

Figure 3.1: Fishbone Diagram Example

Instructions: Follow these steps to complete the fishbone diagram.

1. **State the problem:** Write the problem or issue you want to analyze at the head of the fishbone diagram.
2. **Draw the backbone:** Draw a horizontal line extending from the head to the right. This is the backbone of the fish.
3. **Identify major categories:** Think about the big areas that contribute to the problem, and write them as branches coming off the backbone. Avoid blaming specific groups of people. For example, use categories like *school culture*, *instruction*, *social-emotional health*, and *family and community engagement* instead of just *family*.
4. **Brainstorm causes:** For each major category, list the causes that affect that category. Add these as smaller branches or bones coming off each major category. Some causes might fit into more than one category. These smaller causes can help you find important solutions.
5. **Organize the causes:** Once your fishbone diagram is complete, sort the branches into three groups: (1) symptoms (what you see happening), (2) causal factors (things that influence the problem), and (3) root causes (the main reasons behind the problem). Set aside the symptoms and focus on the causes. For example, under *instruction*, if you see "instruction lacking real-world applications of learning," analyze it further to find the real root causes or causal factors to improve student engagement. Most of the branches will be contributing factors, not root causes.

