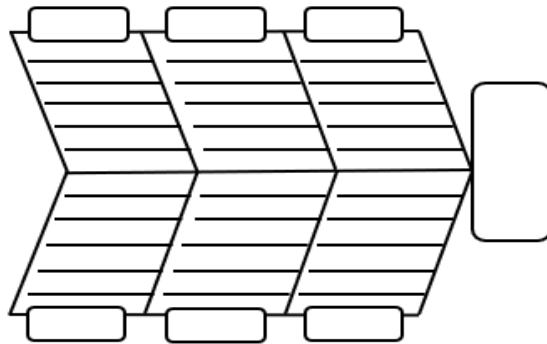# Root Cause Analysis: Fishbone Diagram

Purpose: The purpose of the Fishbone Diagram is to brainstorm potential causes of a problem identified in the Key Conclusions and organize them into relevant categories. Once categories are identified, the team drills down into each area through the inquiry process to identify potential underlying causes.

Materials: Teams may select their preferred mode for engaging in the Fishbone Diagram. Depending upon the choice, teams use a variety of materials, such as: Fishbone Template (fillable PDF provided), chart paper, markers, and technology.

Steps:
1. Write your Key Conclusion in the box provided.
2. Brainstorm potential categories relevant to the context of the problem and come to consensus. For example, categories may include: instruction, curriculum, organizational structure, organizational culture, student factors, external factors (James-Ward, Frey, Fisher, 2012).
3. Write the categories in each of the boxes. As teams drill down, they come to consensus as to the most likely underlying cause of the problem at each of the five levels. Remember to identify only those underlying causes for which you have control to change.
4. Select a category and ask "Why" this problem exists.
5. Come to consensus on the most likely underlying cause of the problem that is within your control and write the first identified "Cause" on the line below.
6. Ask "Why" again, in relation to the first identified "Cause" and write your team's response on the second line.
7. Repeat this process at least 3 more times until your team has identified the underlying cause within this category.
8. Repeat this process for each identified category.

9. Examine the team's responses and select the **highest leverage underlying cause** by coming to consensus. The identified underlying cause should yield the "biggest bang for your buck" and become the focus of your team's TAP-IT Action Plan.

10. Validate the identified underlying cause by asking the following questions:
    □ Is the cause within your team's control?
    □ Is the cause actionable?
    □ Does this cause make sense to someone else hearing it for the first time?

Root Cause Analysis: Fishbone Diagram

Key Conclusions