



Introduction	
Overview	This presentation will guide you through the process of developing instructional priorities. It will lay out the steps to effectively set priorities, alert you to common pitfalls faced by districts, and provide templates to fill in as you go. While the first half of the guide will help in developing the priorities (Step 2: Set Instructional Priorities), the second half will include extra information on how to make a plan for implementing each priority (Step 3 : Pay for Priorities and Step 4: Implement Plan).
What will you get out of this activity?	1. An assessment of where your district is in developing actionable priorities 2. Support for bringing your leadership through a process of developing priorities 3. Next steps for how to invest in and implement the top priorities
When should you do this activity?	Step 2: Set Instructional Priorities Use this guide to initiate the developing priorities process
Approximately how long may it take to complete?	~30 minutes for project champion to review materials and make assessment of district's status 1-2 weeks if the district needs to clarify its priorities 3-5 months if the district needs to undergo a whole strategic planning process
Who should be involved?	• project champion to make initial assessment of district's progress and facilitate additional actions • The district's senior leadership team to make decisions about which priorities your district should pursue • Additional district personnel including academic, financial, and school-based leaders to support the identification of key priorities
Is technical assistance support necessary?	No, but additional support would be helpful if the district undertakes a strategic planning process
Tips & Tricks	• The information in this guide can be used by district staff to learn about how to develop instructional priorities. The slides in this guide can also be used to make a presentation to lead the district's senior leadership team through the meeting to set instructional priorities

Smarter School Spending



Instructional Priorities Planner

Guide to the process of developing and implementing instructional priorities in a district. Includes materials to use with the district's senior leadership team to set priorities that address district success goals.

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Before You Begin

Assess District's Current Status

How far along is your district in creating instructional priorities?

Priorities Fully Developed

Development of Priorities Required

Our district has a strategic plan that has been translated into implementable instructional priorities

- ☐ Our district has recently conducted a comprehensive strategic planning process
- ☐ That plan has been translated into clear instructional priorities to implement
- ☐ The community knows about and supports these instructional priorities

We have a strategic plan but no clear priorities to implement

- ☐ If our district has done a strategic planning process, we have not translated that plan into discrete priorities
- ☐ We have not communicated our priorities to the community

We have not yet formally defined our priorities or conducted a strategic planning process

- ☐ Our district does not have a set of priorities or specific initiatives that it is driving towards

Before You Begin

Assess District's Current Status



Before You Begin

Assess District's Current Status



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What are Instructional Priorities?

Instructional Priority =

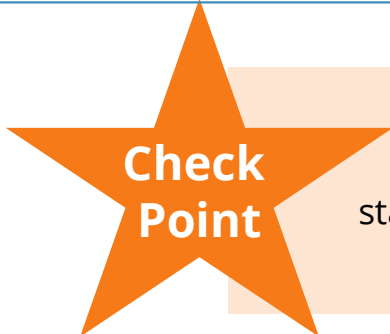
A program, school model, or other instructional initiative the district will commit to implementing in order to achieve student outcome goals

Why are instructional priorities important?

- Instructional priorities clearly identify the link between the actions to be taken and our desired student outcome goals.
- Estimate the costs of the investments needed for our instructional priorities so we can see how much we need in cost savings to pay for those priorities
- If the board and other stakeholders agree that our students will greatly benefit from instructional priorities, they will be more likely to agree with the cost savings to fund those priorities

What makes for effective instructional priorities?

1. **Limited:** We should select only a few priorities so that the district can focus time and energy towards implementing them effectively
2. **Specific:** The priorities should be specific and concrete enough to be actionable for the district
3. **Outcomes-Driven:** The priorities should be connected to the district's student outcome goals and should be efforts that will make major progress towards those goals



Check Point

Agreement from District Leaders & Stakeholders:
If we do not have specific instructional priorities that our stakeholders strongly believe are essential, it is not worth trying to find cost savings to pay for them

Introduction to Priorities

How are instructional priorities developed and implemented?

Instructional priorities are developed by identifying the **district's goals** for student achievement, determining which **levers for success** will impact progress towards those goals, selecting **instructional priorities** to invest in to move those levers, and creating a **plan to implement** those priorities.

Key Phases:

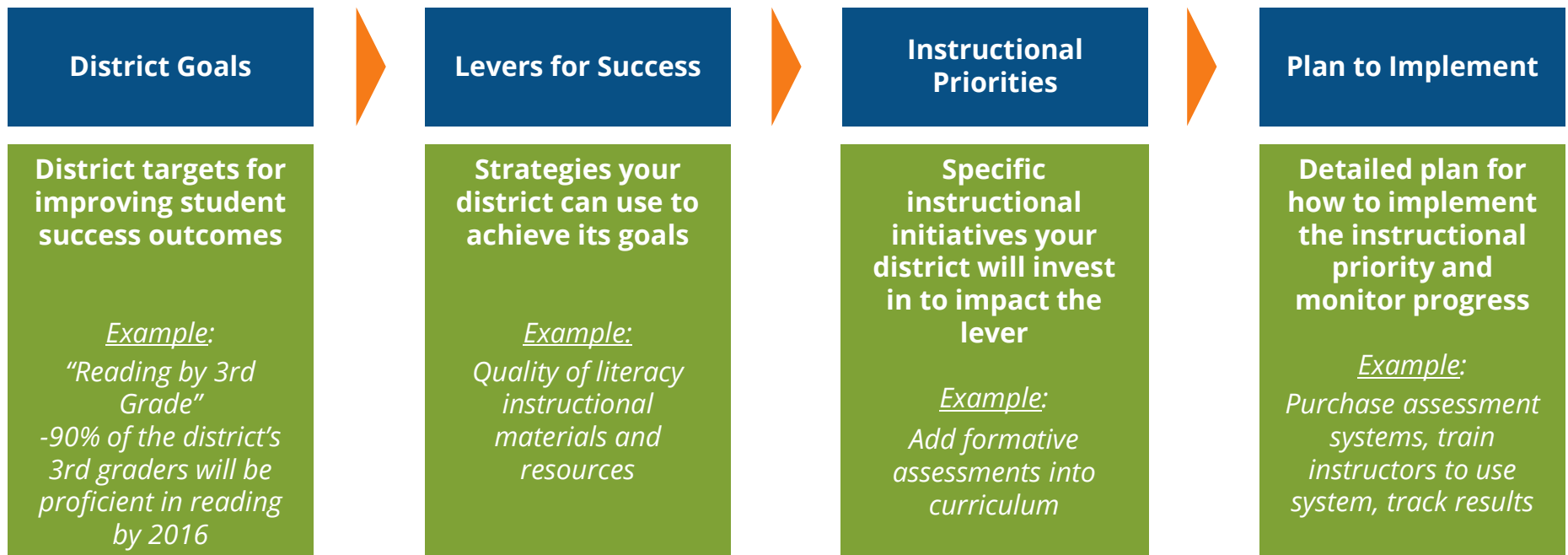
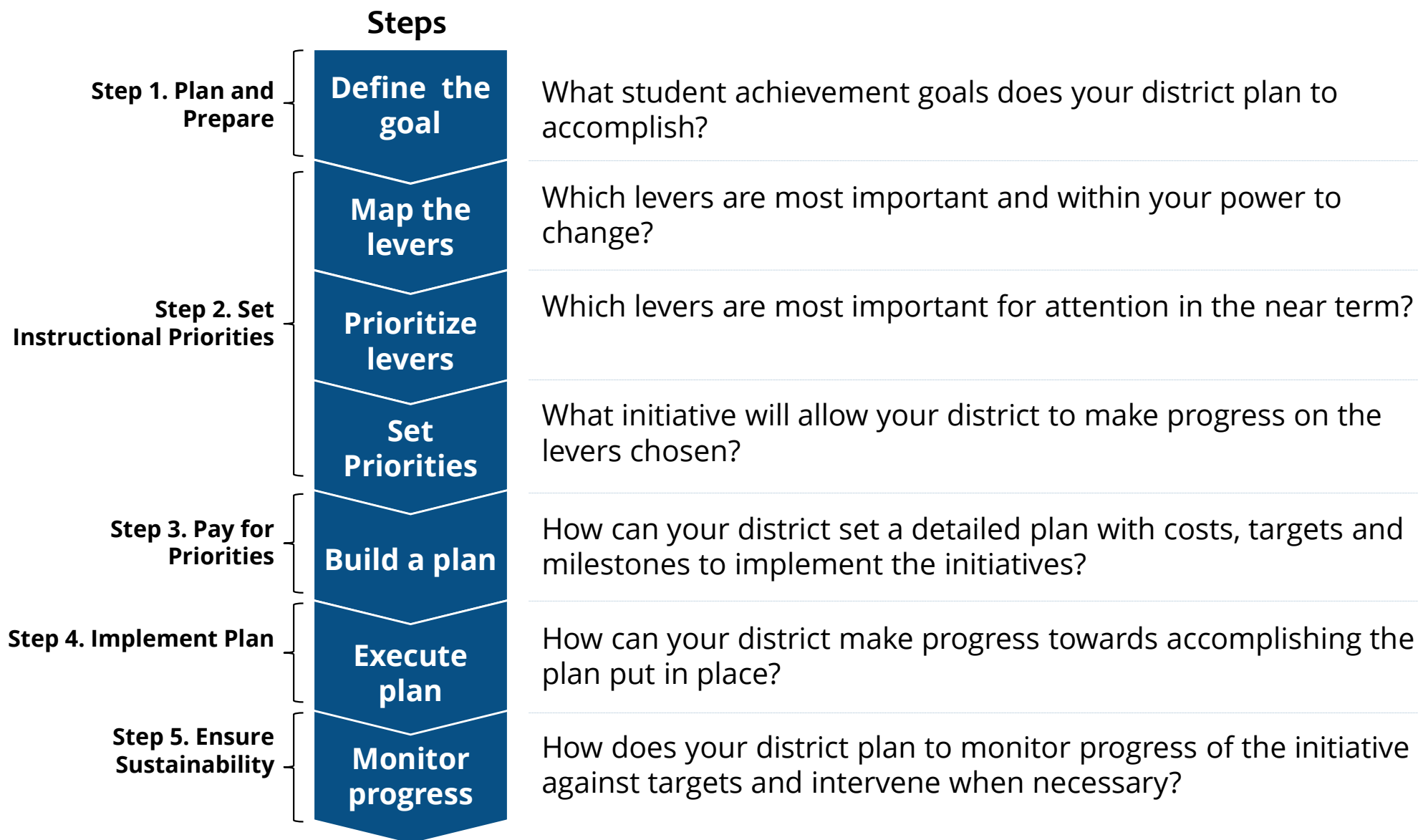


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7 Steps to Priorities

7 Steps to Implementing Instructional Priorities



7 Steps to Priorities

Define the Goal: Make goals that are SMARTER



As districts identify goals for student achievement, they should all meet the SMARTER criteria:

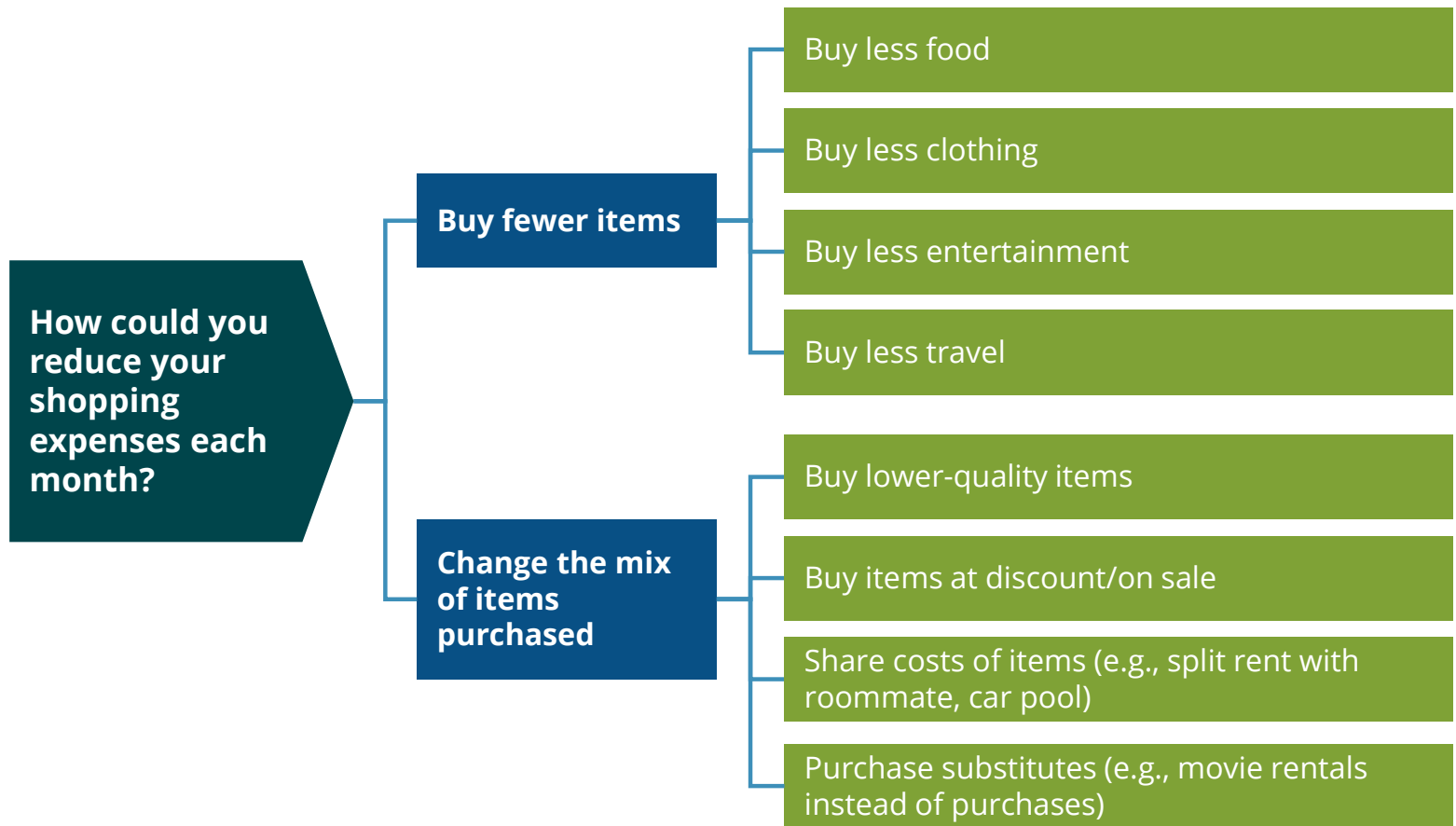
S	pecific	The goal is precise about the outcome or result that your district wishes to achieve
M	asurable	The goal can be measured and quantified
A	chievable	The goal is feasible given your district's current environment
R	elevant	The goal is focused on the results or outcomes that matter most to students
T	ime-bound	The goal should identify a time period within which the goal is to be achieved and specific milestones for incremental progress
E	ngaging	The goal reaches for ambitious, yet realistic, improvement in student achievement and organizational performance
R	esourced	Your district has the capacity to achieve its goals and will be able to align resources accordingly

7 Steps to Priorities

Map the Levers: How to map levers for a goal

In order to determine which instructional priorities can drive towards the goal, it is important to figure out what the district can do to impact that goal

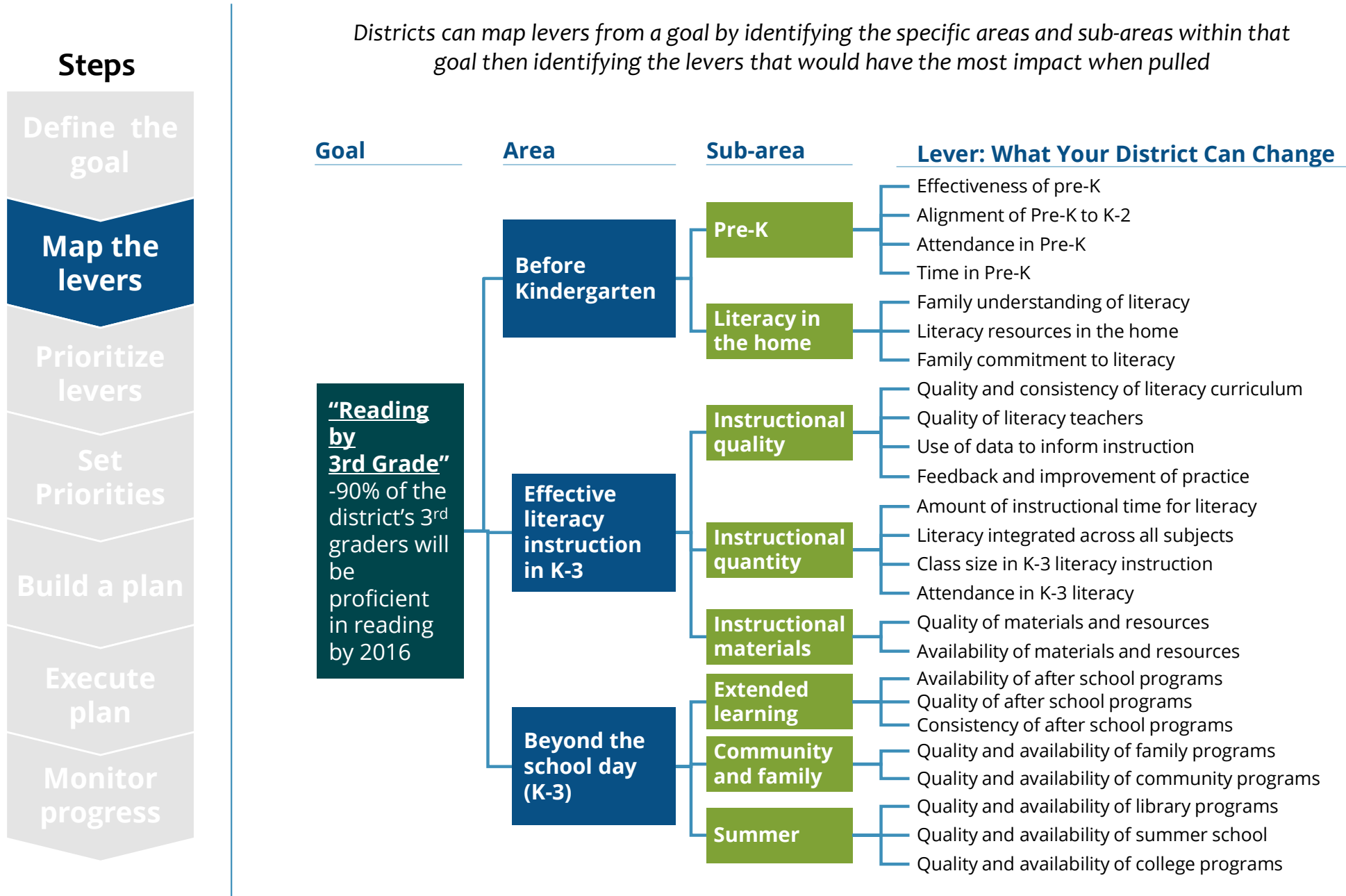
Sample “Every-Day” Mapping of Levers:



Which would you choose, and why?

7 Steps to Priorities

Map the Levers: Mapping levers for your district's goal



Prioritize Levers: Identify the levers with the most impact on the district's goal

Steps

Define the goal

Map the levers

Prioritize levers

Set Priorities

Build a plan

Execute plan

Monitor progress

How can a district determine which levers to focus on?

Research shows effectiveness

Feasibility of change

Specific and actionable

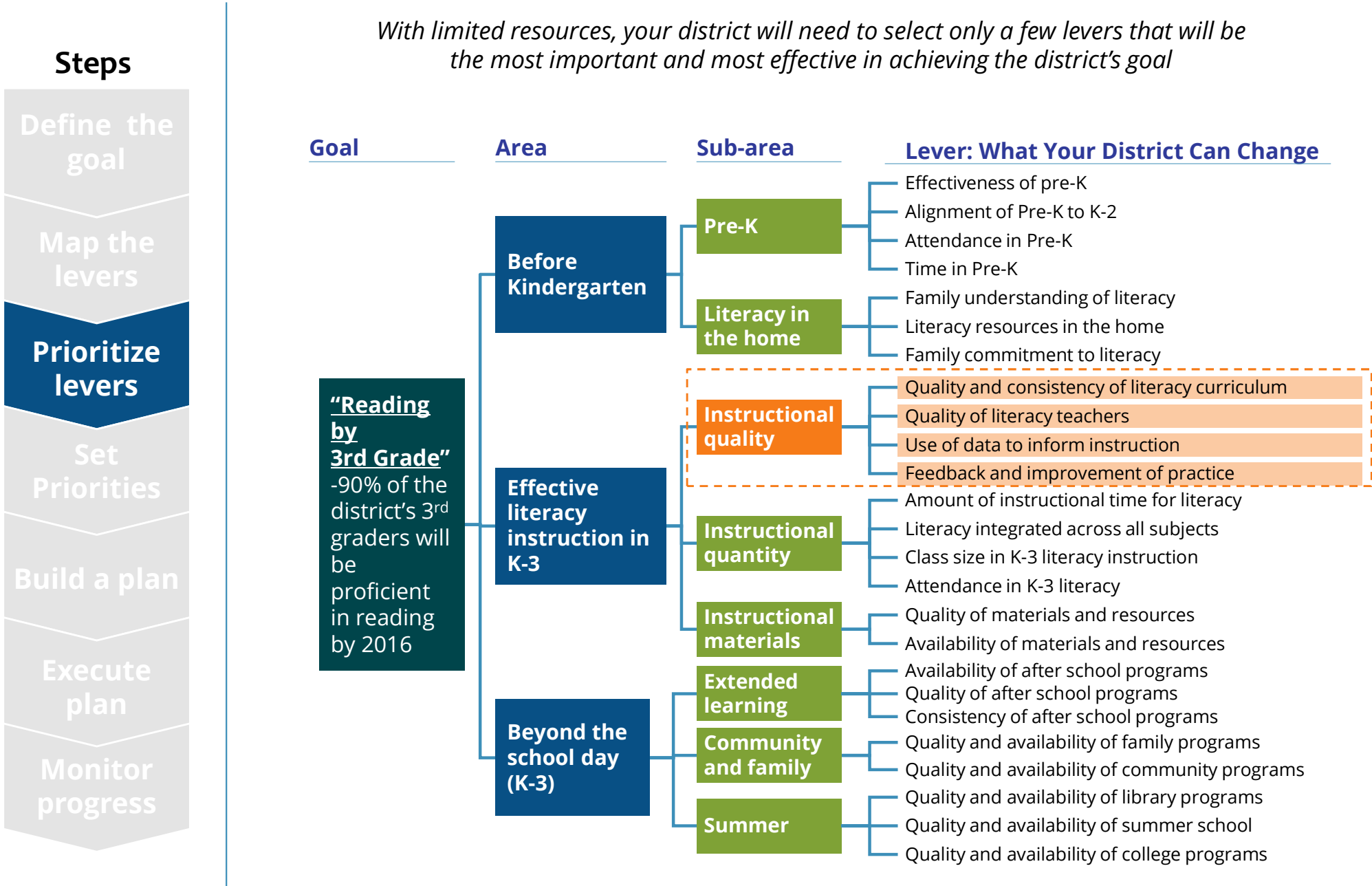
Good fit in existing context

Key Questions

- Do studies consistently show this lever has strong impact on students?
- Does your district have supports in place to ensure efforts succeed?
- Does your district have specific actions it can take (e.g., monitor number of IEP filings) for the lever, as opposed to general hopes (e.g., improve Special Ed)?
- Does the lever take advantage of your district's current strengths to minimize new investments?

7 Steps to Priorities

Prioritize Levers: Select the levers for focus

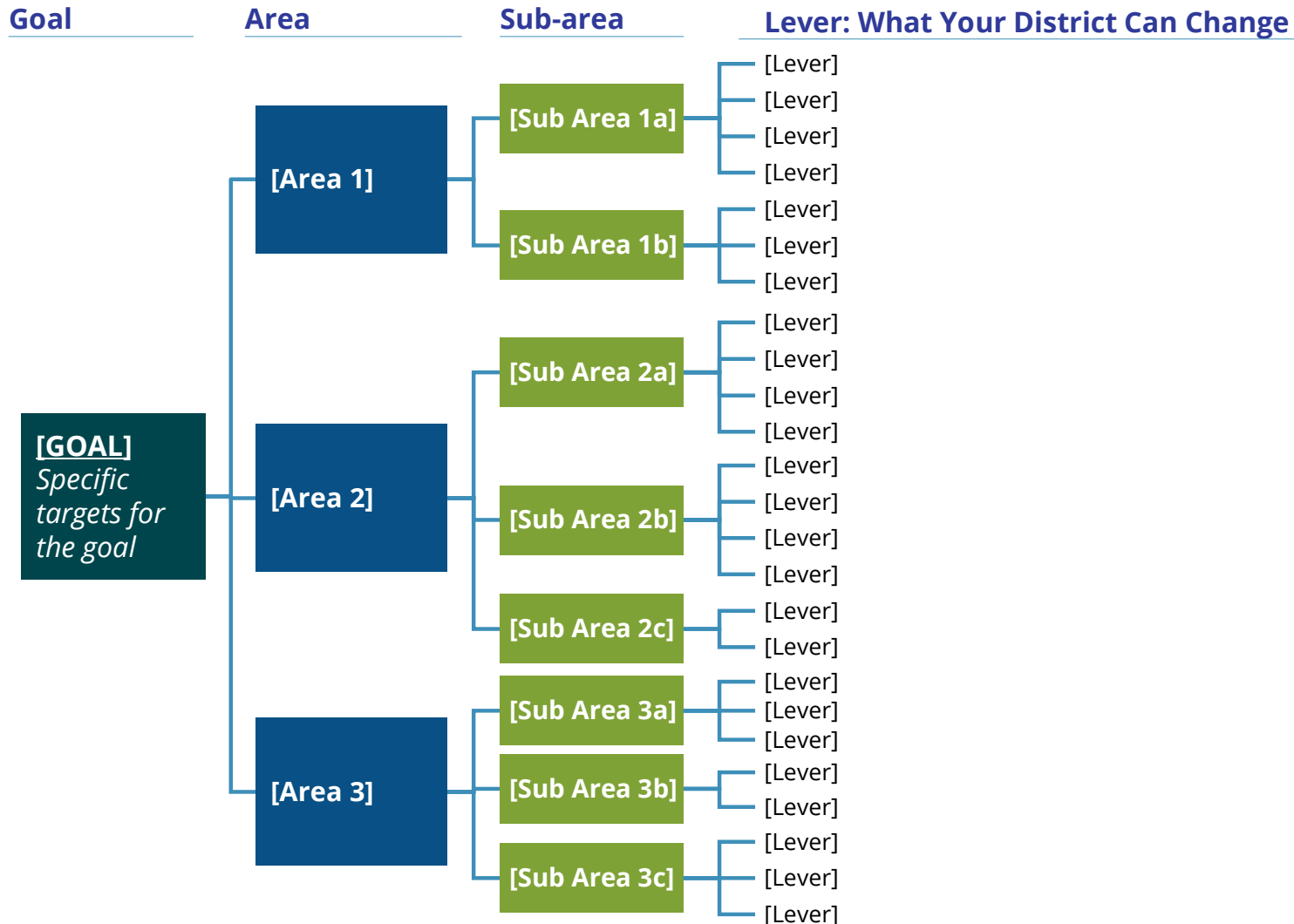


7 Steps to Priorities: Worksheet

Map and prioritize levers for your district

Tip: Use this worksheet as a format for brainstorming priorities in a senior leadership team meeting

With limited resources, your district will need to select only a few levers that will be the most important and most effective in achieving the district's goal



Key Questions for Selecting Levers to Prioritize

Research Shows Effectiveness

- ☐ Do studies consistently show this lever has strong impact on students?

Feasibility of Change

- ☐ Does your district have supports in place to ensure efforts succeed?

Specific and Actionable

- ☐ Does your district have specific actions it can take (e.g., monitor number of IEP filings) for the lever, as opposed to general hopes (e.g., improve Special Ed)?

Good Fit in Existing Context

- ☐ Does the lever take advantage of your district's current strengths to minimize new investments?

7 Steps to Priorities

Set Priorities: Determine where to invest to achieve the district's goals

Steps

Define the goal

Map the levers

Prioritize levers

Set Priorities

Build a plan

Execute plan

Monitor progress

Your district will set instructional priorities that you will support by investing in specific programs or efforts. This is a crucial step and it is important that districts identify clear and specific priorities



Effective Instructional Priorities are...

1. **Critical:** They address an important need within the school that stakeholders agree upon
2. **Compelling:** Your district can make a strong case for why the instructional priority is important and connected to the district's overall goal
3. **Crystal Clear:** The priorities and the implications of the investments should be easy to understand by the district and your district should be able to set targets to measure the impact of the priority



Common Pitfalls

1. **Too Many:** Districts often select too many priorities which inhibits the ability to focus on a few priorities and implement them well. Districts have found that ~3-4 priorities is the best amount
2. **Not Specific:** The priorities should be specific and concrete enough to be actionable for the district
3. **Not Enough Impact:** Connect priorities to the district's student outcome goals and ensure they will make major progress towards those goals. Initiatives in only one school for example would not make the necessary impact

7 Steps to Priorities: Worksheet

Fill in your district goals, levers, and instructional priorities

	Goal 1:	Goal 2:	Goal 3:
Levers for Success	• • •	• • •	• • •
1-2 Instructional Priorities	1. 2.	1. 2.	1. 2.
Checklist: Are your priorities...	☐ Critical? ☐ Compelling? ☐ Crystal Clear? ☐ Limited to 1-2? ☐ Specific? ☐ Linked to student achievement?	☐ Critical? ☐ Compelling? ☐ Crystal Clear? ☐ Limited to 1-2? ☐ Specific? ☐ Linked to student achievement?	☐ Critical? ☐ Compelling? ☐ Crystal Clear? ☐ Limited to 1-2? ☐ Specific? ☐ Linked to student achievement?

Check Point: Before You Continue



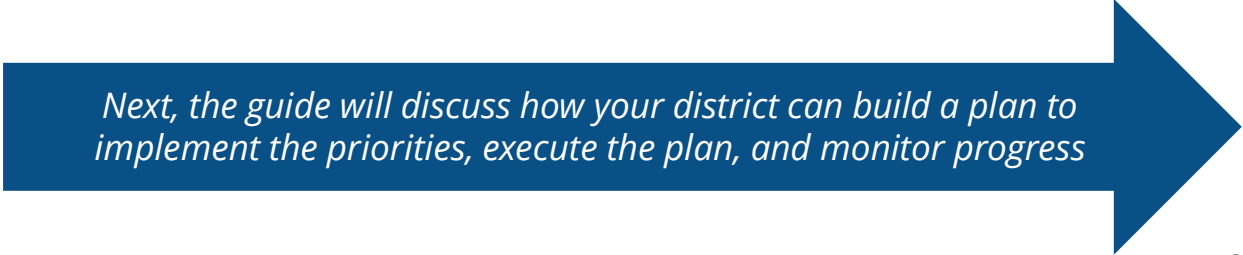
Check Point

Review and Finalize Instructional Priorities

At this point, your district should have determined a select number of instructional priorities that it will invest in to drive student achievement.

Before you continue, ensure that the instructional priorities...

- Meet all the criteria of effective priorities
- Have agreement and support from both internal and external stakeholders



Next, the guide will discuss how your district can build a plan to implement the priorities, execute the plan, and monitor progress

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Build a Plan, Execute Plan, and Monitor Progress



Activity	Sample answer
1 Define the priority at a high level (what you want to change and how you will change it, in a sentence)	Ensure student achievement data is shaping and improving instruction via use of formative assessments and the importing of formative assessment data into district's system
2 Set 3-5 outcomes that articulate what success looks like for this priority	By 1/1/2018,... 100% of K-3 ELA classes will administer 3 or more standards-aligned formative assessments per year to diagnose student progress - The results of these assessments will be available in the district's system no more than 20 days after testing 100% of the district's teachers will be logging into this system weekly to monitor progress
 <i>Check-Point: Does your district have a plan to measure these outcomes?</i>	
 Measuring Impact Guide	
 Program Success Tracker	
3 Using these goals, break the priority into 3-5 manageable components	To achieve success, the district must... - Choose/create, schedule, and administer the standards-aligned assessments - Ensure assessment data enters the district's system - Ensure teachers know how (and why) to use system - Ensure principals know how (and why) to use the system
4 Begin backwards planning (see next page)	
5 Step back and assess obstacles and next steps (see next page)	

7 Steps to Priorities

Build a Plan, Execute Plan, and Monitor Progress: Divide the plan into manageable sections with clear activities

Steps

Define the goal

Map the levers

Prioritize levers

Set Priorities

Build a plan

Execute plan

Monitor progress

For each component of an instructional priority....

Activity	
4. Backwards planning	4A Decide on a clear end-state
	4B Plan with the end in mind: what actions will the district need to accomplish and by when - to reach this target?
	4C Considering these actions, what tools / deliverables will the district need to accomplish them? When will we need them? Who is responsible for each?
	4D Schedule check-ins : A) How often does the leadership of this project need to meet with senior leadership? B) What will they discuss at the check ins?
5. Step back	5A Identify key stakeholders : A) Who will monitor progress to ensure we are on track? B) Who needs to be brought in early for consultation?
	5B Step back : What will be the biggest “bottleneck” in the path towards this target? Are there steps the district can take to address this bottleneck in advance?
	5C Think next steps : What decisions or signoff do we need in order to kick off ASAP?

Next Step

Estimate the costs of each priority to determine the whole financial need

Cost Projection Tool

7 Steps to Priorities: Worksheet

Set up a plan for each instructional priority (part 1)

1

The overall initiative is ...

- ...

2

The major accomplishments needed to do that are ...

Item	Date
...	...
.....	
...	...
.....	
...	...
.....	
...	...

3

... which will require the following main pieces of work

A

...

.....

B

...

.....

C

...

.....

D

...

.....

E

...

.....

7 Steps to Priorities: Worksheet

Set up a plan for each instructional priority (part 2)

4A

For each component of a priority...

- Desired end state, including date

	4B Actions	4C Deliverables	4D Check-ins
Date			
	...	...	...
	...	...	...
	...	...	...
	...	...	...
	...	...	...
	...	...	...
	...	...	...

7 Steps to Priorities: Worksheet

Set up a plan for each instructional priority (part 3)

Component

5A Stakeholders - who else needs to be engaged?

Group	Role
• ... • ... • ...	• ... • ... • ...

5B Critical path/bottleneck

3 most critical	How to address
• ... • ... • ...	• ... • ... • ...

5C Getting started

Key decisions	Other items
• ... • ... • ...	• ... • ... • ...