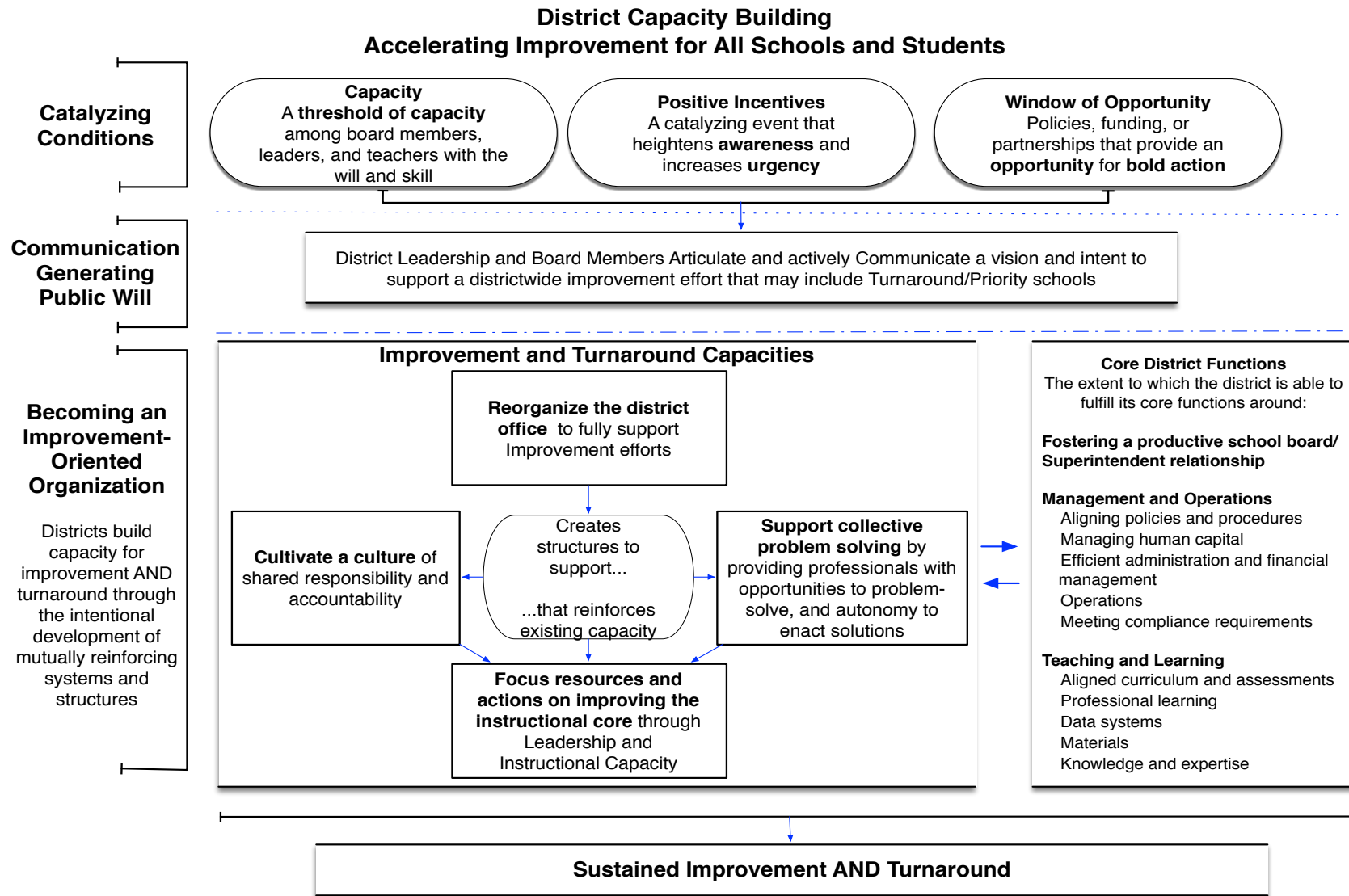


**Figure 1. Framework for District Capacity Building and Improvement: Accelerating Improvement for All Schools and Students**

The Framework integrates the core district functions and improvement capacities with the catalyzing conditions and strategies needed to initiate a process of rapid improvement. The framework includes 10 interdependent variables and depicts the relationships among the variables.



Adapted from: Lane, B. (2009). *Exploring the Pathway to Rapid Improvement*. Lincoln, IL: Center on Innovation and Improvement.



## Building District Capacity for Sustainable School Turnaround The Pathway to Accelerating Improvement

Initiating an effective and sustainable turnaround effort involves **key steps and actions to be taken by the district** prior to beginning the hard work of actually implementing turnaround initiatives. These steps—first accepting that the current state of affairs is unacceptable and second, using the district’s Bully Pulpit to communicate urgency and generate public will—are crucial in setting the stage for turnaround efforts to be owned and successfully enacted.

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Step 1</b></p> <p><b>Catalyzing Conditions</b></p> <p>The current state of affairs is unacceptable and must change!</p>	<p><b>A catalyzing event or external change agent</b> provides the positive incentives needed to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Heighten the <b>awareness</b>, among school board and district leaders, of critical academic gaps</li> <li>✓ Increase the <b>urgency</b>, among school board and district leaders, to make significant change</li> </ul> <p>A <b>Window of Opportunity</b> presents itself (e.g., changes to policies that create conditions for real change, availability of funding, access to expertise, willingness to change) that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Provides an opportunity for bold action and dramatic improvement</li> </ul> <p>There exists a <b>Minimal Threshold of Capacity</b> among Board members, district leaders, or principals, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ A strong and proactive school board or a home-grown district leader/superintendent</li> <li>✓ Strong principals and teacher leaders (but limited district leadership or board leadership)</li> <li>✓ A strong school board with the courage and ability to attract and hire high-quality, change-oriented leadership</li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Step 2</b></p> <p><b>Communicating and Generating Public Will</b></p> <p>Here is what we are going to do; it will require dramatic change; and here is our vision!</p>	<p><b>District Leaders and the Board decide on a coherent approach</b> (e.g., a framework, an articulated theory of action) to <b>accelerating improvement in all schools</b> (including driving turnaround efforts), that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Is <b>system-wide</b>, in that the effort encompasses the entire district and all schools in the district</li> <li>✓ Is <b>linked to prioritized district and school issues and challenges</b></li> <li>✓ Defines <b>specific and public goals</b> that are meaningful to parents, community members, educators, and students</li> <li>✓ <b>Depicts a vision of the district</b> that is dramatically different than the status quo and that will require administrators and teachers to do more than “tinker around the edges”; <b>it will require rapid, intense and dramatic change.</b></li> </ul> <p>The district-wide approach to dramatic improvement (its focus, intensity, and that it will involve significant and rapid changes) is <b>communicated and shared with principals, teachers, and community leaders.</b></p>



## Building District Capacity for Sustainable School Turnaround Improvement and Turnaround Capacities

Districts build leadership capacity for improvement and turnaround through the intentional development of mutually reinforcing systems, structures, and processes (such as communication and teaming) focused on improving the instructional core. While the specific strategies used by districts depend on local context and district size, the reinforcing systems typically involve a re-organization of the district office, teaming structures and networks that support active problem-solving, approaches that build collective responsibility for all students, and a focused theory of action for improving instruction. Districts build capacity by:

<p><b>Cultivating a culture of shared responsibility and accountability</b> by articulating a clear vision, specifying expectations and goals, and ensuring that supervisory, monitoring, and support functions are focused on shared responsibility.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Establishing and communicating a district-wide improvement strategy</b>, including a vision and specific goals for improvement.</li> <li>• <b>Developing, communicating, and strategically using</b> policies and state and federal mandates.</li> <li>• Establishing and maintaining a <b>focus on equity</b>.</li> <li>• Coordinating and ensuring <b>alignment among programs and external providers</b>.</li> <li>• Developing tools and processes to <b>directly monitor local school improvement/turnaround efforts</b> and that <b>provide immediate and useful feedback</b> to principals and schools.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Supporting Collective Problem Solving</b> by providing professionals with opportunities to problem-solve and autonomy to enact solutions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Providing <b>educators</b> (principals, teachers, administrators) with <b>ongoing</b> (e.g., at least once a week) opportunities to engage in joint <b>problem-solving</b> around issues related to teaching and learning.</li> <li>• Providing principals and teachers with the <b>autonomy</b> to <b>incorporate educator-developed strategies and solutions</b> into school and district improvement efforts, within district expectations.</li> <li>• Developing teaming processes and ways of working together that <b>value, support, and engender productive attitudes/dispositions</b>, such as trust, willingness to share information, reflection and self-awareness, and willingness to change.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Improving and strengthening the instructional core</b> through leadership and instructional capacity building, including support (e.g., professional development) and active use of teacher evaluations and classroom observations.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Defining and articulating what high-quality core instruction and interventions look like and mean</b>, across grades and content areas.</li> <li>• <b>Implementing strategies that enable learning and sharing of effective instructional strategies</b>, within and among leaders and teachers (e.g., within and across-school learning walks).</li> <li>• <b>Actively developing and monitoring formal</b> (e.g., educator evaluation systems) and <b>informal</b> (e.g., peer-observations, teacher teams) <b>mechanisms</b> focused on improving teachers' instruction.</li> <li>• <b>Identifying and selecting improvement strategies</b> that are aligned with the district's theory of action and <b>regularly evaluating the impact</b> of programs and strategies.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Reorganize the district office</b> to fully support and monitor improvement and Turnaround so that all efforts, functions, policies and actions are supporting the improvement effort.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Strategically allocating and targeting</b> human and fiscal resources to improve instruction and cultivate shared responsibility and ownership of instruction.</li> <li>• <b>Aligning district systems, structures, and policies</b> to provide ongoing and frequent support for district and school improvement efforts and that</li> <li>• <b>Advocating for and actively using policies and authorities</b> that will provide schools with the flexibility to enact improvement and turnaround efforts.</li> </ul>



**Building District Capacity for Sustainable School Turnaround**  
**Core District Functions**

Districts have control over and responsibility for a set of core functions. Establishment of these core functions provide the foundation for districts to become high-performing and improvement-oriented organizations capable of supporting students successfully attend and succeed in college or the workforce.

<p align="center"><b>Management and Operations</b>  <b>Core District Function</b></p> <p>The district demonstrates the following functions:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Effective and mutually supportive relationship between the <b>School Board and the Superintendent/District.</b></li> <li>• Ability to develop, communicate, and enforce <b>policies and procedures.</b></li> <li>• <b>Strategic management of human resources</b> - efficient and streamlined processes (e.g., systems for induction, evaluation, compensation, and training for all staff) focused explicitly on supporting Teaching and Learning.</li> <li>• <b>Administration and Finance</b> - efficient and streamlined processes for managing district finances, including an explicit connection to Teaching and Learning.</li> <li>• <b>Operations</b> - efficient upkeep of district buildings and operations (e.g., physical plant, food services, custodial, and student services).</li> <li>• Ability to meet <b>federal and state regulations and compliance requirements.</b></li> </ul>
<p align="center"><b>Teaching and Learning</b>  <b>Core District Function</b></p> <p>The district establishes, supports, provides, or has access to:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>An aligned curriculum</b> that includes K-12 curriculum frameworks, maps, or guides and sample instructional strategies aligned with state standards and/or grade level expectations.</li> <li>• <b>District-wide and school-level formative and summative assessments</b> in literacy, mathematics and science, providing for aligned assessments within and across grades.</li> <li>• <b>Data systems</b> for collecting, storing, accessing and disseminating school and student-level data.</li> <li>• <b>Materials</b>, including textbooks and curricular materials, as needed for instruction.</li> <li>• <b>Human capital</b>, which entails that the district has the capacity to recruit, induct, evaluate, retain and/or release district and school staff, principals, teachers, coaches and support staff, including specialized instructional support.</li> <li>• <b>Knowledge and expertise</b> needed to support and train district and school staff on instructional programs, including designated time and opportunity for professional development.</li> </ul>

