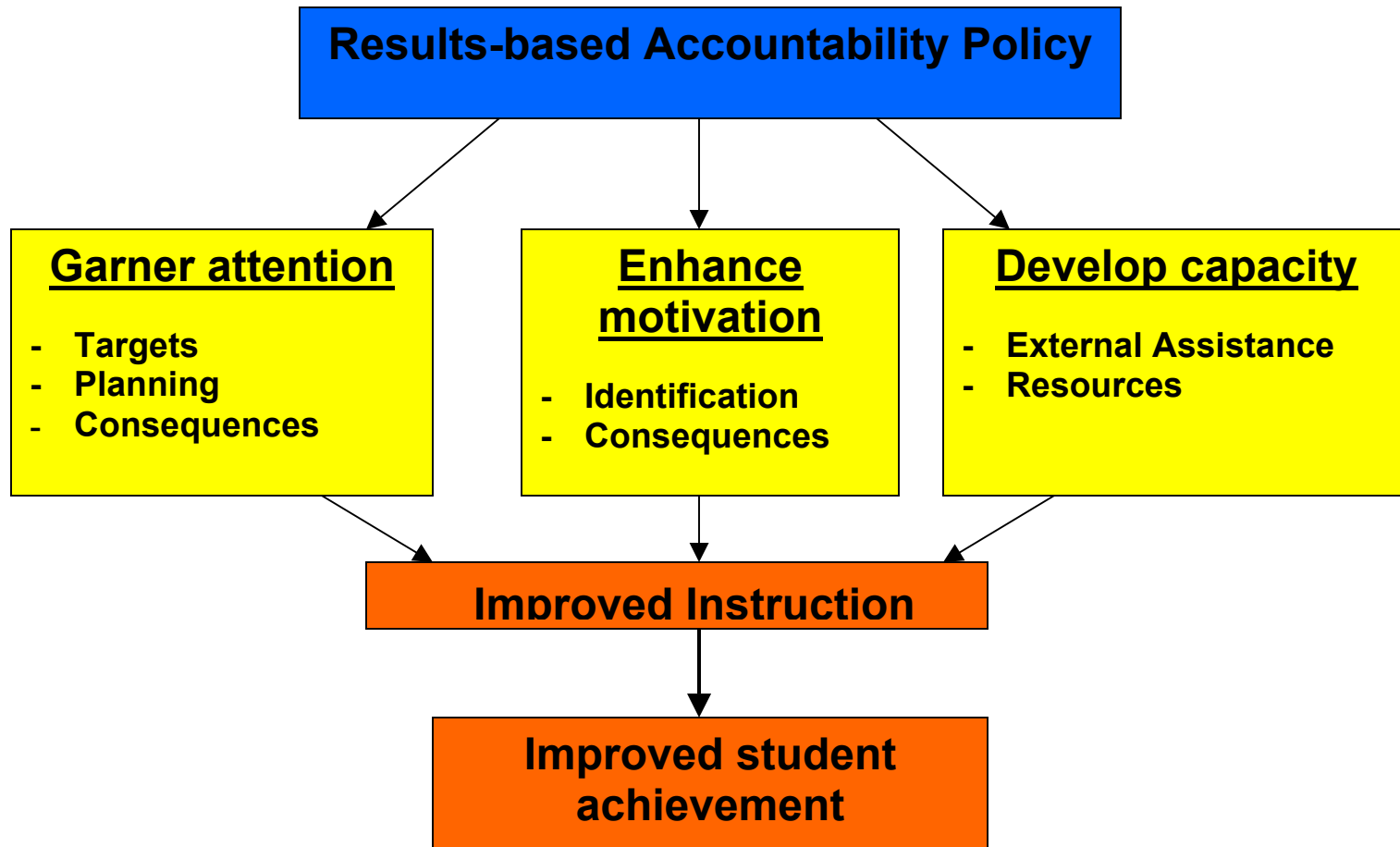


Generic “Theory of Action” of Results-based School Accountability



Theory of Action: CA Public Schools Accountability Act (Underlying assumptions of the policy)

General Policy Model: Rational, Linear model of decision making and school change; motivation through extrinsic incentives

Policy Component: Accountability for Student Outcomes

- If educators are held accountable for student performance, they will attend to improving performance as the main goal.
- Data derived from state assessments are valid and reliable; the API is an accurate reflection of school outcomes and productivity
- Growth targets are reasonable (achievable yet challenging)
- Educators and the public will accept and support the system as legitimate
- Actors at the school level will be able to make sense of the assessment data and use it to improve instruction.

Policy component: School as Unit of Accountability

- Because schools have a cumulative effect on student performance, coordinated schoolwide action will lead to greater improvement in student learning.
- Collective (school-level) accountability and incentives will generate collective (school-wide) strategies and coordination.

Policy Component: Rewards and Sanctions

- Perceived problem: schools lack the will to effect change and improve student learning.
- Threats (sanctions) and promises (rewards) will increase educator motivation and effort.
- Extrinsic incentives in PSAA are effective and salient
- Voluntary participation in II/USP will lead to increased buy-in and motivation and efforts to improve.

Policy Component: Action Planning

- Organizational needs can be identified and anticipated
- The external environment and internal change processes can be managed and controlled
- Necessary resources can be procured or reallocated

Policy component: Stakeholder participation

- Community, parent, and educator stakeholders will participate in improvement efforts.
- Stakeholder participation will lead to greater stakeholder support for school improvement.
- Stakeholder support will improve the capacity of the school to promote student learning.

Policy component: External assistance through EE and/or CSRD

- Low-performing schools lack the capacity to change on their own and need assistance.
- The external evaluator will have the expertise to help the school identify problems and strategies.
- Because capacity and conditions vary among low-performing schools, assistance and strategies should also vary. External providers can adapt strategies to local needs.
- With appropriate interventions, schools can attain a level of capacity necessary to use money well and to effect change.

Issues to consider:

- Are the measures of outcomes perceived as legitimate and authoritative?
- Who leads the planning process, with what data and sources, how is data used, who interprets it?
- Who interprets the causes for failure? Internal or external?

Issues to consider:

- Motivation:
 - Direction (what are they motivated to do?),
 - Amplitude (how much effort?),
 - Duration (how long will they persist in effort?)
- Incentives:
 - Appropriate size,
 - perceived as forthcoming,
 - consistency/conflict with organization values

Issues to consider:

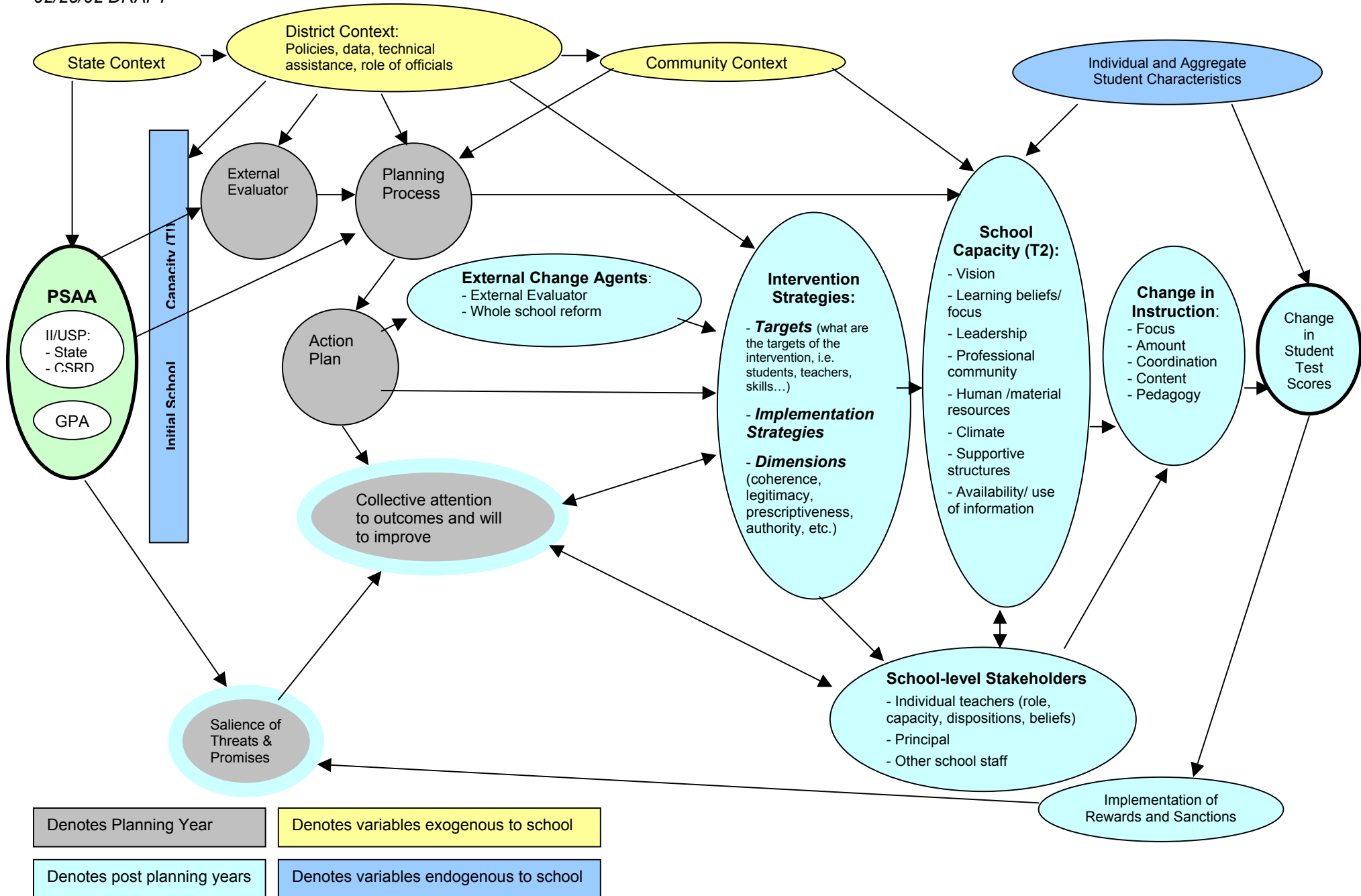
- What characterizes school improvement efforts: targets, strategies, and dimensions
- To what extent is the plan coherent, comprising a strategic vision with sufficient detail to enact
- To what extent are people engaged in thinking about practice, as a professional community?
- Is participation symbolic or substantive?
- How voluntary is participation? External pressure?

Issues to consider:

- How much time does the external evaluator spend in the school, what is his/her level of expertise?
- Who selected the evaluator, what level of authority and legitimacy does s/he have within school?

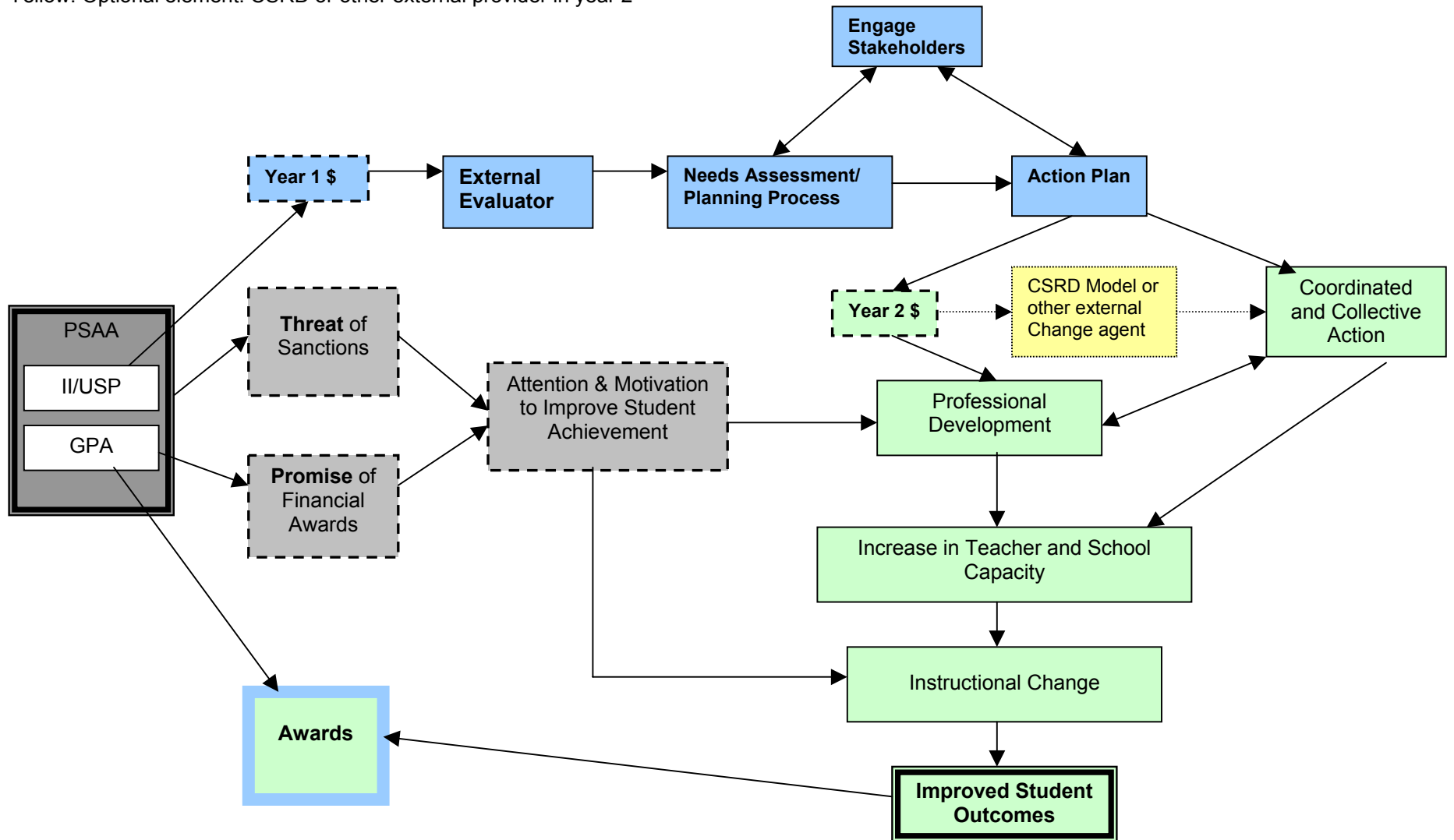
Cross-cutting dimensions: *Coherence, *Legitimacy
*Salience *Attention *Motivation

AMERICAN INSTITUTES FOR RESEARCH (AIR)
PSAA – II/USP – GPA Evaluation: Abbreviated Conceptual Framework
 02/28/02 DRAFT

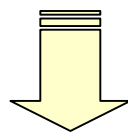
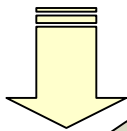
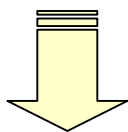


AMERICAN INSTITUTES FOR RESEARCH Theory of Action: CA Public Schools Accountability Act

Blue: Year 1
Green: Year 2
Yellow: Optional element: CSRD or other external provider in year 2



District, community and School Context



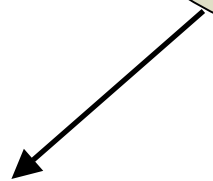
External Evaluator

- Selection Process
- Relationship w/ stakeholders
- Expertise of individual EE
- Capacity of EE organization
- Role/Types of assistance
- Time spent in school
- Number of Schools EE working with



Planning Process

- Use of data for needs assessment
- Who involved/ inclusiveness
- Degree of conflict/ consensus
- Duration and intensity of process



Action Plan

(focus, coherence, alignment w/ needs)