

Systems of Effective Practice

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The background of the slide is a solid blue color. In the lower right quadrant, there are several faint, concentric circles that resemble ripples in water, creating a subtle decorative pattern.




Today's Discussion

- Problem-solving session
 - Practices in the Great City Schools
 - Demonstrated and sustained academic progress for English Language Learners
 - Examined through lens of systems thinking
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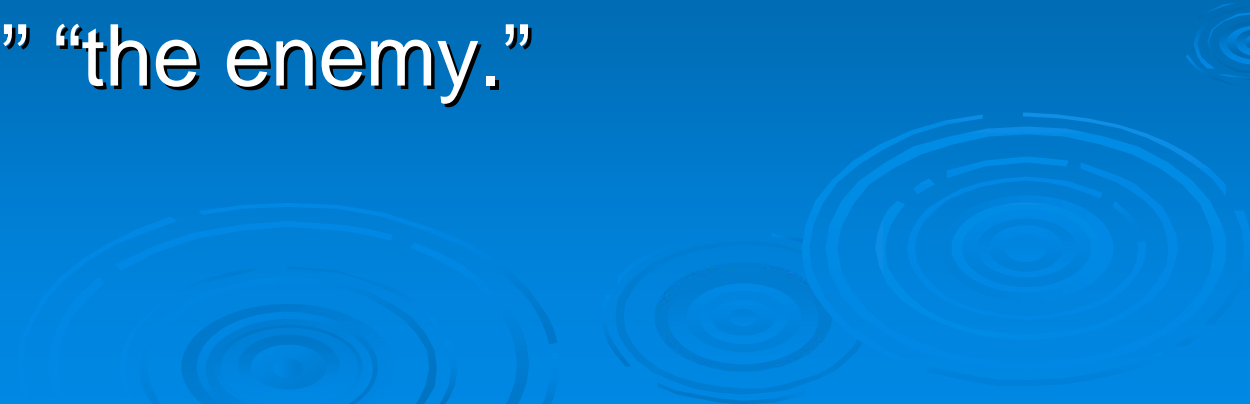


What is Systems Thinking?

- Concept under development since 1940's
 - Peter Senge popularized the concept in *The Fifth Discipline* (1990).
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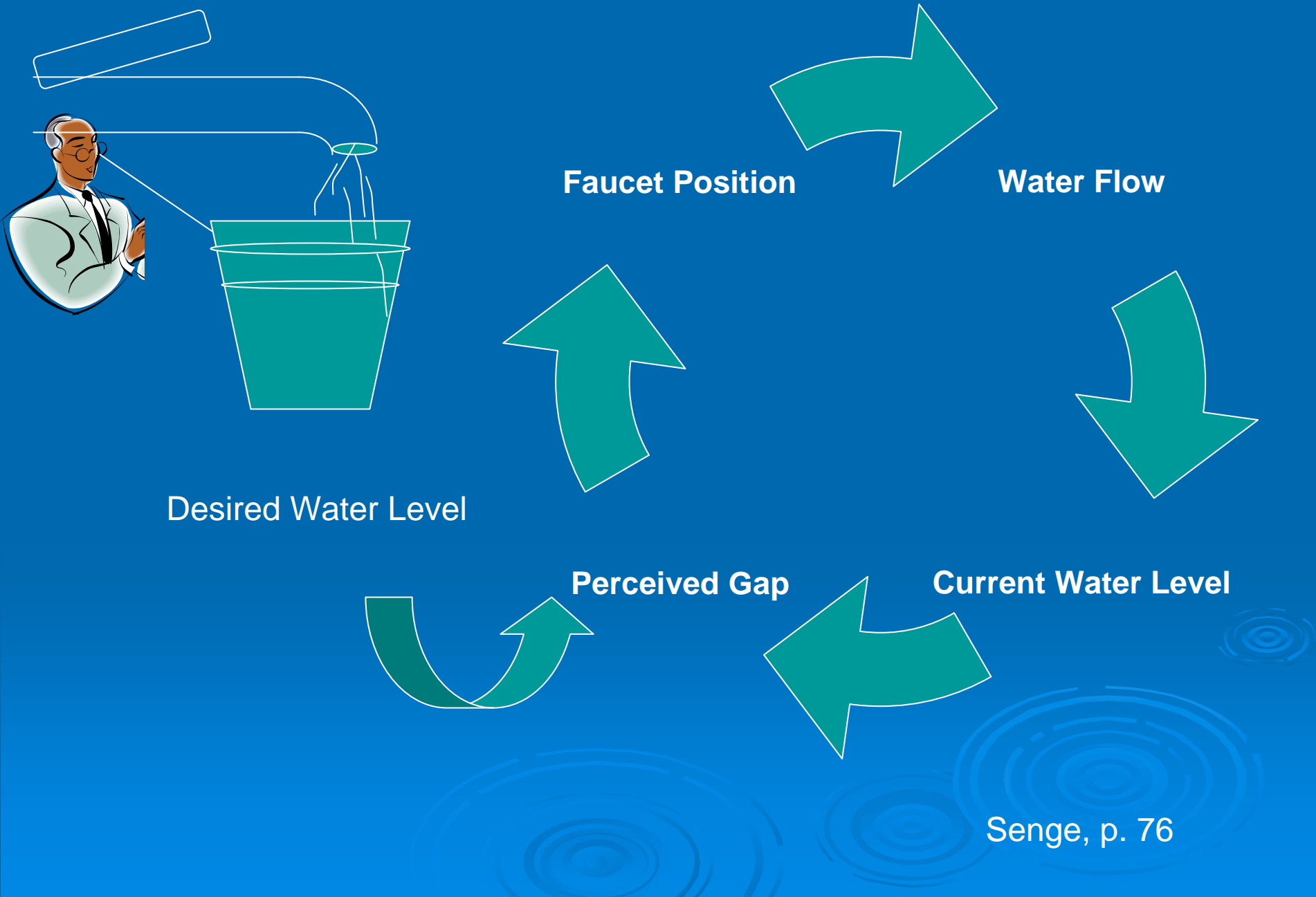


The Problems that Systems Thinking Seeks to Address

- We tend to fragment problems without seeing how they are inter-connected.
 - We take actions without seeing their impact in the long term.
 - The reason for failure is “out there” with “the other,” “the enemy.”
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Basic Concept

- Ability to see the big picture, and to distinguish patterns instead of conceptualizing change as isolated events
- Systems are bound by invisible fabrics of interrelated actions, which often take years to fully play out their effects on each other, making it hard to see the whole pattern of changes.
- Sustained performance improvement can be achieved only by seeing and managing interrelations rather than by asserting and hoping for linear cause and effect



Desired Water Level

Faucet Position

Water Flow

Perceived Gap

Current Water Level

Delays in the System

- Full impact of an action may not be seen immediately.
 - Example: Early reading successes with transitioned ELL students drop off by Grade 4
 - Example: Eliminating some curriculum objectives to concentrate on the current grade level tested left out learning that formed the foundation for more complex expectations at higher grade levels.

Systems Issue

- Yesterday's solutions are today's problems in a fragmented system.
- The team that put the original solution in place may not even be there when the new problem results.
 - Example: A school district that encouraged older ELL students to move to adult education programs improved their passing rates on state tests by removing those students from the pool; however, the district data will indicate a decrease in completion and graduation rates.



Government

Central Office

Regional Office

School


Four Component Areas

- Mental Models
- Personal Mastery
- Shared Vision
- Team Learning





Mental Models

- Deeply ingrained assumptions, generalizations, or even pictures or images that influence how we understand the world and how we take action, even if we are not consciously aware of them
 - Can prevent new and powerful insights and organizational practices from becoming implemented
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Personal Mastery

- Discipline of continually clarifying and deepening our personal vision, focusing our energies, developing patience, and seeing reality objectively.
- Be more realistic, focusing on becoming the best person possible, and to strive for a sense of commitment and excitement in our careers to facilitate realization of potential (Senge 1990,11).

Shared Vision

- Capacity to hold a shared picture of the future we seek to create.
- Something for everyone to be passionate about
- Shared vision elicits commitment in good times and bad, with the power to bind an organization together, fostering a commitment to the long term.

Team Learning

- Suspension of assumption in order to enter into a dialogue and think together to create desired results together
- Purpose of building a team with more, not less, intelligence than its members.

Leverage

- Sometimes small changes exert major leverage in the system
- Our success is dependent on the success of the whole system.

Foundations for Success Research

- What was the historical, administrative, and programmatic context within which student achievement improved in these districts?
- What district-level strategies were used to improve student achievement and reduce racial disparities?
- What was the connection between policies, practices, and strategies at the district level and actual changes in teaching and learning in the classroom?

Political Preconditions

- Political preconditions, including:
 - Board focus on student achievement
 - Shared vision and clear goals
 - Capacity to diagnose problems
 - Matching resources to vision
 - Accountability system

Foundations of Success, continued

- Focus on student achievement and specific achievement goals, on a set schedule with defined consequences
- Aligned curricula with state standards and assessments
- Standards translated into instructional practice
- Concrete accountability systems with responsibility for results

More Foundations for Success

- Districtwide curricula and instructional strategies
- Aligned professional development
- Method to drive instructional reforms down to the classroom level
- Commitment to data-driven decisions
- Systematic reforms
- Intensive focus on reading and mathematics
- Special attention to low-performing schools

Discussion

- You have created policies and practices in your districts that have led to demonstrated and sustained academic progress for English Language Learners.
- As you talk about your implementation of these policies and programs, please address the *Foundations for Success* areas we have just reviewed.
- In light of systems thinking and *Foundations for Success*, are you considering any possible refinements to policies, processes, or programs?

	Political Precondi- tions; Goals, Accounta- bility	Curriculum; aligned professional development	Use of Data and Evalua- tions	Getting reforms into classroom practice	Interven- tions for lowest performing students and schools
Mental Models					
Leverage					
Inter- relationships					
What we might do differently					