

CORE FUNCTION	EFFECTIVE PRACTICE	INDICATOR
Dimension D	Planning and Operational Effectiveness - Resource Allocation	The LEA/school has aligned resource allocation (money, time, human resources) within each school's instructional priorities. (5171)

School districts exert a significant impact on student learning and achievement in both direct and indirect ways (Chingos et al., 2013; Leithwood & McCullough, 2016; Leithwood et al., 2019). A number of research reviews have identified characteristics of high-performing districts that improve student learning (e.g., Anderson & Young, 2018a, 2018b; Leithwood, 2010; Trujillo, 2013). While concerns for generalizability for this research have been expressed in the literature (e.g., see Anderson & Young, 2018b), several characteristics have received strong, consistent support across a variety of studies, and are presumed to be important across a variety of district contexts (Leithwood & Azah, 2016). Effective districts that provide for high quality and equitable instructional practice align “budgets, personnel policies/procedures, and uses of time with district mission, vision, and goals” (Leithwood et al., 2019, p. 521). Resource allocation is an essential condition for effective instruction; however, effectiveness depends on how it is used (Anderson & Young, 2018 a, b; Peurach et al., 2019). This research brief will review evidence-based practice on how districts and school leaders can align resources to schools’ instructional priorities to maximize effective instruction.

District Resource Alignment: Evidence-Based Practice

Recent frameworks of effective district practice and school turnaround include the importance of structuring and managing the organization and its resources (Anderson & Young, 2018a; The Center on School Turnaround, 2018; Leithwood et al., 2019). For example, districts that have been able to spark rapid school improvement customize and target resources and supports to meet each school’s needs through practices such as providing “tailored support to each school based on deep root-cause analysis and needs assessment to inform the school’s priorities, and custom[izing] each school’s level of autonomy for personnel hiring, placement, and replacement and other key decisions based on school capacity” (The Center on School Turnaround, 2018, p. 11). Effective district resource alignment or coherence is dynamic, and requires “school and school district central office leaders to work in partnership to continually ‘craft’ or negotiate the fit between external demands and schools’ own goals and strategies” (Honig & Hatch, 2004, p. 17). The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) mandates that state education agencies (SEAs) perform resource allocation reviews within districts serving low-performing schools, representing an opportunity for district leaders in these schools to capture data on the link between resource allocation and student performance outcomes (Hagan et al., 2019).

Researchers at the Center on School Turnaround at WestEd have recently investigated resource allocation principles and strategies that support four evidence-based domains of rapid school improvement (Turnaround Leadership, Instructional Transformation, Talent Development, and Culture Shift) (see The Center on School Turnaround, 2018; Willis et al., 2019). Four principles of effective district resource allocation for school transformation were identified:

- 1. Equitably distribute resources** by directing them to schools/students with the greatest needs. Districts must collect data beyond per pupil expenditures; for example, teacher experience, student demographic data, and poverty levels. District leaders can use this data to identify inequities and intentionally allocate staff and other resources based on the school’s instructional needs or achievement performance gaps among subgroups of students.



2. **Consider additional resource types beyond just funding**, such as staff experience and effectiveness, student learning time, and external community partner services. Effective resource allocation includes not just per-pupil spending, but also the consideration of the quality and variety of district investments in staff and programs, and how they can be successfully aligned with a school’s improvement priorities.
3. **Establish resource priorities through stakeholder input, and that are linked to student performance goals.** A regular review of resource allocation data can pinpoint where resources are having the greatest impact, and where adjustments are needed to optimize outcomes. District leadership planning teams should include fiscal services representatives, and stakeholder feedback should be captured from parents, students, and community partners to provide a broader perspective on what is, and isn’t working, to improve student outcomes. Union groups should be included in stakeholder engagement efforts, to elicit staff support for improvement initiatives.
4. **Blend, braid, and/or layer available funding sources to maximize available resources.** ESSA has provided for increased flexibility in how districts may use what once were prescriptive and restricted federal funds. Blending, braiding, and layering funding sources allow districts to maximize these funding sources to strengthen and interact with one another to support school turnaround strategies. *Blending* involves combining funds from two or more separate funding sources to pay for a single program that serves to meet the needs of multiple student groups. For example, the district could blend state/local funds with federal and special education funds to develop a program to support teachers to effectively diagnose and respond to student learning needs. *Braiding* involves coordinating funds from two or more funding sources to support the total cost of services, but simultaneously allocating revenues and tracking expenditures separately for each individual funding source to ensure each is paying its fair share of costs. For example, a districtwide Multi-Tiered System of Supports program could use IDEA funds to pay for 10% of the program cost (if 10% of students served are eligible for special education), and Title III funds to pay for 15% of the program cost (if 15% are English learners). When a specific funding source is inadequate to cover the entire program cost, *layering* through an additional source can be used to supplement the foundational funding source by paying for additional services as needed to meet desired program outcomes. District leaders need a comprehensive understanding of funding sources and their allowable uses before attempting to blend, braid, or layer these resources. State and other resource guides (e.g., Tennessee’s Coordinated Spending Guide: <https://eplan.tn.gov/DocumentLibrary/ViewDocument.aspx?DocumentKey=1576652&inline=true>) can provide examples of how districts can leverage federal dollars to use multiple funding streams for comprehensive improvement strategies.

District leaders must adopt a continuous improvement approach to resource allocation in order to sustain and maximize the effectiveness of school improvement efforts. Continuous improvement involves “the practice of continually studying and improving system processes—and in the case of resource allocation, investments in education programs—to make them as efficient and effective as possible” (Willis et al., 2019, p. 6). District leaders must set up the structures and processes necessary for the regular collection, review, and use of data by leadership groups (that include classroom teachers with on-the-ground expertise), to identify how resource allocations are working to improve academic outcomes for struggling students (Willis et al., 2019).

School Resource Alignment: Evidence-Based Practice

Effective school leaders are competent managers of resources that are essential to achieving rapid and sustained school improvement. Resources including time, money, personnel, and partnerships must be strategically aligned to address the school’s goals, and the principal is most often in charge of this function. School leaders must hire staff capable of the high-quality instruction needed for improvement, and place staff in roles that are suited to their strengths, while providing professional learning to improve weaknesses. Effective leaders also ensure that staff have the time and instructional resources necessary for instructional planning and improvement, and in many cases, identify external partnerships that can further meet the needs of students at the school.



School leaders exert a powerful influence on student learning and achievement, second only to the influence of teachers (Hitt & Tucker, 2016; Hitt, Woodruff, Meyers, & Zhu, 2018; Leithwood, Harris, & Strauss, 2010; Louis et al., 2010). This influence may be even more important in schools that are in need of substantial improvement (Murphy & Meyers, 2008). School leaders in improving schools set the strategic direction for the school and establish clear policies, structures, and expectations for ambitious improvement goals, obtaining and aligning the necessary resources to achieve the school's goals (Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe, 2008; The Center on School Turnaround, 2017, 2018). For example, effective school leaders in improving schools carefully align financial resources, time (e.g., extended school hours, increased time for teacher collaboration and planning), and targeted personnel and professional learning programs to address the school's most important improvement goals (Cosner & Jones, 2016). In fact, leaders' capacity to resource schools strategically has been shown to significantly contribute to their ability to optimize school improvement (Robinson et al., 2008). This brief will discuss ways that school leaders can ensure that they allocate resources effectively to meet school improvement goals.

How do principals in improving schools effectively allocate resources towards school improvement?

School improvement goal achievement requires clearly stated improvement goals and strategies so that resources can be aligned sufficiently and appropriately (Robinson et al., 2008). Effective school leaders then acquire and allocate personnel and instructional resources to meet improvement goals (Cosner & Jones, 2016). One of the key tasks of a school leader critical to school improvement is human resource management (Hitt & Tucker, 2016). A majority of the school budget is made up of teacher selection and staff assignment, and effective school leaders "astutely facilitate the human resource management function such that it supports, by way of hiring in particular, the vision and mission of a school" (Hitt & Tucker, 2016, p. 554). This process may include "encouraging" out or terminating teachers who refuse to or cannot make instructional improvements, or who may undercut attempts to improve school climate (Meyers et al., 2017). To attract, select and retain high-quality teachers, the principal may also need to reallocate resources in order to develop incentive packages that appeal to teachers capable of fulfilling the school's goals for improved student learning. This may include making the district aware of the school's human resource needs and advocating for additional resources as necessary to address these needs (Meyers et al., 2017). Effective school leaders also match teachers' strengths with improvement work by determining how certain talent can support the school's improvement goals (Hitt et al., 2018). Principals then must carefully allocate the remaining budget to professional learning, necessary supports for students, and other needs that support the school's vision and goals.

Effective school leaders must "aggressively acquire additional instructional resources and allocate these resources in ways that support targeted instructional work" (Cosner & Jones, 2016, p. 51). Appropriate teaching resources must be made available, and this process is facilitated when leaders have substantial knowledge of the curriculum, curriculum progressions, and pedagogy (Robinson et al., 2008). In many cases leaders must directly ask teachers what resources and materials are necessary to enact the school's selected improvement strategies (Chapman & Harris, 2004), while ensuring that programs and partnerships that do not address the school's goals do not detract from the improvement process (Newmann, Smith, Allensworth, & Bryk, 2001). Management of the school's budget also includes careful selection of targeted professional development in collaboration with the school's leadership and instructional teams. Research has demonstrated that effective turnaround principals differentiate professional learning by analyzing the staff's strengths and limitations in their capacity to foster students' academic growth and ensuring that teaching capacity is built to address those needs accordingly (Hitt et al., 2018). Targeted professional learning must be partnered in most cases with the resource of additional time for collaboration and planning to improve instruction, and effective principals shift or acquire resources as necessary to create additional time for these important processes (Hull, 2012).

Many leaders of schools attempting rapid improvement also may need to engage with organizations that are aligned with the school's vision and goals to bring additional resources and support for the improvement process. Partnerships with mission-aligned organizations can help schools meet the social, emotional, physical, and mental health needs of students who face both academic and non-academic challenges that cannot be met by the school alone (Hitt & Meyers, 2017; Meyers et al., 2017). Meyers and colleagues cite an example of one principal's actions to secure partnership resources to meet student needs:



One principal left no stone unturned when reaching out to potential partners to support the school's turnaround efforts of engaging students, providing support for whole-child development, and increasing opportunities to learn through enrichment experiences that build motivation and aspiration. He reached out to state and local health and mental health providers to identify community resources for students and families that could be provided at the school or in the neighborhood. He reached out to community-based youth groups and after-school providers. He also reached out to businesses in a variety of industries, including science and technology, and explored opportunities for experts to volunteer to teach enrichment courses or serve as mentors to students. He reached out to arts and cultural organizations and athletics and recreational organizations to identify opportunities for partnerships. As a result of this extensive outreach, the principal leveraged partnerships and secured grants and donations to provide extended day enrichments, after-school activities, and wraparound supports to students. He also hired a coordinator to manage partnerships and programming. (p. 19)

The research literature clearly shows that effective school leaders identify and carefully align whatever personnel, instructional, professional learning, time, and partnership resources are needed to fulfill the school's improvement goals and spark an upward and sustained trajectory for the school.

Connecting the Research to Our Practice: Assessing Your District's Needs Related to This Indicator

Assessing your district's needs is a critical first step in identifying evidence-based practices appropriate for planning for improvement. The suggested needs assessment questions below encompass three areas: data review; programs, policies and procedures; and implementation of programs, policies and procedures. You can adapt the questions to fit your district's context as needed, and/or add or remove questions as desired. *This tool may be useful as you identify supports in your district, determine where things are working, and what needs to be improved.*

<i>I. What Data are Currently Being Provided?</i>	
<i>Questions to Consider</i>	<i>Discussion of Data/Responses</i>
1. You may wish to consult the following resource developed for ESSA requirements as a guide: https://edunomicslab.org/2023/04/24/appendix-a-sample-data-report/	
2. Review resource data on each major area of resource allocation within the district and school performance at each level (including outcomes across student subgroups). For example, compare district spending by school and the assignment of effective and experienced teachers vs. school outcomes in high poverty vs. lower poverty schools. What evidence does the district have that major resource allocations are effectively addressing schools' instructional priorities to ensure equitable student outcomes?	
3. What if any data are available from stakeholders regarding the degree to which district resources are aligned effectively to match schools' instructional priorities? What is the message from these data?	



What needs can you identify based on the responses?

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II. What Programs, Policies, and Procedures Are Already Being Implemented?

<i>Questions to Consider</i>	<i>Responses/Success with Implementation</i>
1. How does the district currently review its resource allocation strategy? How does the school currently review its resource allocation strategy? Who is involved in the planning process? How often does this review occur?	
2. How can the district better leverage resources to do more for students?	
3. How can the school better leverage resources to do more for students?	
4. What opportunities and barriers exist?	

Consider the data and needs identified from Table I, and responses to these questions. What is needed to establish evidence-based practice? What gaps (if any) can be identified between what we're implementing and evidence-based practice?

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What actions, customized for your district’s needs, will ensure that this Success Indicator will be fully met? How will the team monitor implementation and success?

<i>Begin Date</i>	<i>End Date</i>	<i>Action</i>	<i>Monitoring Process/ Data Collected</i>	<i>Desired Outcome/ Need Met?</i>

NC MTSS CONNECTION:

Think of MTSS implementation as building an architectural building. Before building commences, a strong foundation must be laid; in regards to MTSS the foundation is effective leadership and strong teaming structures. Once the foundation is solid, the infrastructure (walls, furniture, decor) can be included. Through the lens of MTSS, the infrastructure of the framework includes the resources used to support its implementation. Within an MTSS, resource mapping is a process designed to assist teams to review the resources, such as personnel, facilities, curriculum and instruction, as well as data sources available and how they have been allocated. Resource mapping allows school improvement teams to be on the same page about the available resources, but also promotes discussion around how to allocate resources most effectively to meet student need.

Below are five steps teams may consider to support resource mapping process.



[Resource Mapping to Effectively Implement MTSS](#)



NC FEDERAL PROGRAMS CONNECTION:

North Carolina, pursuant to Section 1111 (1)(B)(iv) and (c)(4)(D) of the *Every Student Succeeds Act*, requires schools identified as **Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI)** and **Additional Targeted Support and Improvement (ATSI)** to prioritize and actively implement strategies to address identified resource inequities within the school's CSI and/or ATSI Plan for Indicator D1.02. A school-level Comprehensive Needs Assessment must be conducted to identify resource inequities annually. At least one active strategy must be employed to address identified resource inequities each year the school is designated as CSI or ATSI. **For CSI and ATSI identified schools**, annual action steps for indicator D1.02 should be written using this format: *Within the 2023-24 school year, our school identified the following resource inequity, (insert inequity), as a result, our school plans to mitigate this inequity by (insert action)*. For additional information, visit the Comprehensive and Targeted School Support page on the Office of Federal Programs webpage.

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