



O K L A H O M A
COMPREHENSIVE
SCHOOL
COUNSELING

State Department of Education



From Guesswork to Grounded: Building Counseling Programs Based on Real Student Need

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Defining Comprehensive School Counseling

Comprehensive school counseling is a proactive, data-driven program that supports every student's academic, career, and personal development through a planned service model.

It is aligned with state standards and delivered in collaboration with educators, families, and the community to ensure student success and well-being.

Defining Comprehensive School Counseling

- **Focused on All Students and Data-Driven**
 - ❑ Uses student data to identify needs, close achievement gaps, and promote access for all learners.
- **Student-Centered and Developmental:**
 - ❑ Supports every student's academic, career, and life skills/wellness development from early learning through high school.
- **Systemic and Aligned:**
 - ❑ Integrated into the school's overall mission and aligned with state standards and best practices.
- **Proactive and Preventative:**
 - ❑ Delivered through intentional, planned services like classroom lessons, small groups, and college/career readiness activities. It is more than crisis response.
- **Accountable and Collaborative:**
 - ❑ Evaluated regularly for effectiveness, with input from stakeholders, and implemented in partnership with educators, families, and the community.



How Do You Decide Your Focus?

**Whatever
admin
requests...**

**What we've
always
done...**

**Something that
happened
somewhere else
that everyone is
now worried
about...**

**Whatever is
on fire
right now...**

**Whatever our
current
curriculum/
resources are...**

**Well, it
seems like a
good idea....**

**Whatever is
loudest...**

**Whatever
teachers are
frustrated
about...**



**Leaves us directionless in
the middle of nowhere...**

If we don't intentionally design our program around student need, it will be designed for us... by urgency, by crisis, or by tradition!

Busy vs Effective

❖ Full calendars



- *Lessons
- *Meetings
- *Crisis
- *Parent Calls
- *Student Walk-ins
- *Scheduling

A full calendar doesn't necessarily mean we are addressing the *highest student needs*.

Busy vs Effective

❖ Constant Student Walk-Ins



Students show up throughout the day with immediate needs. Those conversations are important, but if most of our day is spent **responding** to whoever shows up first, our program becomes driven by **urgency** rather than design

Could there be a larger issue that requires Tier 1 or Tier 2 solutions systemwide?

Busy vs Effective

❖ Responding to Requests



Teachers asking for a lesson.



Administrators asking for an activity related to attendance.



Parents asking for a meeting.

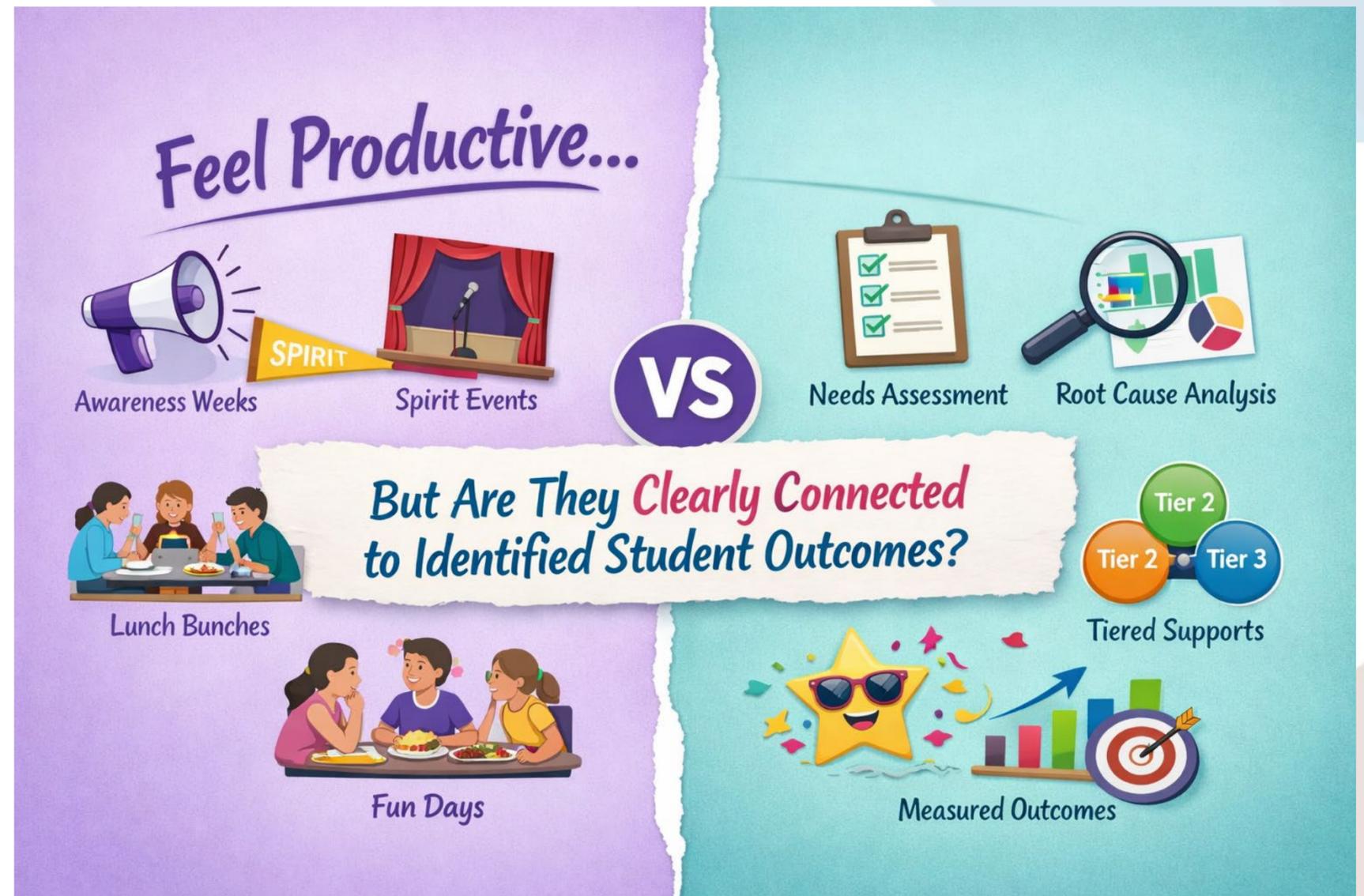
None of these activities are bad... they all support student growth and school culture and climate. However, are we aligning our work to match identified student needs so as to make the greatest difference in outcomes?

Busy vs Effective

❖ Lots of Activities

Counselors are amazing at creating activities:

- Awareness weeks
- Spirit events
- Character days
- Lunch bunches
- Assemblies



Counselors are some of the hardest working people in a school. The problem isn't that we aren't working hard. The problem is that sometimes the system pulls us into being **BUSY** instead of **STRATEGIC**.

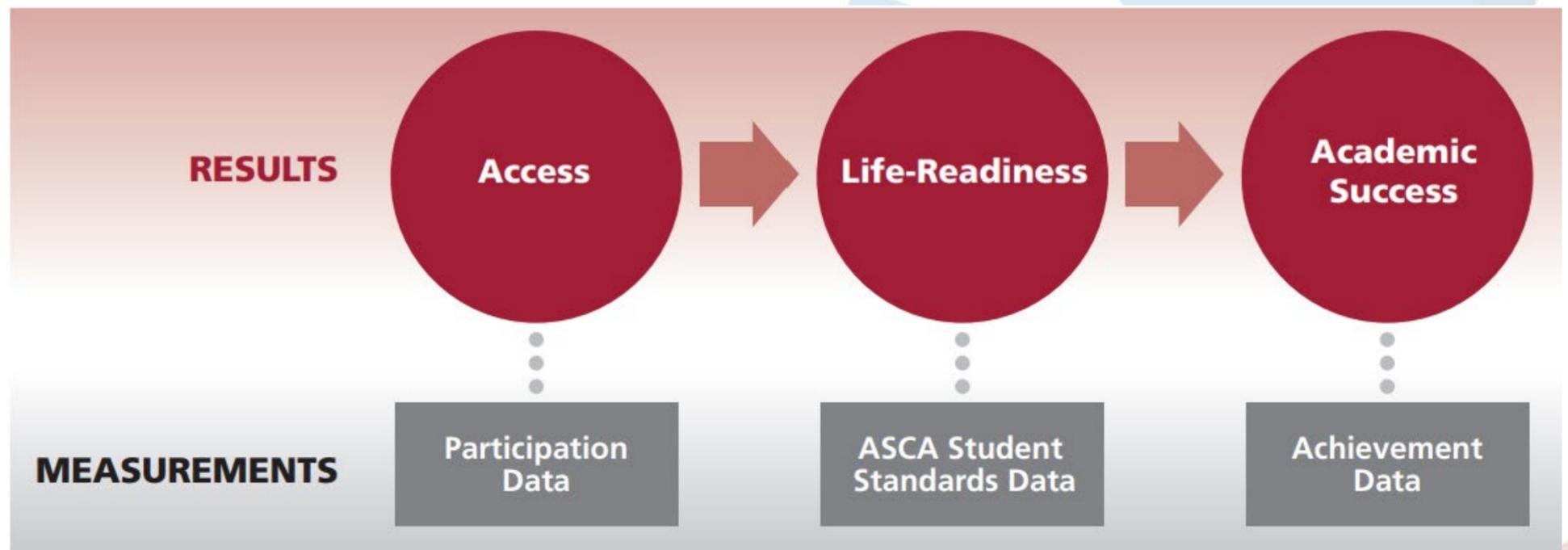


Key to Effective School Counseling Programs

Effective programs are:

- 1 Intentional**
- 2 Data-informed**
- 3 Prioritized**
- 4 Tiered**
- 5 Sustainable**

How Data is Used:



Academic Data

- Course failure rates
- Credit accumulation/recovery needs
- GPA trends
- Graduation/dropout data
- Retention and remediation rates
- Performance by subgroups

Behavior and Climate

- Discipline referrals
- Suspensions/expulsions
- Climate survey results

Attendance and Engagement

- Chronic Absenteeism
- Tardies
- Disengagement indicators:
 - Missing/incomplete work
 - Sudden drops in grades
 - Rigorous course enrollment
 - Credit accumulation gaps
 - Increased behavior referrals
 - Low participation in extracurriculars
 - Increased nurse visits
 - Avoidance of future planning conversations

CCR

- FAFSA completion
- Postsecondary enrollment rates
- ICAP completion
- Student career goals

Student Wellness

- Needs assessment results
- Referrals for support
- Crisis response data
- Counseling service participation data
- Family and community data
 - Employment data
 - Health data
 - Demographic trends

Taking a Deep Dive into Data

For each flagged data point, consider:

1 Is this influenced by student skills, behaviors, or decision-making?

2 Does counseling currently touch this area (or should it)?

3 Would increased access to counseling services reasonably impact this outcome?

! **Decision Rule:** If the answer to all three is no, it is not a counseling goal.

Next Step:

Identify 1-3 areas of focus to draft goals statements in SMART format. See Data-to-Goal Mapping Worksheet handout.

PROBLEM-SOLVING MODEL

Using
Data to
Answer
Critical
Questions



Data: Integral at Every Step

PROBLEM-SOLVING MODEL



- ❑ **Problem Identification:**
 - Screening/Early Indicator Data
- ❑ **Problem Analysis:**
 - Diagnostic Assessment/Multiple Sources of Data
- ❑ **Plan Development:**
 - Baseline Data
- ❑ **Plan Implementation:**
 - Fidelity Data
- ❑ **Plan Evaluation:**
 - Progress Monitoring Data

Scenario

9th grade failure rate increased 18%. Attendance is below 85% for 32% of the freshmen class. Teacher perception is: “Students lack organization and executive functioning skills.”

Discuss:

1. What is the real need?
2. Is this academic? Behavioral? Skill-based? Systemic?
3. What additional data would you need to make an informed decision about how to proceed?

Surface Problems vs. Root Causes

- **Surface**: What is readily apparent, what you can see.
 - Failing Grades
- **Root Cause** Possibilities:
 - Attendance
 - Organization skills
 - Lack of belonging
 - Course mismatch
 - Mental health stressors

Simple Root Cause Protocol

1. Clearly define the problem.
2. Disaggregate the data.
3. Use tool such as a fishbone diagram to identify categories of possible causes.
4. Brainstorm causes under each category.
5. Ask “Why?” (The 5 Whys Protocol).
6. Confirm with additional data or student voice.

Step One: Clearly Define the Problem

The problem must be:

- Specific
- Measurable
- Focused on students



"Students are unmotivated."



"32% of 9th graders failed at least once core course in the first semester."

“
*If you can't
measure it,
you can't
manage it.*
-Peter Drucker
”

Step Two: Disaggregate the Data

Ask:

- Which students?
- Which courses?
- Which teachers?
- Which subgroups?
- What patterns over time?

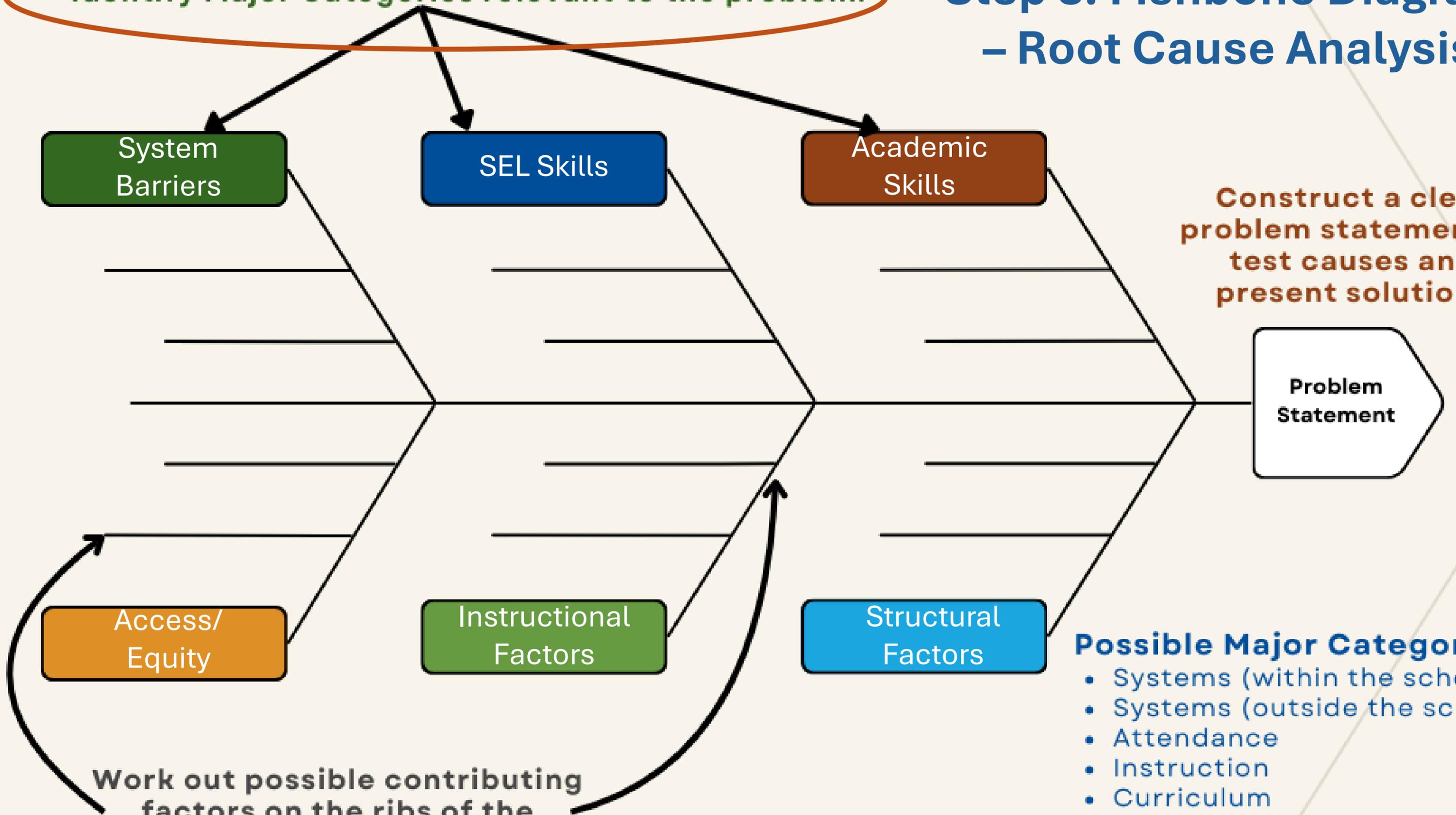
Often the “problem” shrinks once you start disaggregating!

Example:

- ✓ 32% failing overall.
- ✓ 60% of failures concentrated in Algebra 1.
- ✓ 70% of those students have attendance below 90%.

Step 3: Fishbone Diagram – Root Cause Analysis

Identify Major Categories relevant to the problem.



Construct a clear problem statement to test causes and present solutions

Problem Statement

Possible Major Categories:

- Systems (within the school)
- Systems (outside the school)
- Attendance
- Instruction
- Curriculum
- Assessment
- Climate/Culture

Work out possible contributing factors on the ribs of the fishbone. Keep asking, "what is

Step 5: Ask “Why” (The 5 Whys Protocol)

Choose one high-probability cause and go deeper.

Example:
Students aren't turning in assignments.

Why? →

They don't track assignments.

Why? →

No structured planner use.

Why? →

No system-wide organizational expectation.

Why? →

Teachers use different platforms to track assignments/homework.

Why? →

No alignment on policy or procedure across grade level.



Now we see this may not be about motivation.



This may be a systems issue.



Step 6: Confirm with Additional Data/Student Voice



Before launching an intervention or solution, pause and confirm!

- Do we have enough evidence this is the real cause?
- Are we hearing directly from students?
- Do multiple data sources support this conclusion?

Student Voice:

- Quick student surveys
- Focus groups
- Exit tickets after lessons
- Informal conversations

Adult Insight:

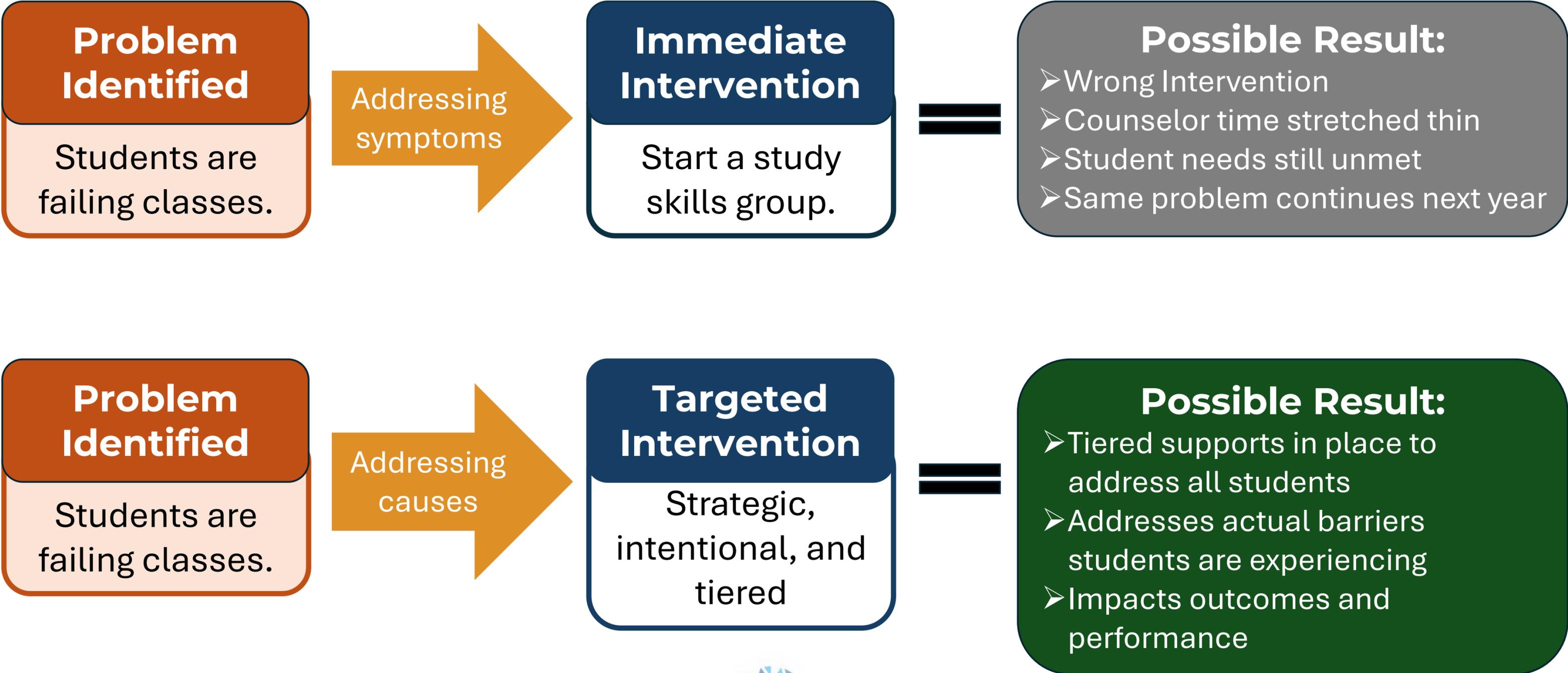
- Teacher/staff feedback
- Team discussions
- Advisory council input
- Administrator feedback

Additional Data:

- Attendance patterns
- Assignment completion
- Behavior trends
- Course performance



Danger of Skipping Problem/Cause Analysis



Time to Practice Analyzing!



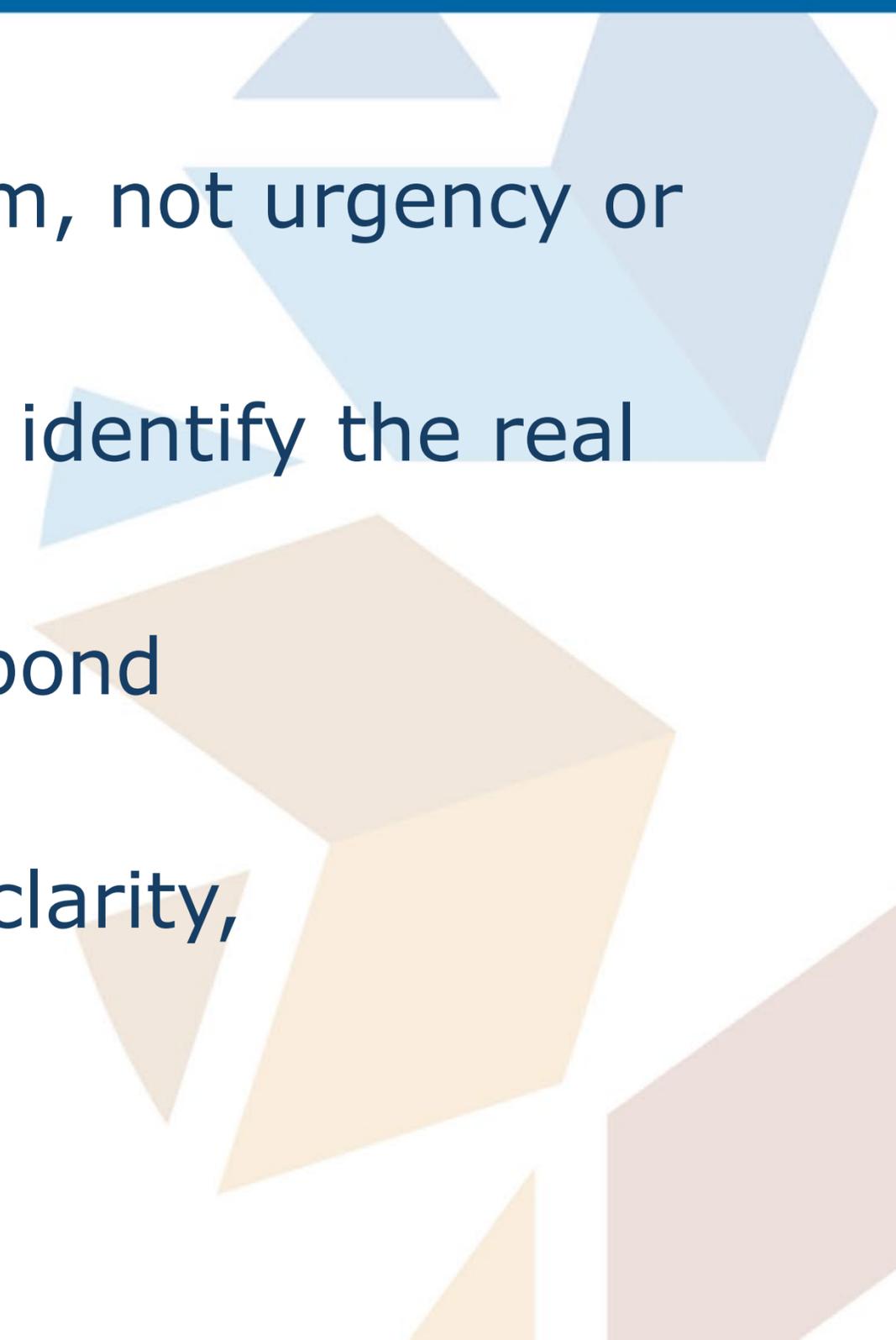
Find your group:

Jan-Mar:	Scenario 1
Apr-May:	Scenario 2
Jun-Jul:	Scenario 3
Aug-Sept:	Scenario 4
Oct-Dec:	Scenario 5



From Guesswork to Grounded

Key Takeaways:

1. Student **needs** should drive the program, not urgency or tradition.
 2. **Data** and **root cause analysis** help us identify the real barriers students face.
 3. Tiered supports allow counselors to respond **strategically** rather than reactively.
 4. **Intentional program design** creates clarity, sustainability, and impact.
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In school counseling, we look at a lot of numbers... attendance rates, discipline referrals, course failures, survey data. These numbers help us see patterns. But they also represent **REAL STUDENTS** sitting in our classrooms every day.

Our goal isn't just to collect data. Every piece of data is one piece of a bigger story. Our goal is to listen closely enough to the stories inside the data so we can design programs that meet real student needs!