

Tools for Identifying Root Causes of Problems

There are a number of techniques that can be used to analyze a problem or issue in order to come to a deeper understanding of its “root causes”. Such techniques can help boards incorporate strategic and generate thinking into their governance process. Four techniques we can use are Force Field Analysis, “The Iceberg”, “Keep Asking Why” and “After Action Review”.

Instructions on Using the Force Field Analysis Worksheet:

1. Go to the Force Field Analysis Worksheet on Page 2. Write your selected issue on the blank line in the middle of the large arrow at the center of the worksheet. Look at the sample of a completed Force Field Analysis Worksheet on Page 3.
2. Discuss and list all the things -- all the positive forces -- that you know will help you resolve the issue. These are things that are now in the picture (in the field) that will be driving forces toward a solution. Please note: At this time, do not list actions that you intend to take in the future to solve the problem. We will get to this step later. Write the positive forces down in the small arrows on top of the worksheet.
3. Then do the same for barriers or restraining forces -- all the negative forces that are in the picture (in the field) that get in the way of solving the problem/issue. Write the negative forces down in the small arrows on the bottom of the worksheet.
4. After completing the Force Field Analysis Worksheet, briefly discuss your results.

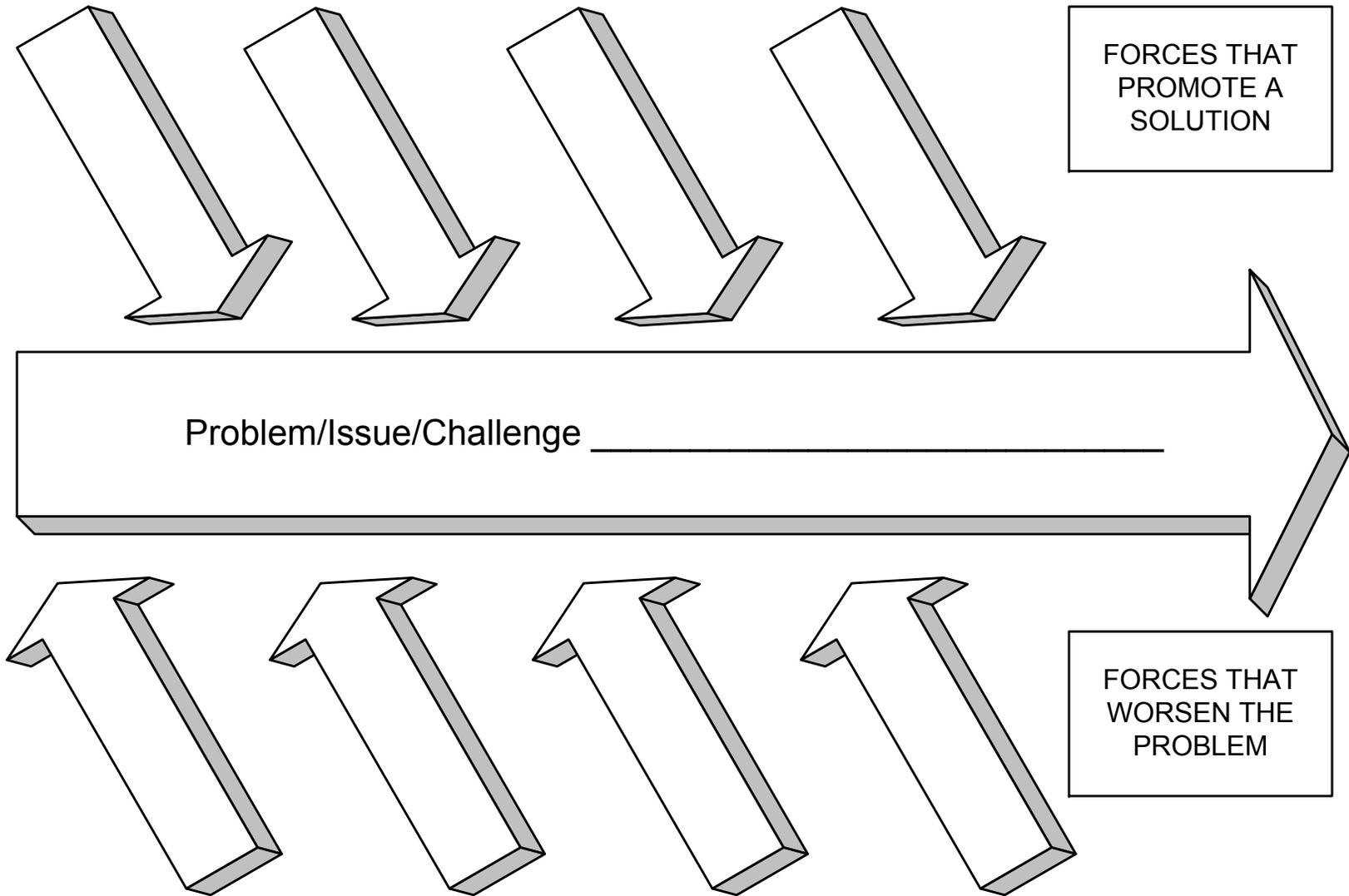
Instructions on Using the Iceberg Worksheet:

1. Go to the Iceberg Worksheet on Page 4 of the print packet. Write your selected issue on the blank line at the top of the worksheet. View a sample on Page 5.
2. Follow the worksheet directions to complete your task.
3. After completing the Iceberg Worksheet, briefly discuss your results.

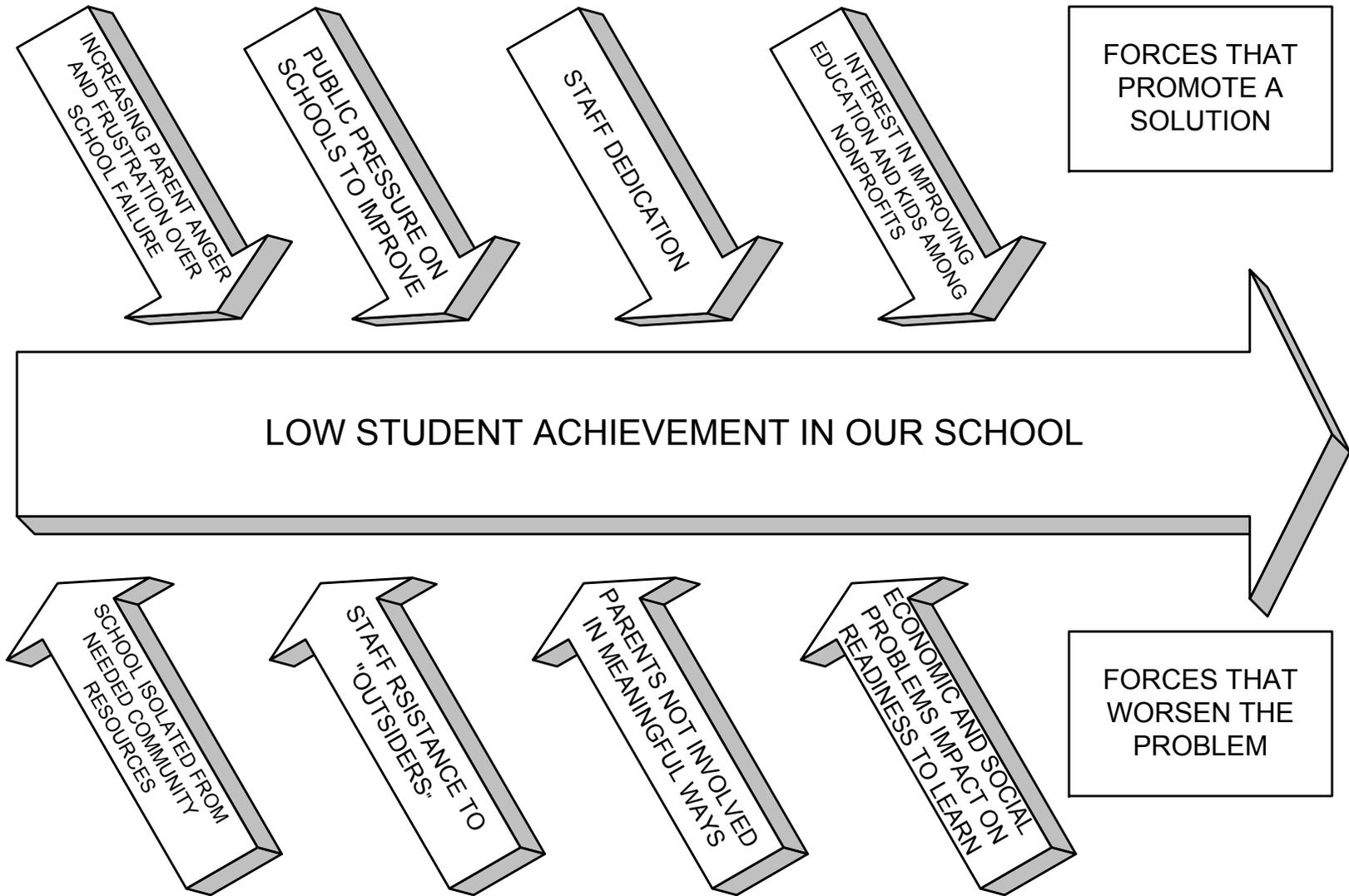
Instructions on Using the Keep Asking Why Worksheet:

1. Go to the Keep Asking Why Worksheet on Page 6 of the print packet. Write your selected issue in the box at the top of the worksheet. View a sample on Page 7.
2. Start by asking the question why with reference to your selected issue. Write your responses on the first level below the dotted line. Next ask “why” a second time for each of the first level responses. Write those responses on the second level.
3. After completing the Keep Asking Why Worksheet, briefly discuss your results.

Force Field Analysis Worksheet



Force Field Analysis Worksheet Example

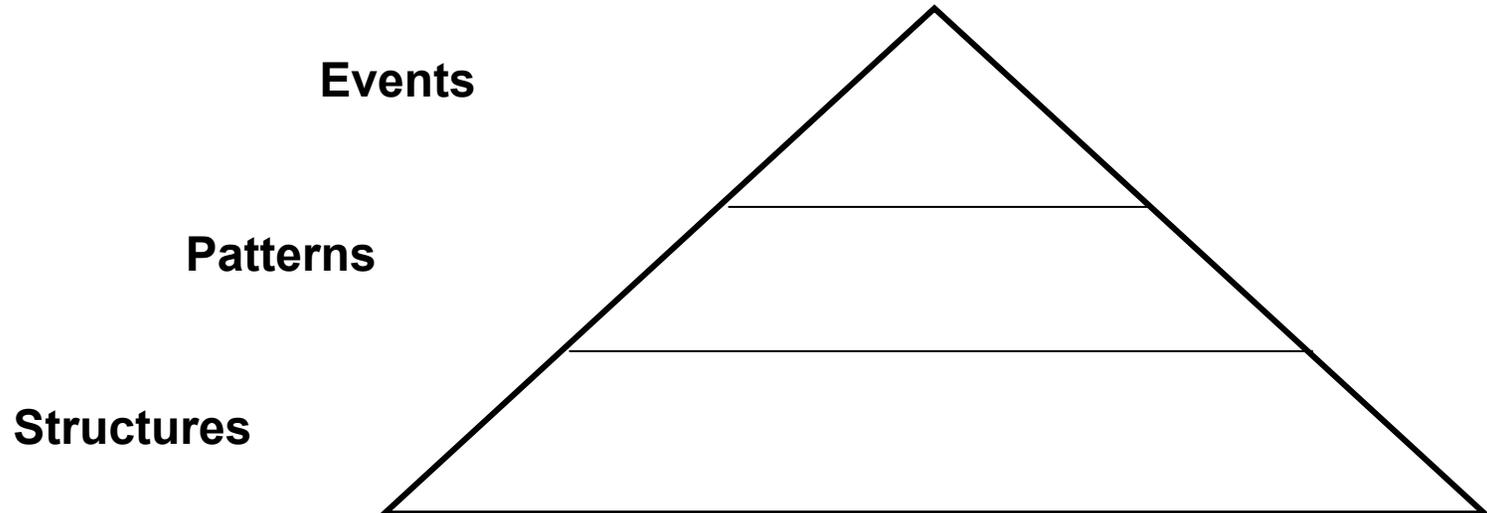


The Iceberg Worksheet

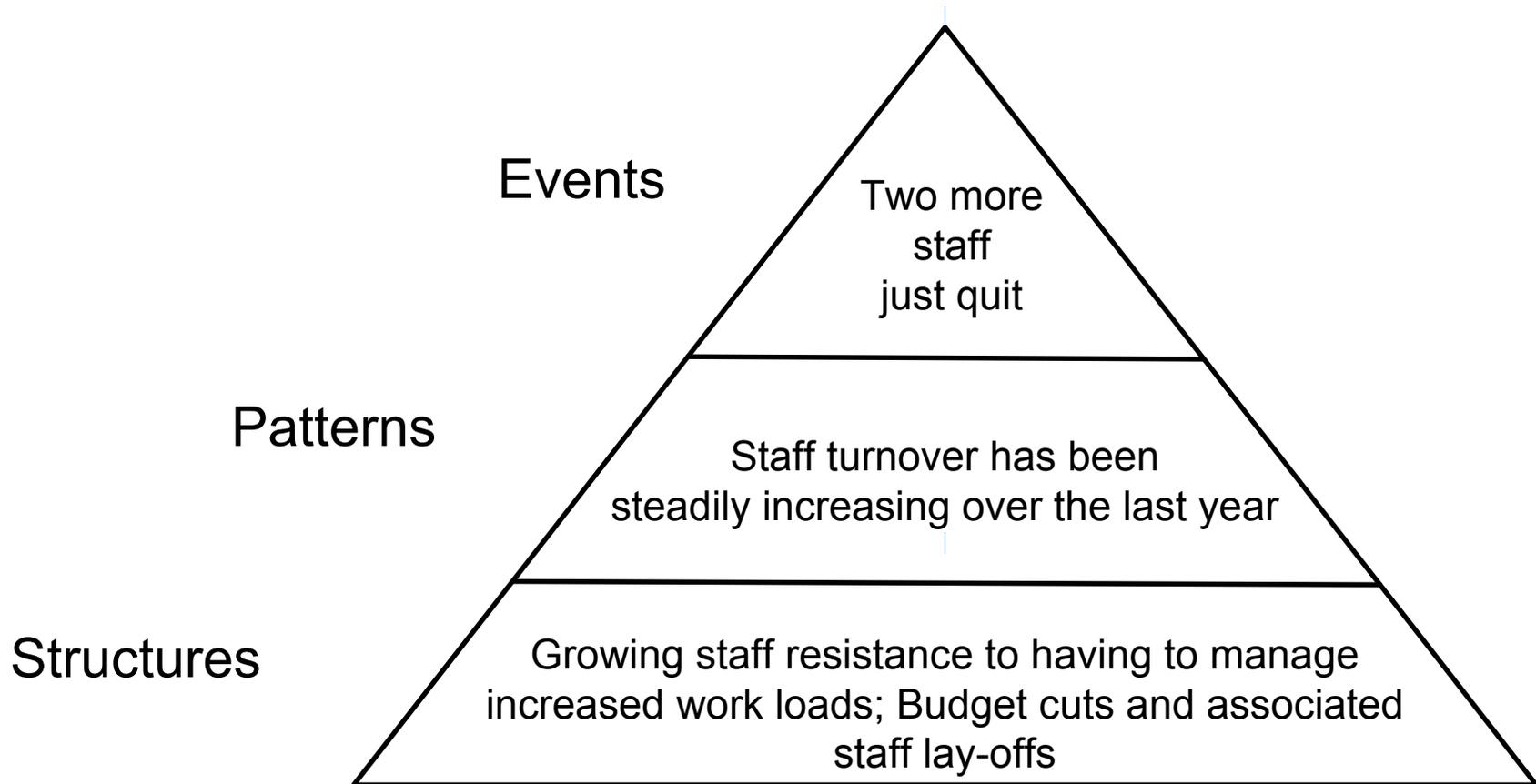
Problem/Issue: _____

Use the iceberg worksheet to discuss patterns relate to your selected problem/issue. With reference to your issue, respond to the following questions:

1. **Events:** What is happening? What's observable? After you determine this, go on to "Patterns".
2. **Patterns:** Have the same or similar things been happening over time? What are the trends we have seen? After you determine this, go on to "Structures".
3. **Structure:** Why is this happening? What forces (including underlying mental models) have created this behavior? List all of the forces you identify. If needed, prioritize the list.



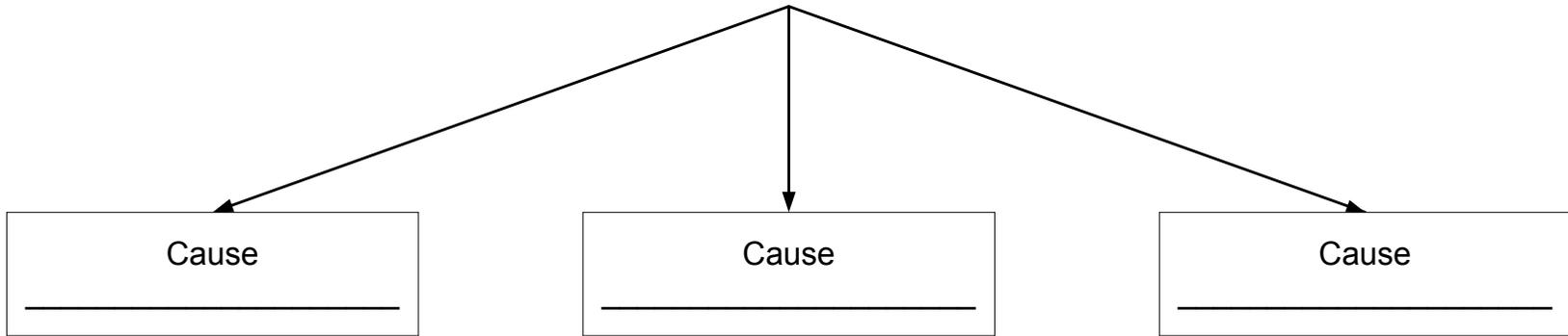
The Iceberg Worksheet: An Example



"Keeping Asking Why" Worksheet

Issue/Problem/Issue We Wish to Address

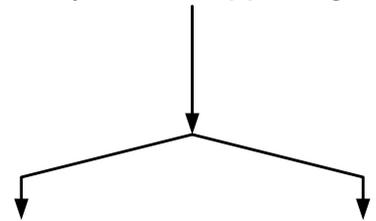
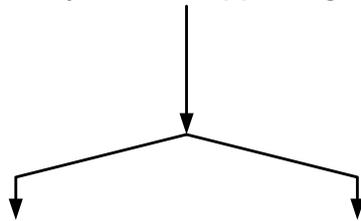
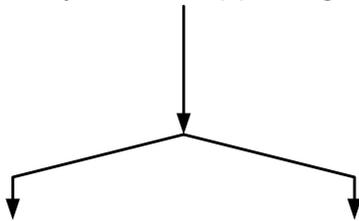
Why is this happening?



Why is this happening?

Why is this happening?

Why is this happening?



Cause

Cause

Cause

Cause

Cause

Cause

"Keeping Asking Why" Worksheet

Issue/Problem/Issue We Wish to Address:
Lack of younger leaders on our board

Why is this happening?

Cause
No plan to recruit them

Cause
Don't know where to look

Cause
They aren't ready yet

Why is this happening?

Why is this happening?

Why is this happening?

Cause
No leadership commitment

Cause
Have good leaders now

Cause
Lack of knowledge

Cause
No contacts

Cause
They need to pay their dues first

Cause
Too young

