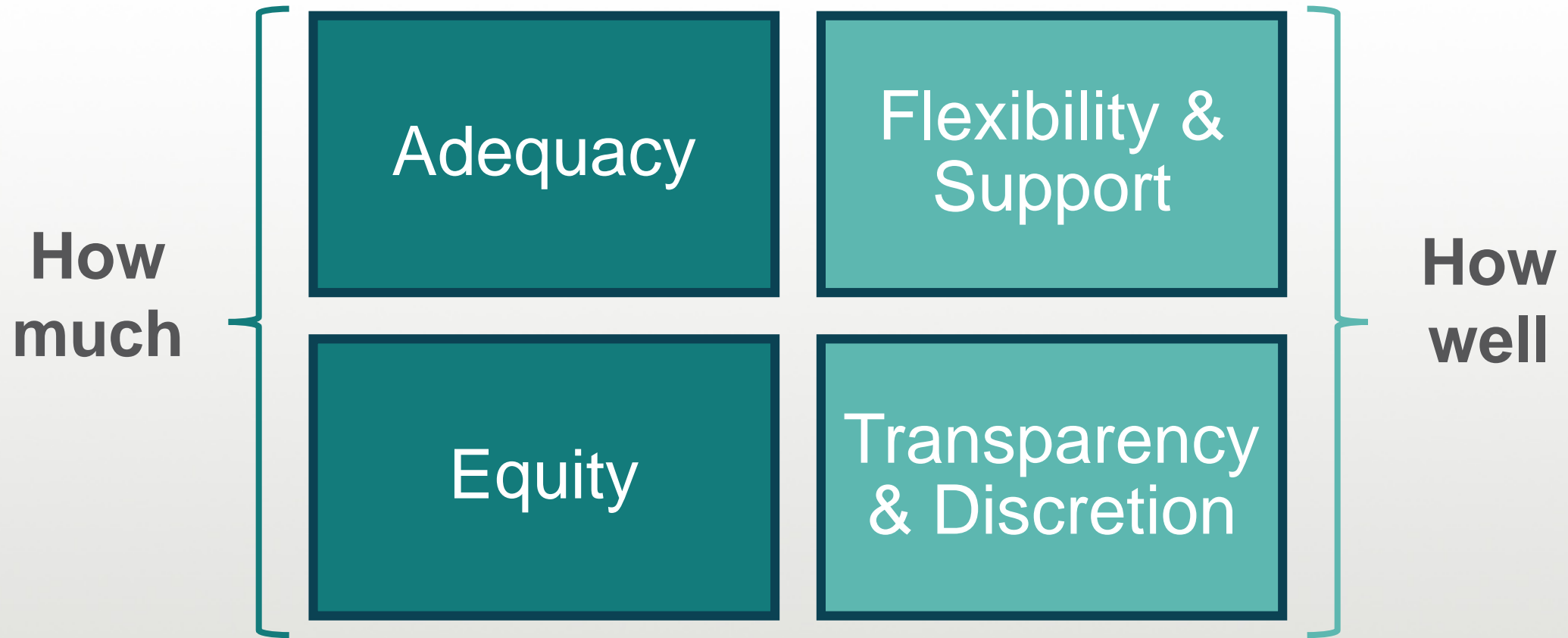
Convener

Creates structures to support the exchange of ideas across districts; brings educators together to increase focus on/knowledge of the most pressing needs identified statewide.

Researcher

Studies and highlights effective practices of schools and districts pursuing improvement; collects and disseminates evidence-based practices.

A good state funding and accountability system addresses both how much and how well.



DISCRETION

- **Local decision making** on compensation, curriculum, staffing models, and scheduling that meet local needs.

SUPPORT

- Intentional, targeted professional learning that **builds skill of professionals** to implement **common goals**.

ACCOUNTABLE

- **Balance** local decision making with **accountability measures** that are **relevant, timely, and meaningful**.

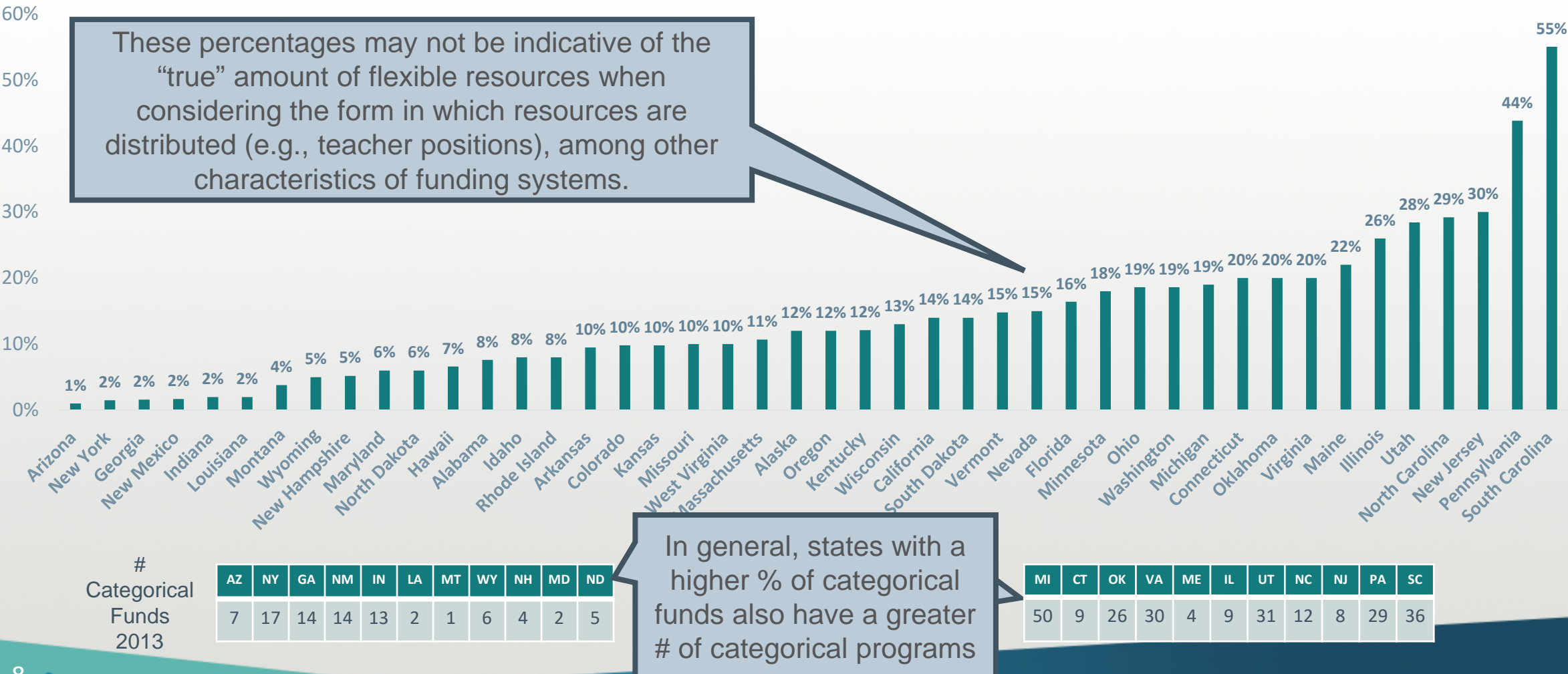
TRANSPARENT

- Accessible information on current **performance, goals and strategies**, and **the alignment of resources**.

**Improved,
equitable
student
outcomes for
all Maryland
students**

Many districts don't have meaningful flexibility over resources, in part because of state categorical mandates.

Categorical Mandates as Percent of State Education Budget (2013)



Source: Center for American Progress, *Categorical Funds: The Intersection of School Finance and Governance*, 2013

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What does Effective Support look like?

Effective professional development programs share several “critical features”:

- Job-embedded practice
- Intense and sustained durations
- A focus on discrete skill sets
- Active learning

What do these “critical features” look like at each level of the system?

Kraft MA, Blazar D, Hogan D. [The Effect of Teacher Coaching on Instruction and Achievement: A Meta-Analysis of the Causal Evidence](#). Review of Educational Research [Internet]. 2018;88 (4) :547-588.

Four Domains of Rapid School Improvement



- Framework is specific to the areas in which practitioners need to diagnose, assess, and improve
- Backed by research and evidence from the field
- Critical element remains: ***how does a state monitor and support implementation?***

Assumptions behind continuous improvement

- It's about **systems**
- Focus on the **processes** to improve outcomes
- Learn our way into new performance by applying the **scientific method**
- Engaging the “front line”



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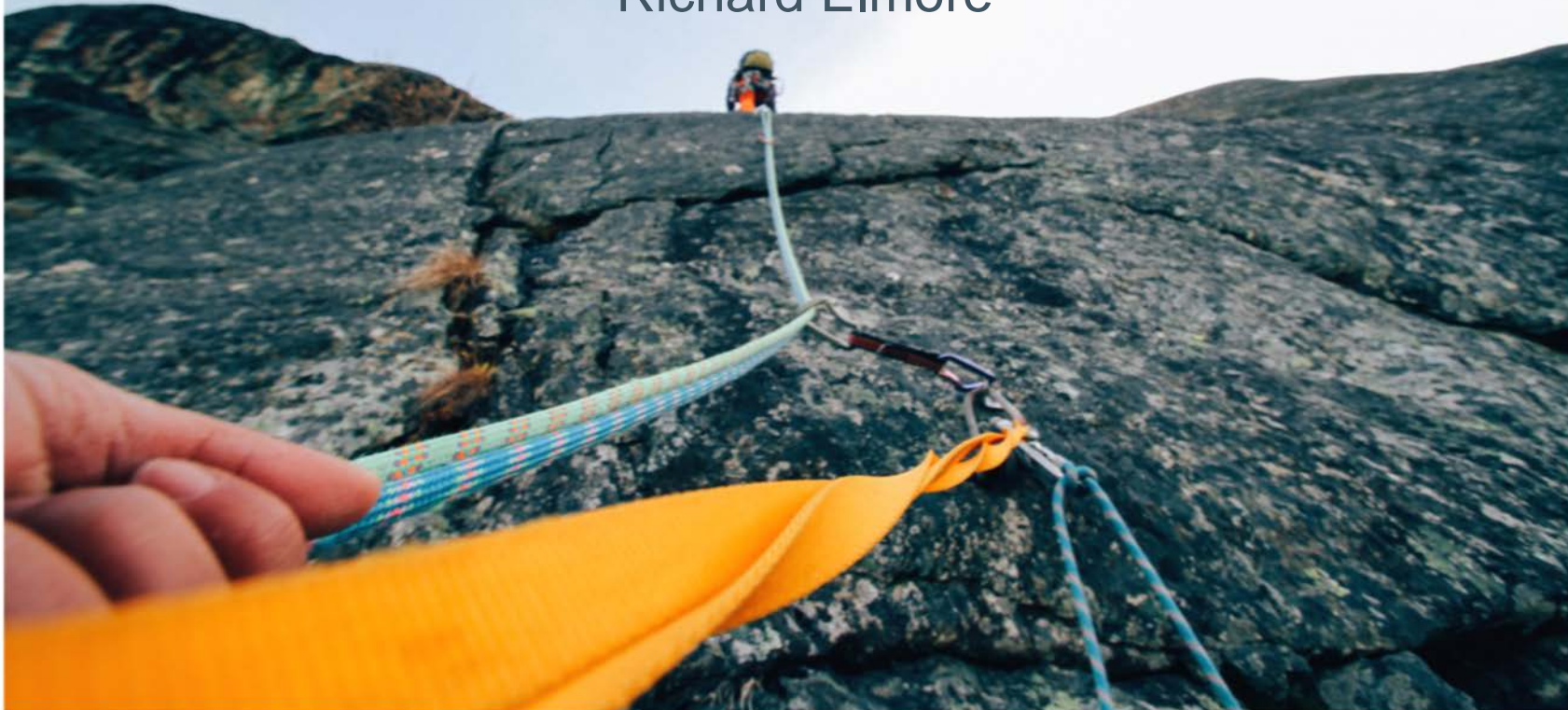
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Reciprocal Accountability

“Accountability must be a reciprocal process. For every increment of performance I demand from you, I have an equal responsibility to provide you with the capacity to meet that expectation.”

- Richard Elmore



Accountability and support: Avoiding “the pendulum swing”

Incremental Change

Innovations implemented on small scale through step by step changes and narrow actions that can be measured and monitored for impact.

Fundamental Change

Innovations implemented on wide scale through multiple and simultaneous changes measured and monitored collectively for impact.

Reality on the Ground? A combination of the two

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Internal and external transparency

- **Access to information is the foundation of greater transparency.**
- **Transparency has practical implications and implications for the culture of the system.**
- **Systems must attend to internal transparency in addition to external transparency.**
 - Identify and disaggregate progress across districts, schools, and for student groups
 - identify structural, policy and systems problems
 - Inform continuous improvement efforts
- **Considerations: need a clear theory of change that links the data to accountability; need to select data that are critical to monitoring performance, finance and management.**

State Spotlights

Massachusetts & California

Massachusetts: 30 years in the making

- **Flexibility.** ESSA plan gives districts ability to “stretch and continually improve,” to determine the best lever for improvement
- **Support.** Direct support to large districts through Commissioner’s Districts programs; and small and midsize districts through District and School Assistance Centers.
- **Accountability.** Robust accountability metrics on a variety of academic, behavioral and student coursework indicators. Underperformance results in state-level intervention.
- **Transparency.** Parent-friendly district and school-level report cards, based on accountability metrics.
- **Equity.** System focus on closing the proficiency gap.



California: Local Control Funding Formula

- Enacted in 2013, LCFF transformed education funding and accountability in California. Its guiding principles are equity, local control, and accountability.
- **Accountability.** Student outcomes are reported through an accountability matrix on the state's data Dashboard.
- **Support.** Districts qualify for context-specific *differentiated assistance* through their COE or another entity if 2 or more student groups are underperforming.
- **Transparency.** Districts develop three-year plans describing annual goals and specific actions to meet state priorities.





Upcoming WestEd Release

Building an Improved Accountability, Support, and Governance System: Research Paper

Estimated Release Date: Winter 2018

Thank you!

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Supplemental

Methodology & Framework



Accountability, Support, & Governance Systems in the era of ESSA

Project aims to:

- ***Understand*** and ***document*** the developing landscape of accountability, support, and governance systems in the U.S.
- Create a way in which to ***classify*** and ***organize*** states
- Raise up examples, domestic and internationally, that **demonstrate effective uses of such systems**
- Offer specific, concrete ways in which various branches of state government as well as school districts can configure such systems

Selection Criteria

- **International:** PISA Scores (last 12 years by absolute performance, growth and gap closure)
- **Domestic:** NAEP Scores (last 12 years by absolute performance, growth and gap closure)
- **Validated by research.** Existing research on top-performing systems both domestic and internationally.
- **Bold reforms.** Included states that have recently enacted bold reforms, e.g., CA, TN

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- **Local decision making** on compensation, curriculum, staffing models, and scheduling that meet local needs.

SUPPORT

- Intentional, targeted professional learning that: **builds capacity of professionals** to implement **common goals**.

ACCOUNTABLE

- **Balance** local decision making with **accountability measures** that are **relevant, timely, and meaningful**.

TRANSPARENT

- Publicly accessible information on current **performance, goals and strategies**, and **the alignment of resources**.

Discretion Principles

- The state has worked to remove constraints and mandates that limit strategic resource use by districts to improve student outcome goals and local priorities informed by state-wide policy investments.
- The state has created structures to increase flexibility to districts to improve resource use.
- All districts that want flexibility have the ability to get it.

Accountability

Table 1. Accountability types in policy and psychological accountability mechanisms

		Accountability types in policy			
		Outcome-based	Rule-based	Market-based	Professional
Psychological accountability mechanisms	Mere presence of another				Surgical operating room with nurses in attendance
	Identifiability	US News college rankings	Minimum certification requirements (various professions)	Consumer Reports, Better Business Bureau	Membership in professional organization
	Reason-giving			Annual report to company stockholders	Medical rounds with explanation of treatment
	Evaluation	Contingent fees for attorneys	Driver licensing test		Bar exam

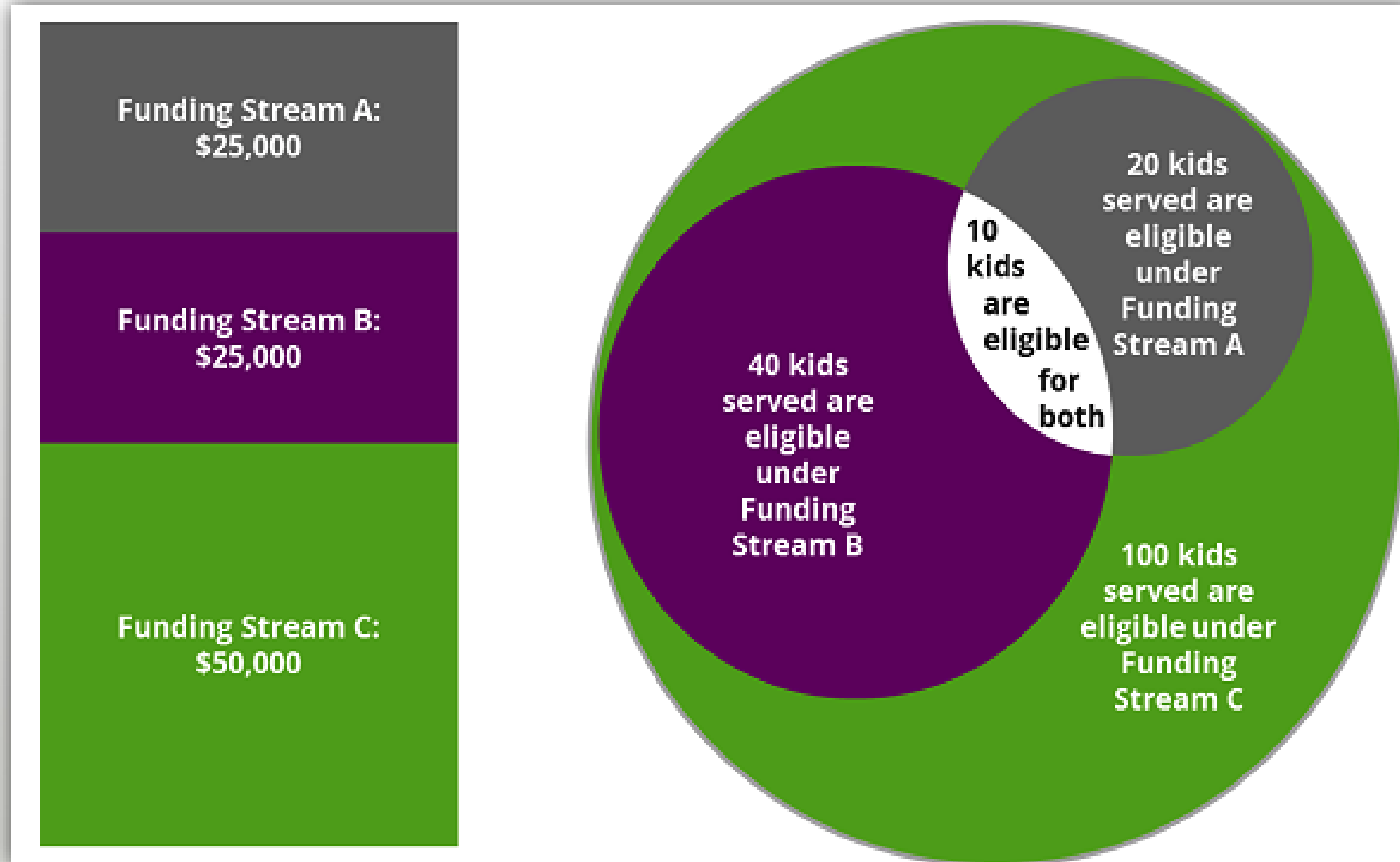
Gill, B.P., Lerner, J.S., & Meosky, P. (2016). [Re-imagining accountability in K-12 education: A behavioral science perspective](#). Re-imagining accountability in K-12 education. *Behavioral Science and Policy*, 2(1), 57-70.

Design Principle: Strengths-Based Approach

- **Values the capacity, skills, knowledge, connections and potential in individuals and communities.**
- **Focusing on strengths does not mean ignoring challenges, or converting struggles into strengths.**
- **Practitioners working in this way have to work in collaboration - helping people to do things for themselves. In this way, people can become co-producers of support, not passive consumers of support.**

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Blending funds to maximize efficiency



Systemic causes require systemic solutions

A continuous improvement approach

Targeted high-leverage interventions

Stronger connections between schools, districts, and support providers

O'Day, J. A., & Smith, M. S. (2016). Quality and equality in American education: Systemic problems, systemic solutions. https://www.carnegiefoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/ODaySmith_Systemic_reform.pdf

What is continuous improvement?

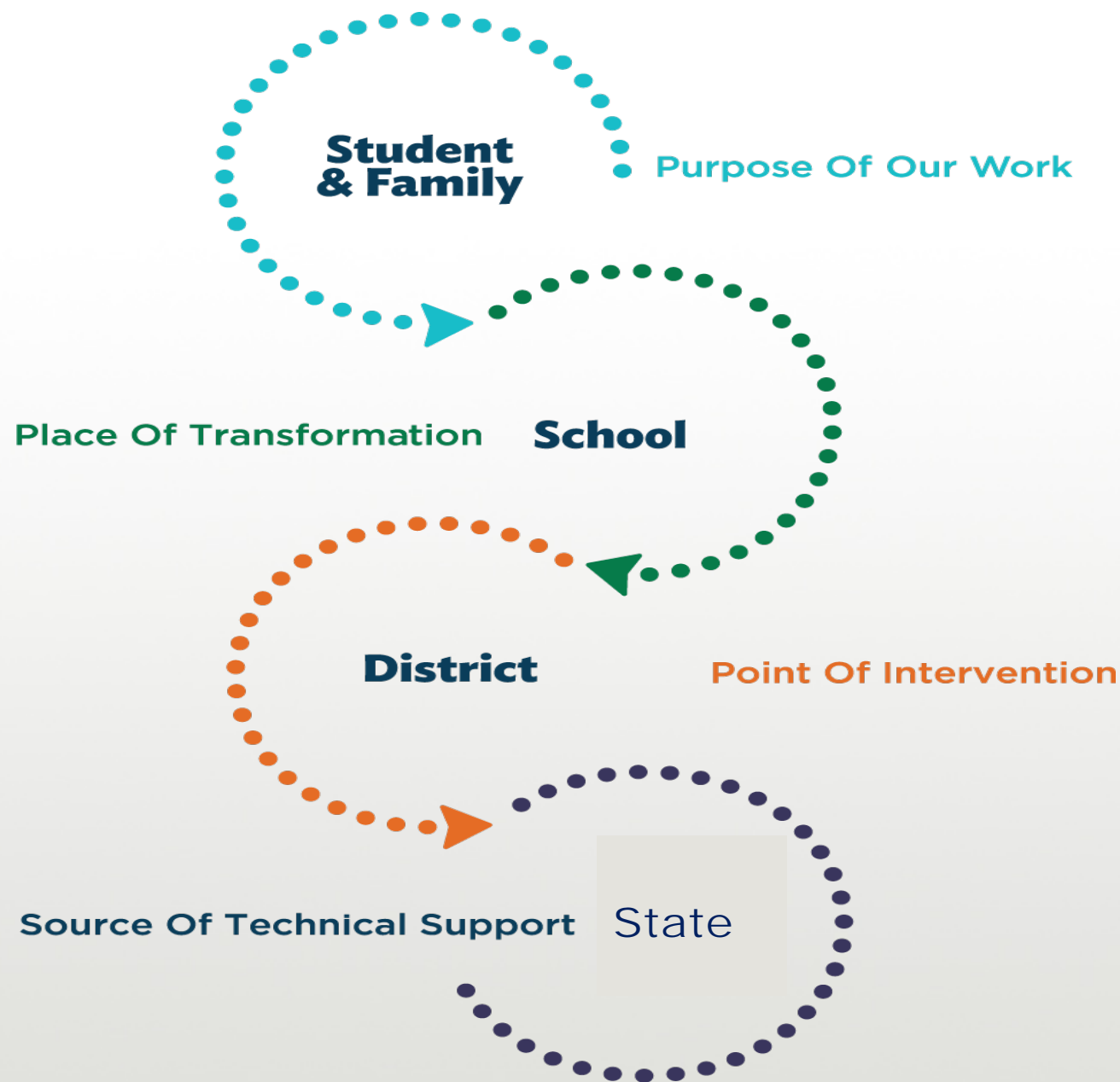
**“constant and
unrelenting”**

**”without
interruption”**

“steady progress”



Whole System Engagement



International Examples

Singapore & Canada



Singapore ranks the highest in all three subjects

Subject	Mean score in PISA in 2015	OECD Average in 2015
Science	556	493
Reading	535	493
Math	564	490

Keys to Singapore's success

- **National investments** in the teaching force to increase prestige for the profession and attract most qualified graduates.
- **A tightly coupled system.** Key leaders of the ministry, NIE, and the schools share responsibility and accountability. No policy is announced without a plan for building the capacity to meet it.
- **System coherence.** Attention to the details of implementation when a policy is developed or changed results in high fidelity to implementation and reduces variation across schools.
- **High-quality teaching force.** A comprehensive system for selecting, training, compensating and developing teachers and principals.
- **A culture of achievement.** A national commitment to educational achievement and educational excellence.

“From Singapore’s beginning, education has been seen as central to building both the economy and the nation.” - OECD

Canada achieved both high levels of performance and greater equity

Subject	Mean score in PISA in 2015	OECD Average in 2015
Science	528	493
Reading	527	493
Math	516	490

What distinguishes Canada from other systems

- Decentralized, but collaborative education system
- A strong focus on equity
- A highly selective, well-paid teaching force
- High levels of consistency in performance between low- and high-income students and between schools
- Clear goals for their education system that are connected to Canada's social and economic goals

Singapore's success attributed to its teaching force

- **National investments** in the teaching force to increase prestige for the profession and attract most qualified graduates.
- **Pre-service training.** All teachers are trained through the National Institute of Education; sets a standard of quality for teacher preparation.
- **Selection and placement.** Two stage process including an exam and an interview by school principals.
- **In-service training.** 100 hours of in-service training per year.
- **A culture of achievement.** A national commitment to educational achievement and educational excellence.

“From Singapore’s beginning, education has been seen as central to building both the economy and the nation.” - OECD

Finland

Subject	Mean score in PISA in 2015	OECD Average in 2015
Science	531	493
Reading	526	493
Math	511	490

Finland's success attributed to its teaching force

- **Highly Competitive:** 1/10 Candidates selected annually based on high scores, interview and observed performance in a clinical environment.
- **Highly Qualified:** Primary and High School teachers must have a masters degree. Preschool and Kindergarten must have a bachelors.
- **Highly Respected and Autonomous:** Teachers heavily influence curriculum design and implementation as well as student assessment. Finns view this as granting a high level of professionalism.