

RESOURCE EQUITY GUIDEBOOK

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# STUDENT SUPPORTS & INTERVENTION



**ALLIANCE FOR  
RESOURCE  
EQUITY**

Uniting advocates and education leaders  
to unlock excellence for every student



## About

This guidebook for district- and school-level action planning leverages Education Resource Strategies' deep expertise supporting districts and schools and iterates from frameworks and tools that we have tested and used with school and district leaders from across the country over the last decade.

It was also informed by strong collaboration with The Education Trust and its expertise working with equity advocates across the country to support state and federal policy development that focuses on eliminating opportunity and achievement gaps for students of color and students from low-income backgrounds.

The Alliance for Resource Equity is a partnership between **Education Resource Strategies (ERS)** and **The Education Trust**.



### WHY AN ALLIANCE?

Across the nation, local decision makers and equity advocates are committed to improving schools—including school board members, state and district leaders, civil rights advocates, families, educators, and even students themselves. However, a lack of coordination can limit the impact of these efforts. The Alliance for Resource Equity works to bring many combinations of stakeholders together around a framework for shared understanding, and a plan for collaborative action.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

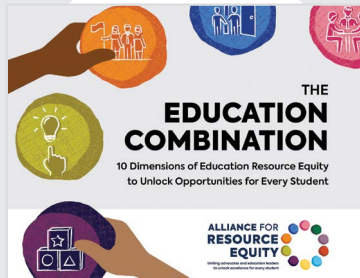
This work is the result of joint efforts among dozens of people, led by Education Resource Strategies, with strong collaboration from The Education Trust, as part of The Alliance for Resource Equity.

First, we owe our deep thanks to the many people in the field who inspire us by engaging in this difficult (yet rewarding) work each day: Thank you to our partners within the schools, systems, and communities that we have worked with throughout the years; to the leaders and researchers from peer education organizations who served as valuable thought partners; and to the many district and nonprofit leaders, advocates, teachers, and families from across the country who contributed with an ongoing willingness to reflect, share their stories, and help others learn.

We would also like to acknowledge the many team members who contributed to this work. At Education Resource Strategies, this includes Danielle Adams, Nicole Katz, Ben Hopkins, Torrie Mekos, Betty Chang, Jonathan Travers, and Karen Hawley Miles. At The Education Trust, this includes Nancy Duchesneau, Heather Rieman, and Terra Wallin. Thank you to Karen Pittman and Larry Pasti at The Forum for Youth Investment for their content feedback. Thank you to J Sherman Studio for their design partnership.

This work was made possible by the support of The Raikes Foundation, The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, and The W.K. Kellogg Foundation.

The Alliance for Resource Equity is solely responsible for the ideas presented in this document for any errors.

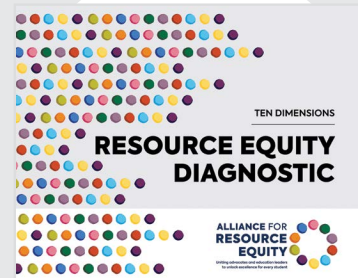


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### THE EDUCATION COMBINATION

## Learn about the 10 dimensions

This paper turns the spotlight on education resource equity by sharing the 10 dimensions that unlock better, more equitable experiences in school for all students.



2

### THE RESOURCE EQUITY DIAGNOSTIC

## Identify strengths and gaps

This tool helps you better understand the current state of education resource equity and excellence for students in *your* school system across all ten dimensions.

- **Advocates' Guide:** Tailored guidance for advocates on how to use the diagnostic in partnership with your local school system.
- **Sample Meeting Agenda:** An example of a meeting agenda to help community advocates and district leaders work collaboratively to kick off the process of improving education resource equity.



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### THE RESOURCE EQUITY GUIDEBOOKS

## Explore next steps

This series of guidebooks digs deeper into your diagnostic results by probing underlying causes of challenges in your school system and considering ways to improve students' experiences in school.



## Dimension 7: Student Supports & Intervention

# ABOUT THIS GUIDEBOOK

Your team of district leaders and community members can use this guidebook about **Student Supports and Intervention** to choose promising actions based on your district’s challenges and the distinct needs of your students.

- Determine **root causes** of challenges in your school district
- Explore **potential actions**
- Plan **next steps**

The Student Supports & Intervention dimension focuses on four key questions (see right). Because the root causes and potential actions for questions 7.1, 7.2, and 7.3 are so similar (and because students may have needs in several areas), these three key questions have been combined into the same chapter, so that they can be reviewed holistically. Depending on what growth opportunities your team identified in the diagnostic, you can choose to look at either the chapter for key questions 7.1–3, or the chapter for key question 7.4. **For key questions that are relevant to your district, you will investigate the underlying root causes of challenges, explore potential actions, and plan next steps.** Key questions, root causes, and potential actions often connect to each other across chapters.

### KEY QUESTIONS

## 7.1–7.3

**7.1 Does each student who needs targeted social-emotional support receive it?**

**7.2 Does each student who needs targeted physical and mental health support receive it?**

**7.3 Does each student who needs targeted family support receive it?**

### KEY QUESTION

## 7.4

**Does each student have access to effective guidance to support postsecondary success?**

Refer to your [Resource Equity Diagnostic \(bit.ly/equitydiagnostic\)](https://bit.ly/equitydiagnostic) as you use this guidebook.



### INSIDE THIS GUIDEBOOK

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# WHAT IS EDUCATION RESOURCE EQUITY?

When schools, systems, and communities work together to mobilize the right combination of resources that create high-quality learning experiences for all students, that is what we call **education resource equity**. Yet many schools and systems are set up as if different students all need the same things. Worse yet, students with higher needs and students of color are often *less* likely than their peers to have access to the high-quality learning experiences that research tells us are necessary to prepare them for college and career.

**Education resource equity is what we need to make sure that school unlocks every child’s power to live a life of their choosing—and that race and family income no longer predict a student’s life trajectory.**

To change students’ educational experiences for the better, we need to “do school” differently by making changes at the district and school levels. This means working together to design schools and systems that use the right combination of resources to meet each child’s distinct needs.

## KEY TERMS

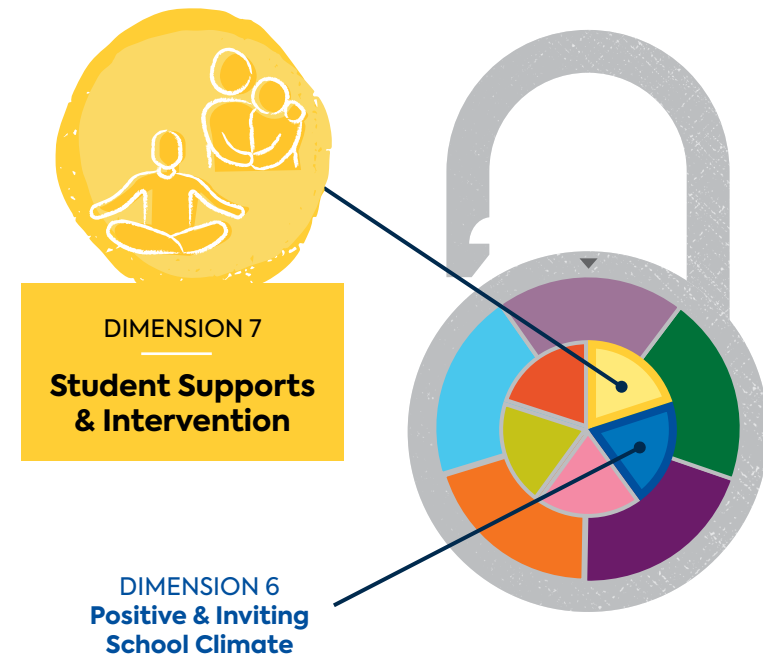
**Students with higher needs** includes students in your district who may face additional barriers to success, such as students from low-income backgrounds; English learners; students with disabilities; and students experiencing foster care, homelessness, or the juvenile justice system.

**Students of color**, in this context, includes Black, Latino, and Native American students, or other historically underserved racial/ethnic groups in your district.

The 10 dimensions of education resource equity often interact. For example, **Student Supports & Intervention** is closely intertwined with **Positive & Inviting School Climate** because school climate is, in part, affected by the universal supports that are readily available to all students, such as school-based physical and mental health professionals.

This guidebook considers the targeted non-academic supports and interventions needed to meet specific students’ needs. No single dimension of education resource equity can unlock every student’s potential—but when dimensions are combined to meet students’ distinct needs, they are a strong foundation for unlocking better, more equitable experiences in school.

Learn more at [educationresourceequity.org/dimensions](https://educationresourceequity.org/dimensions).



# FOUNDATIONS FOR EXCELLENCE & EQUITABLE ACCESS

To make progress toward education resource equity, your team will need to consider:



## FOUNDATIONS FOR EXCELLENCE Systemwide

Foundations for Excellence gauges whether there is enough of a resource available at the system level and whether foundational structures, practices, and policies are in place to enable equitable access to the resource for all students. For example, a challenge in Foundations for Excellence may mean that your district does not have an adequate number or quality of partnerships with outside physical and mental health services overall.

If your district faces challenges with Foundations for Excellence, then your team will need to consider how the root causes you see in this guidebook play out across the system, for all schools or all students. The actions you choose to address these root causes should be implemented systemwide.



## EQUITABLE ACCESS In specific schools or classrooms

Equitable Access assesses whether students with higher needs, students of color, and students with lower academic performance have access to the right amount and combinations of resources necessary to meet their needs. Challenges in Equitable Access may mean that in your district there are...

- **Inequities across schools**—for example, if schools that serve higher proportions of students from low-income backgrounds are less likely to have enough college guidance counselors.
- **Inequities within schools**—for example, if students of color are more likely to be identified as in need of social-emotional supports than their peers.

If your district faces challenges with Equitable Access, then your team will need to consider how the root causes of those inequities play out at specific schools or for specific groups of students. The actions you choose to address these root causes should be targeted toward specific schools or classrooms.



The [Resource Equity Diagnostic \(bit.ly/equitydiagnostic\)](https://bit.ly/equitydiagnostic) can help your team determine key opportunities and challenges both systemwide (**Foundations for Excellence**) and in specific schools or classrooms (**Equitable Access**). Keep these results in mind as you work through this guidebook to ensure that your team is addressing the specific challenges your district faces.

# HOW DO WE USE THIS GUIDEBOOK?

First, get everyone together at the table.

Every community, district, school, and child is unique. And your system undoubtedly has strengths, challenges, and possible barriers that will surface as you explore this guidebook.

**That's why the first step to ensuring that students have better, more equitable experiences in school is engaging the people who know that unique context best.** To accurately identify and effectively mobilize the right combination of resources for meeting students' needs, many different people need to be part of the process. Their perspectives, expertise, and lived experiences will help to inform a planning process that reflects your system's unique context and has broad community support.

Therefore, you should use this guidebook as part of a facilitated group exercise and a starting point for larger conversations and planning. Include the following groups from the outset: **PRAC-TITIONERS**, including school board members, district leaders, and central office department staff; **EDUCATORS**, including school leaders and teachers; and **ADVOCATES**, including civil rights leaders, business leaders, families, and other community members.

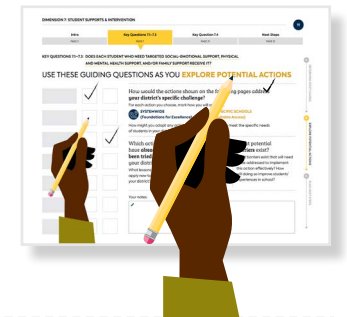
## A DETERMINE ROOT CAUSES

After you've decided which key question chapter(s) to start with, use the guiding questions to help you narrow down the menu of common root causes and select the one(s) that are most significant, relevant, or true for what is driving your district's challenges. Together, you should use the root cause menu to help your team think, discuss, analyze data, seek out other views, and keep asking "why?" to dig deeper. You may find that this menu doesn't include every root cause that contributes to your district's challenge. You can add your own customized root cause based on your [diagnostic results](#) and insights from the diverse groups of stakeholders at the table.



## B EXPLORE POTENTIAL ACTIONS

Next, use the guiding questions as you explore potential actions and choose the ones that seem most promising given the needs of students in your community. For each action you choose, indicate if you will pursue it systemwide, in specific schools or classrooms, or both.



## C PLAN NEXT STEPS

Making changes isn't easy. As you gear up for deeper planning and implementation, your team will need to organize your roles and identify both short- and long-term next steps. Use the guidance on ["Plan Next Steps" on page 38](#) to prioritize which of the actions you selected seem most promising to pursue (and when), to further customize those actions to meet the unique needs of your students, and to check for alignment with other district efforts and priorities.





# THE IMPACT OF BIAS ON STUDENT SUPPORTS & INTERVENTION

**Working on equity—including education resource equity—requires us to identify and erode mindsets and structures that may be rooted in bias, including racism.**

Individual and institutional biases, especially those that hold power in our society, can perpetuate harm to specific groups of students. Education resource equity work typically centers the experiences of students of color (including Black, Latino, and Native American students, or other underserved racial/ethnic groups in a particular district) and students with higher needs (including students from low-income backgrounds; English learners; students with disabilities; and students experiencing foster care, homelessness, or the juvenile justice system). *However, bias can negatively impact students with other underserved identities too—including, but not limited to, gender identity, sexual orientation, nationality, or religion.* Furthermore, it is important to recognize that every student has multiple, intersecting identities, each of which must be properly affirmed and sustained for their needs to be fully met.

Bias affects all ten dimensions of education resource equity and has particularly profound implications for **Student Supports & Intervention**. As your team works to ensure every child receives the right combination of resources to unlock their full potential, understanding the specific ways bias plays out in your unique context will be critical.

**Schools both shape and reflect society.** Schools and educators can—and do—actively work to combat the biases that exist in society; however, they can sometimes implicitly (or explicitly) create or perpetuate bias in society, too.

**Individual Bias** is a person's perceptions and assumptions about groups of people. Individual biases can affect our understanding, actions, and decision-making.

- Sometimes individual biases are **explicit**, meaning people are aware of their own biases.
- In other instances, individual biases are **implicit**, meaning people are unaware that they exist. It is important to note that implicit biases don't always match a person's underlying values or beliefs—for example, one could believe in racial equality, but still implicitly treat Black and Latino students with bias.

Because individuals are shaped by their context, including the institutions they interact with (such as school and work), *institutional* biases can inform or perpetuate *individual* biased actions and mindsets.

**Institutional Bias** is when rules, policies, practices, and procedures within an institution (such as a district or a school) operate in ways that advantage or disadvantage specific groups of people.

- Sometimes institutional biases are **explicit**, meaning discriminatory rules, policies, and practices purposefully disadvantage certain groups or create inequitable opportunities.
- In other instances, institutional biases are **implicit**, meaning biased rules, policies, practices, and procedures have become ingrained in an institution without acknowledgement of the negative impacts on underserved groups.

Because institutions are governed and sustained by people (such as students, families, and teachers), *individual* biases can cumulate and compound into *institutional* biased policies or practices.



The beginning of each chapter of this guidebook notes some possible manifestations of bias to serve as a reminder to identify and address potential areas of individual and/or institutional bias in your district.

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KEY QUESTION

**7.1**

Does each student who needs targeted social-emotional support receive it?

KEY QUESTION

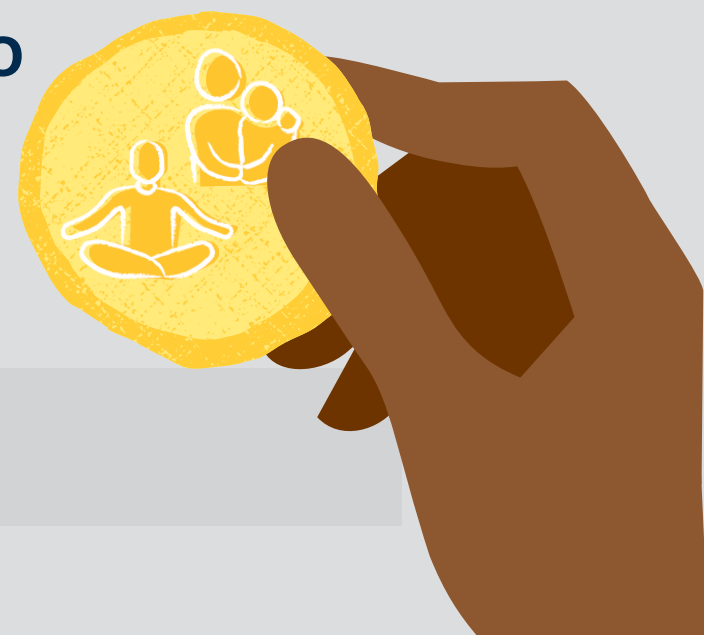
**7.2**

Does each student who needs targeted physical and mental health support receive it?

KEY QUESTION

**7.3**

Does each student who needs targeted family support receive it?



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**KEY QUESTION 7.1: DOES EACH STUDENT WHO NEEDS TARGETED SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL SUPPORT RECEIVE IT?**

**KEY QUESTION 7.2: DOES EACH STUDENT WHO NEEDS TARGETED PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT RECEIVE IT?**

**KEY QUESTION 7.3: DOES EACH STUDENT WHO NEEDS TARGETED FAMILY SUPPORT RECEIVE IT?**

## USE THESE GUIDING QUESTIONS AS YOU **DETERMINE ROOT CAUSES** OF YOUR DISTRICT'S CHALLENGE

In your district, **where** does this challenge occur?



**SYSTEMWIDE** for all schools or all students  
(Foundations for Excellence)



**IN SPECIFIC SCHOOLS OR CLASSROOMS,**  
affecting specific groups of students (Equitable Access)

**Which** of the root causes on the next page drive this challenge in your district?

Consider...

- Available district data
- Input from different stakeholder groups, particularly those most directly impacted by existing inequities

**How** do biases play out in your district?

Explicit or implicit biases can underly root causes and/or affect peoples' perceptions of root causes.

Your notes:



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## WHAT ARE THE **ROOT CAUSES** OF YOUR DISTRICT'S CHALLENGE?

ROOT CAUSES

**Identification Processes** PAGE 12

Schools do not consistently use transparent and unbiased systems for effectively identifying the additional non-academic supports students need, and for monitoring and adjusting those supports over time.

**Programs & Integrated Practices** PAGE 17

Schools lack effective, culturally sustaining programs and practices to provide students with individualized supports, and/or supports are not integrated into the day-to-day functioning of the school.

support systems that meet students' needs.

**Staff Capacity & Expertise** PAGE 15

Hiring and professional learning practices limit access to staff and services that meet students' needs, and/or staff do not have the expertise or time needed to effectively support students.

**Family & Community Partnerships** PAGE 19

Schools lack meaningful partnerships with families and the community, limiting schools' understanding of their challenges and assets, and how to best offer

**District & State Policies** PAGE 21

Unclear or inflexible state and/or district policies (such as "seat time" requirements) prevent schools from being able to create student groupings and student/staff schedules that match their unique context and needs.

**Other\*** PAGE 23

*\*You can add a custom root cause depending on your district's unique context*

**The Impact of Bias** PAGE 7

In addition to taking on structural root causes (like those listed on this page), districts need to support staff in examining the racial, gender, and ability biases (among others) that may be contributing to students having inequitable experiences in school.

For example, staff members may hold unconscious biases around their perception of Black students, resulting in disproportionately identifying Black students as needing social-emotional, physical and mental health, or family support relative to their peers.

DETERMINE ROOT CAUSES

↓

EXPLORE POTENTIAL ACTIONS

↓


PLAN NEXT STEPS

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- KEY QUESTION 7.1: DOES EACH STUDENT WHO NEEDS TARGETED SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL SUPPORT RECEIVE IT?
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## USE THESE GUIDING QUESTIONS AS YOU EXPLORE POTENTIAL ACTIONS

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How would the actions shown on the following pages address **your district's specific challenge?**

For each action you choose, mark how you will apply it...

-  **SYSTEMWIDE**  
(Foundations for Excellence)
-  **IN SPECIFIC SCHOOLS**  
(Equitable Access)

How might you adapt any actions that seem promising to meet the specific needs of students in your district?

Which actions have **already been tried** in your district?  
What lessons can you apply now to address your district's challenge?

What do stakeholders **recommend?**  
What recommendations do different stakeholder groups have—particularly those most directly impacted by existing inequities?

What potential **barriers** exist?  
What barriers exist that will need to be addressed to implement this action effectively? How will doing so improve students' experiences in school?

Your notes:

A DETERMINE ROOT CAUSES

B EXPLORE POTENTIAL ACTIONS

C PLAN NEXT STEPS

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## WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL ACTIONS?



SYSTEM-WIDE



SPECIFIC SCHOOLS OR CLASSROOMS

### Identification Processes

Schools consistently use transparent and unbiased systems for effectively identifying the additional non-academic supports students need, and for monitoring and adjusting those supports over time.

Create a clear district vision and provide schools with guidance on how to situate whole child supports, including special education supports, as part of a **multi-tiered system of supports** with early assessment and tiers of interventions to identify and meet students' individual needs.

1 2 3 1 2 3

Conduct **universal student needs assessments**, using evidence-based tools that include students' perceptions about their needs, to identify the students who need additional support and the staff who can provide it as early as possible.

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Maintain a comprehensive, integrated **data system** that provides easily accessible, clear, and accurate data for each student's academic needs (including IEP/504 information) and non-academic needs (including social-emotional needs, physical and mental health needs, and family needs). Ensure this data system can be used to document supports and outcomes over time and to promote high standards in documentation across the district, especially when students transition between schools.

1 2 3 1 2 3

Hire qualified **school-based coordinators**—or leverage other school staff, such as social workers and teachers—to coordinate and review needs assessments, to identify opportunities to connect students to social-emotional, physical and mental health, and family supports, and to monitor support effectiveness and track outcomes.

1 2 3 1 2 3



THE VISION

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## WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL ACTIONS?



### Identification Processes (cont'd)

**THE VISION**  
Schools consistently use transparent and unbiased systems for effectively identifying the additional non-academic supports students need, and for monitoring and adjusting those supports over time.

Provide all staff with **ongoing, job-embedded professional learning** to:

1 2 3 1 2 3

- Understand their own **mindsets, expectations, and biases** around students' social-emotional, physical and mental health, and family needs, and break any harmful patterns through exploration, reflection, and discussion.
- Develop **identification practices that are culturally sustaining and age-appropriate** to ensure accurate assessment of students' needs, so that students are neither denied supports nor targeted for supports as a result of bias.
- Create **high-quality support plans**, IEP/504 plans, student-led IEPs, transition plans for students with disabilities, and other plans to ensure all students receive the additional support they need.
- Analyze data to identify and probe any **disproportionalities** in who is identified for support services based on race, gender, family income level, or home language.

Solicit input from a **family and community team** with cultural competency (supported by a translator whenever necessary) during the identification process so that individual students are neither denied supports nor targeted for supports as a result of bias.

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## WHAT ARE THE **POTENTIAL ACTIONS?**

### Identification Processes (cont'd)

**THE VISION** Schools consistently use transparent and unbiased systems for effectively identifying the additional non-academic supports students need, and for monitoring and adjusting those supports over time.

Adjust how student supports are delivered over time by using data to prompt **targeted and continuous improvements**; monitor the effectiveness of these changes and regularly modify as needed.

Other potential action(s):



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## WHAT ARE THE **POTENTIAL ACTIONS?**



SYSTEM-WIDE



SPECIFIC SCHOOLS OR CLASSROOMS

### Staff Capacity & Expertise

**THE VISION**  
Hiring and professional learning practices provide sufficient access to staff and services that meet students' needs, and staff have the expertise and time needed to effectively support students.

Create a pool of **high-quality and diverse candidates** for positions that are dedicated to providing student supports by clearly defining the skills and competencies required for success in each role, shifting hiring timelines earlier, or targeting recruiting toward the pipelines that provide candidates with the highest potential.

1 2 3      1 2 3

Hire and retain **school leaders, teachers, and student support staff** with cultural competencies, growth mindsets, and who have experience delivering targeted social-emotional, physical and mental health, and/or family supports.

1 2 3      1 2 3

Restructure **roles and schedules** to free up time for student support staff to focus on student-centered tasks—particularly meeting with students or collaborating with teachers, rather than fulfilling administrative tasks, such as data entry or paperwork.

1 2 3      1 2 3



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## WHAT ARE THE **POTENTIAL ACTIONS?**



### Staff Capacity & Expertise (cont'd)

Hiring and professional learning practices provide sufficient access to staff and services that meet students' needs, and staff have the expertise and time needed to effectively support students.

Build the expertise of all school staff—including counselors, social workers, paraprofessionals, school resource officers, teachers, and school leaders—by offering **ongoing, job-embedded professional learning** to help staff:

- Recognize **signs and indicators** that suggest specific students need targeted supports.
- Implement targeted, **evidence-based supports** that are culturally sustaining and age-appropriate.
- Understand **processes for connecting students** to forms of intervention or preventative supports.

Create **collaborative planning time** by aligning schedules so that service providers can meet with teachers during their prep periods; or provide compensation for teachers to meet outside of working hours so that service providers and teachers can share information on students' needs and collaborate on support practices.

Other potential action(s):

1 2 3      1 2 3

1 2 3      1 2 3

1 2 3      1 2 3



THE VISION

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## WHAT ARE THE **POTENTIAL ACTIONS?**



SYSTEM-WIDE



SPECIFIC SCHOOLS OR CLASSROOMS



### Programs & Integrated Practices

Schools have effective, culturally sustaining programs and practices to provide students with individualized supports, and these supports are integrated into the day-to-day functioning of the school.

Define a clear **vision and strategy** for integrating student supports into school settings that is co-developed with the entire school community and elevates student and family voices in determining priorities.

1 2 3 1 2 3

Implement **multi-tiered systems of supports** to address individual students' needs, including universal supports that all students receive (such as peer mentoring), targeted supports that some students receive (such as small-group interventions), and intensive supports that a few students receive (such as one-to-one counseling); vary strategies according to students' needs.

1 2 3 1 2 3

Ensure supports are integrated into **school-level day-to-day functioning**, such as through daily advisory groups, wellness check-ins, and content activities that support social-emotional development, physical and mental health, and family wellbeing.

1 2 3 1 2 3

Ensure supports are accessible to students and families by offering a **variety of modes**, such as at the school building itself or remotely with use of technology, during the school day, or after-hours, such as before or after school, evenings, weekends, or throughout the summer.

1 2 3 1 2 3

THE VISION

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**KEY QUESTION 7.1: DOES EACH STUDENT WHO NEEDS TARGETED SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL SUPPORT RECEIVE IT?**

**KEY QUESTION 7.2: DOES EACH STUDENT WHO NEEDS TARGETED PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT RECEIVE IT?**

**KEY QUESTION 7.3: DOES EACH STUDENT WHO NEEDS TARGETED FAMILY SUPPORT RECEIVE IT?**

## WHAT ARE THE **POTENTIAL ACTIONS?**

### Programs & Integrated Practices (cont'd)

**THE VISION**  
Schools have effective, culturally sustaining programs and practices to provide students with individualized supports, and these supports are integrated into the day-to-day functioning of the school.

Integrate **functional skill development** (including speech and language services) with academic content; deliver these supports in inclusive settings when possible, such as having adaptive and general physical education delivered simultaneously.

Other potential action(s):



SYSTEM-WIDE



SPECIFIC SCHOOLS OR CLASSROOMS

1	2	3	1	2	3
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1	2	3	1	2	3
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KEY QUESTION 7.1: DOES EACH STUDENT WHO NEEDS TARGETED SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL SUPPORT RECEIVE IT?

KEY QUESTION 7.2: DOES EACH STUDENT WHO NEEDS TARGETED PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT RECEIVE IT?

KEY QUESTION 7.3: DOES EACH STUDENT WHO NEEDS TARGETED FAMILY SUPPORT RECEIVE IT?

## WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL ACTIONS?



SYSTEM-WIDE



SPECIFIC SCHOOLS OR CLASSROOMS



### Family & Community Partnerships

Schools have meaningful partnerships with families and the community, bolstering schools' understanding of their challenges and assets, and how to best offer collaborative and comprehensive support systems that meet students' needs.

Encourage greater use of support services by identifying and eroding **stigmas in the school community** about seeking and receiving support, such as through schoolwide wellness campaigns and wellness-focused family workshops.

1 2 3 1 2 3

Establish **partnerships with community organizations and external professionals** to leverage their expertise and fill any existing gaps in the student supports offered by schools—such as by developing joint programs, establishing service coordination positions, and implementing cohesive models for delivering supports.

1 2 3 1 2 3

Develop a clear and up-to-date **inventory of pre-approved resources** offered by local agencies, universities, businesses, and other community organizations—and make it easily accessible for school staff, families, and students to use.

1 2 3 1 2 3

Develop a **tailored plan of evidence-based supports** in conjunction with family and community members to provide students with supports in ways that are equitable, accessible, and sustainable.

1 2 3 1 2 3

THE VISION

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**KEY QUESTION 7.1: DOES EACH STUDENT WHO NEEDS TARGETED SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL SUPPORT RECEIVE IT?**

**KEY QUESTION 7.2: DOES EACH STUDENT WHO NEEDS TARGETED PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT RECEIVE IT?**

**KEY QUESTION 7.3: DOES EACH STUDENT WHO NEEDS TARGETED FAMILY SUPPORT RECEIVE IT?**

## WHAT ARE THE **POTENTIAL ACTIONS?**



A DETERMINE ROOT CAUSES  
B EXPLORE POTENTIAL ACTIONS  
C PLAN NEXT STEPS

### Family & Community Partnerships (cont'd)

THE VISION

Schools have meaningful partnerships with families and the community, bolstering schools' understanding of their challenges and assets, and how to best offer collaborative and comprehensive support systems that meet students' needs.

Examine the language needs of families and provide <b>appropriate guidance and services</b> , such as translated communications, to ensure all families have a clear understanding of how to utilize school support services, or advocate for their needs if such support services are not available.	1	2	3	1	2	3
Ensure students, families, and school staff are informed about available non-academic supports and processes for accessing them in their <b>home language and via multiple forms of communication</b> , such as text messages, phone calls, letters, emails, social media, and in-person interactions.	1	2	3	1	2	3
Build <b>buy-in with key stakeholders—including students, families, and teachers</b> —around priorities and shaping district- and school-level decision-making (for example, through participation in school board meetings).	1	2	3	1	2	3
Other potential action(s):	1	2	3	1	2	3

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**KEY QUESTION 7.1: DOES EACH STUDENT WHO NEEDS TARGETED SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL SUPPORT RECEIVE IT?**

**KEY QUESTION 7.2: DOES EACH STUDENT WHO NEEDS TARGETED PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT RECEIVE IT?**

**KEY QUESTION 7.3: DOES EACH STUDENT WHO NEEDS TARGETED FAMILY SUPPORT RECEIVE IT?**

## WHAT ARE THE **POTENTIAL ACTIONS?**



SYSTEM-WIDE



SPECIFIC SCHOOLS OR CLASSROOMS



### District & State Policy

**THE VISION**  
Flexible and clear district and state policies (such as staffing plans and funding priorities) enable schools to effectively support the needs of the whole child.

Advocate for increased **state and local funding**, or seek grant funding, that can be used flexibly to support students' social-emotional, physical and mental health, and family needs.

1 2 3      1 2 3

Provide **guidance on policies** that integrate and braid systemic supports for students across sectors, such as Handle with Care policies and permissible uses of Medicaid funds.

1 2 3      1 2 3

Adjust **funding and/or staffing formulae** to provide additional student supports funds or staff to schools; prioritize schools with higher needs when assigning counselors, social workers, psychologists, and nurses, to ensure that these schools have lower student-to-staff ratios.

1 2 3      1 2 3

Provide **flexibility to school leaders** in how they organize funds and/or staff, such as the ability to swap staff positions, increase collaborative planning time, or offer additional professional learning opportunities, to enable schools to provide targeted supports based on the needs of their students.

1 2 3      1 2 3

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KEY QUESTION 7.2: DOES EACH STUDENT WHO NEEDS TARGETED PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT RECEIVE IT?

KEY QUESTION 7.3: DOES EACH STUDENT WHO NEEDS TARGETED FAMILY SUPPORT RECEIVE IT?

## WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL ACTIONS?



SYSTEM-WIDE



SPECIFIC SCHOOLS OR CLASSROOMS

### District & State Policy (cont'd)

THE VISION Flexible and clear district and state policies (such as staffing plans and funding priorities) enable schools to effectively support the needs of the whole child.

Design a district- or school-level **staffing plan** that protects investments in student supports—for example, reducing overall spending in less essential areas, reorganizing administrative positions, or making non-core class sizes larger at the school level in order to make more staff available for targeted student supports.

1 2 3 1 2 3

Other potential action(s):

1 2 3 1 2 3





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**KEY QUESTION 7.1: DOES EACH STUDENT WHO NEEDS TARGETED SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL SUPPORT RECEIVE IT?**

**KEY QUESTION 7.2: DOES EACH STUDENT WHO NEEDS TARGETED PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT RECEIVE IT?**

**KEY QUESTION 7.3: DOES EACH STUDENT WHO NEEDS TARGETED FAMILY SUPPORT RECEIVE IT?**

## WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL ACTIONS?



SYSTEM-WIDE



SPECIFIC SCHOOLS OR CLASSROOMS

### Other Root Cause

You can add a custom root cause depending on your district's unique context.

	1	2	3	1	2	3
	1	2	3	1	2	3
	1	2	3	1	2	3
	1	2	3	1	2	3
	1	2	3	1	2	3



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**KEY QUESTION 7.1:** DOES EACH STUDENT WHO NEEDS TARGETED SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL SUPPORT RECEIVE IT?

**KEY QUESTION 7.2:** DOES EACH STUDENT WHO NEEDS TARGETED PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT RECEIVE IT?

**KEY QUESTION 7.3:** DOES EACH STUDENT WHO NEEDS TARGETED FAMILY SUPPORT RECEIVE IT?

For prompts to help your team think about next steps, go to page 38.

## NOTES



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KEY QUESTION

**7.4**

Does each student have access to effective guidance to support postsecondary success?



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**KEY QUESTION 7.4: DOES EACH STUDENT HAVE ACCESS TO EFFECTIVE GUIDANCE TO SUPPORT POSTSECONDARY SUCCESS?**

## USE THESE GUIDING QUESTIONS AS YOU **DETERMINE ROOT CAUSES** OF YOUR DISTRICT'S CHALLENGE

In your district, **where** does this challenge occur?



**SYSTEMWIDE** for all schools or all students  
(Foundations for Excellence)



**IN SPECIFIC SCHOOLS OR CLASSROOMS,**  
affecting some groups of students (Equitable Access)

**Which** of the root causes on the next page drive this challenge in your district?

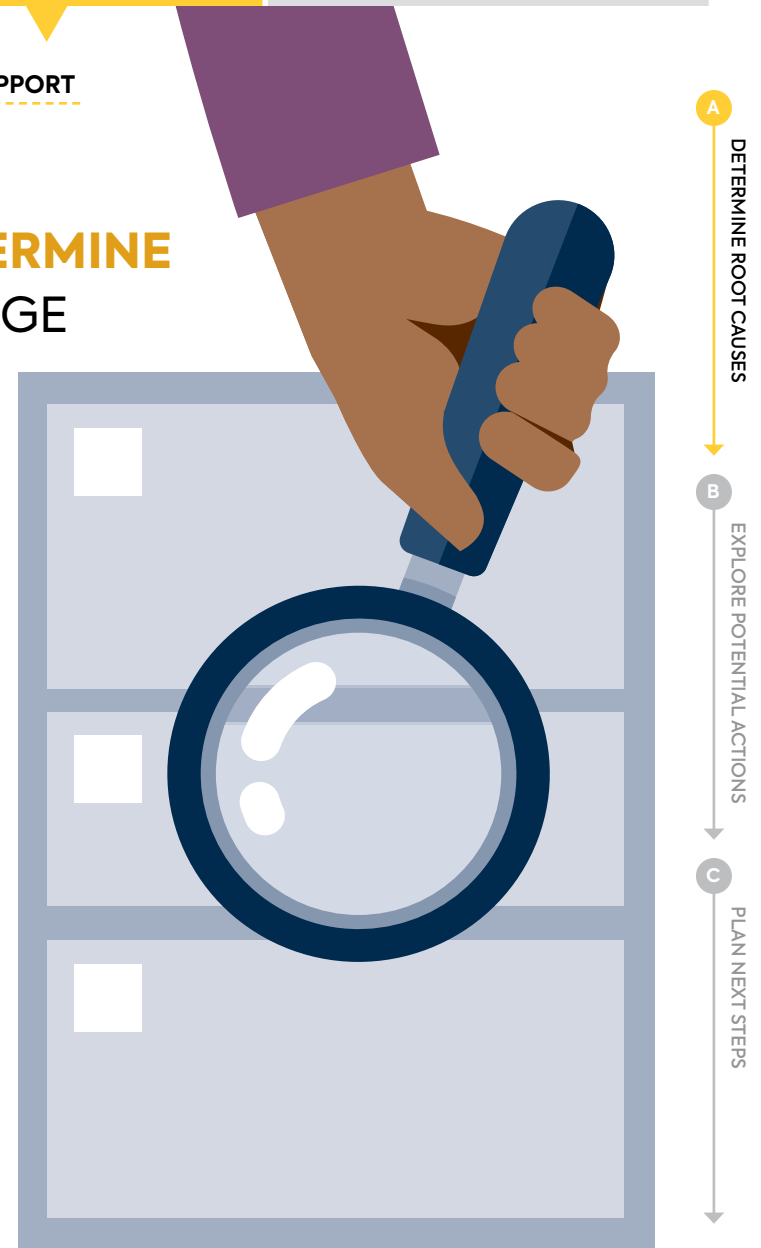
Consider...

- Available district data
- Input from different stakeholder groups, particularly those most directly impacted by existing inequities

**How** do biases play out in your district?

Explicit or implicit biases can underly root causes and/or affect peoples' perceptions of root causes.

Your notes:



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**KEY QUESTION 7.4: DOES EACH STUDENT HAVE ACCESS TO EFFECTIVE GUIDANCE TO SUPPORT POSTSECONDARY SUCCESS?**

WHAT ARE THE **ROOT CAUSES** OF YOUR DISTRICT’S CHALLENGE?

ROOT CAUSES

### Staff Capacity & Expertise PAGE 29

Districts or schools lack sufficient counseling staff, time, and/or expertise to meaningfully work with all students to develop postsecondary plans and provide individual guidance to promote college- and career-readiness.

### Family Engagement Practices PAGE 34

Effective practices for meaningfully engaging families in the process of supporting their students in navigating postsecondary opportunities are not consistently and equitably implemented across schools, and/or schools lack the resources to adequately address communication or logistical barriers.

### The Impact of Bias PAGE 7

In addition to taking on structural root causes (like those listed on this page), districts need to support staff in examining the racial, gender, and ability biases (among others) that may be contributing to students having inequitable experiences in school.

For example, staff members may hold unconscious biases around their perception of students from low-income backgrounds, resulting in them being less likely to receive strong guidance counseling related to various college and career pathways.

### Programs & Integrated Practices PAGE 31

Schools lack dedicated time and/or structures to facilitate strong programs and practices that help students learn about, choose, and plan for college and/or career opportunities.

### Other\* PAGE 36

*\*You can add a custom root cause depending on your district’s unique context*

A

B

C

DETERMINE ROOT CAUSES

EXPLORE POTENTIAL ACTIONS

PLAN NEXT STEPS

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**KEY QUESTION 7.4: DOES EACH STUDENT HAVE ACCESS TO EFFECTIVE GUIDANCE TO SUPPORT POSTSECONDARY SUCCESS?**

USE THESE GUIDING QUESTIONS AS YOU **EXPLORE POTENTIAL ACTIONS**

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	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



How would the actions shown on the following pages address **your district's specific challenge?**

For each action you choose, mark how you will apply it...

**SYSTEMWIDE**  
(Foundations for Excellence)

**IN SPECIFIC SCHOOLS OR CLASSROOMS**  
(Equitable Access)

How might you adapt any actions that seem promising to meet the specific needs of students in your district?

Which actions have **already been tried in your district?**

What lessons can you apply now to address your district's challenge?

What do stakeholders **recommend?**

What recommendations do different stakeholder groups have—particularly those most directly impacted by existing inequities?

What potential **barriers** exist?

What barriers exist that will need to be addressed to implement this action effectively? How will doing so improve students' experiences in school?

Your notes:

A DETERMINE ROOT CAUSES  
B EXPLORE POTENTIAL ACTIONS  
C PLAN NEXT STEPS

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**KEY QUESTION 7.4: DOES EACH STUDENT HAVE ACCESS TO EFFECTIVE GUIDANCE TO SUPPORT POSTSECONDARY SUCCESS?**

WHAT ARE THE **POTENTIAL ACTIONS?**



**Staff Capacity & Expertise**

**THE VISION**  
Districts and schools have sufficient counseling staff, time, and expertise to meaningfully work with all students to develop postsecondary plans and provide individual guidance to promote college- and career-readiness.

Hire and retain **counselors and other guidance-related staff**, and/or restructure the roles of other school staff to spend time on specific guidance functions, such as having an assistant principal serve as coordinator of postsecondary partnerships.

Prioritize schools with higher needs when making **counselor assignment decisions**, to ensure identified schools have lower student-to-counselor ratios and benefit from the expertise of experienced and effective counselors who are adept at meeting students' needs.

Free up **time for counselors to focus on their guidance role** and directly work with students, rather than completing administrative tasks such as data entry or scheduling; ensure there is staff capacity for postsecondary guidance counseling in addition to academic, social-emotional, physical and mental health, and family counseling.

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## KEY QUESTION 7.4: DOES EACH STUDENT HAVE ACCESS TO EFFECTIVE GUIDANCE TO SUPPORT POSTSECONDARY SUCCESS?



SYSTEM-WIDE



SPECIFIC SCHOOLS

## WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL ACTIONS?

### Staff Capacity & Expertise (cont'd)

Districts and schools have sufficient counseling staff, time, and expertise to meaningfully work with all students to develop postsecondary plans and provide individual guidance to promote college- and career-readiness.

THE VISION

Provide counselors, teachers, and school leaders with **ongoing, job-embedded professional learning** to:

- Understand their own **mindsets, expectations, and biases** around students' college and career options and aspirations, and break any harmful patterns through exploration, reflection, and discussion.
- Conduct **assessments and data analysis** on students' college- and career-readiness, applications, and outcomes, and identify disparities between groups of students.
- Understand the different components of and recent changes to **college and career application processes**, such as taking the SAT/ACT, applying for scholarships, or submitting recommendation letters.

Provide **collaborative planning time** by aligning counselors' and teachers' schedules so that they can share best practices and jointly plan instruction that directly relates to postsecondary competencies and readiness.

Other potential action(s):

A

DETERMINE ROOT CAUSES

B

EXPLORE POTENTIAL ACTIONS

C

PLAN NEXT STEPS



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**KEY QUESTION 7.4: DOES EACH STUDENT HAVE ACCESS TO EFFECTIVE GUIDANCE TO SUPPORT POSTSECONDARY SUCCESS?**

WHAT ARE THE **POTENTIAL ACTIONS?**



SYSTEM-WIDE



SPECIFIC SCHOOLS



**Programs & Integrated Practices**

**THE VISION**  
Schools have dedicated time and/or structures to facilitate strong programs and practices that help students learn about, choose, and plan for college and/or career opportunities.

Build **a culture around various college and career pathways** beginning in elementary school—for example, through regular conversations about the college experience, exposure to a range of careers through guest speakers and field trips, visits to local college campuses, and relevant literature and physical symbols (such as posters and pennants) in school and classroom environments.

Create an **advising or mentoring program** in which teachers, counselors, or other school staff help students clarify their interests, set postsecondary goals, and ensure that students’ courses and experiences are aligned with these goals.

Partner with **nonprofit organizations, local colleges and universities, and community members** to connect students with external college and career advising expertise, particularly for higher-need students and students who do not have access to such advising or counseling outside of school.

Integrate college and career counseling into the **school schedule and curriculum**—and ensure that counselors’ schedules prioritize sufficient time to meet with students, particularly students with the highest needs.

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## KEY QUESTION 7.4: DOES EACH STUDENT HAVE ACCESS TO EFFECTIVE GUIDANCE TO SUPPORT POSTSECONDARY SUCCESS?



SYSTEM-WIDE



SPECIFIC SCHOOLS

## WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL ACTIONS?

### Programs & Integrated Practices (cont'd)

THE VISION

Schools have dedicated time and/or structures to facilitate strong programs and practices that help students learn about, choose, and plan for college and/or career opportunities.

Monitor and ensure students are taking and passing **courses needed to graduate and become college- and career-ready**, through using a college preparatory curriculum, offering college-level courses or facilitating dual enrollment at local colleges, and/or creating individualized graduation plans for each student.

Implement practices that help students learn more about **college and career options**, for example:

- Arrange college visits, job shadowing, internships, and work placements to provide students with **direct experience** at colleges and in the workplace.
- Organize **individualized counseling, information sessions, and college and career fairs**, in partnership with colleges and universities, businesses, community members, former students, and current student peer mentors.
- Provide guidance and support on the **college and financial aid and/or job application process**—for example, tracking milestones, hosting mock interviews, and conducting resume and cover letter reviews.

A

DETERMINE ROOT CAUSES

B

EXPLORE POTENTIAL ACTIONS

C

PLAN NEXT STEPS

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**KEY QUESTION 7.4: DOES EACH STUDENT HAVE ACCESS TO EFFECTIVE GUIDANCE TO SUPPORT POSTSECONDARY SUCCESS?**

WHAT ARE THE **POTENTIAL ACTIONS?**



**Programs & Integrated Practices**  
(cont'd)

Collect and regularly review **data on the quantity and quality of guidance** students receive (including from surveys, focus groups, and postsecondary outcomes) to determine whether students of all backgrounds have equitable access to postsecondary counseling support, and to assess which guidance practices are most effective to aid continuous improvement.

Other potential action(s):

**THE VISION**

Schools have dedicated time and/or structures to facilitate strong programs and practices that help students learn about, choose, and plan for college and/or career opportunities.

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## KEY QUESTION 7.4: DOES EACH STUDENT HAVE ACCESS TO EFFECTIVE GUIDANCE TO SUPPORT POSTSECONDARY SUCCESS?



SYSTEM-WIDE



SPECIFIC SCHOOLS

## WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL ACTIONS?

### Family Engagement Practices

Effective practices for meaningfully engaging families in the process of supporting their students in navigating postsecondary opportunities are consistently and equitably implemented across schools, and schools have the resources to adequately address communication or logistical barriers.

THE VISION

Train and support counselors, teachers, and school leaders (through professional learning, exploration, reflection, and discussion) in understanding their own **mindsets, expectations, and biases** that may influence their engagement with families related to postsecondary opportunities.

Mitigate **logistical barriers** so that families can more easily attend in-person engagements (such as college and career information sessions) by providing services like transportation and childcare, holding events in different locations such as community centers, and scheduling events at different times, including evenings and weekends.

Engage families via **multiple forms of communication**, such as text messages, phone calls, letters, emails, social media, and in-person interactions—and provide information to families in their **home languages**—to ensure that all families receive communication about their students in a way that is convenient and accessible.

Provide frequent and consistent **communication to families about important deadlines and events**—such as financial aid application deadlines and career exploration events—being mindful of differences in home language, literacy levels, and technology access.

A

DETERMINE ROOT CAUSES

B

EXPLORE POTENTIAL ACTIONS

C

PLAN NEXT STEPS

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**KEY QUESTION 7.4: DOES EACH STUDENT HAVE ACCESS TO EFFECTIVE GUIDANCE TO SUPPORT POSTSECONDARY SUCCESS?**

WHAT ARE THE **POTENTIAL ACTIONS?**



SYSTEM-WIDE



SPECIFIC SCHOOLS



**Family Engagement Practices**  
(cont'd)

Collect and regularly review **data on family engagement** (including via surveys, focus groups, and meeting or event attendance) to determine whether families of all backgrounds are actively and meaningfully engaged in their students' postsecondary preparations, and to assess which family engagement practices are most effective to aid continuous improvement.

Other potential action(s):

**THE VISION**  
Effective practices for meaningfully engaging families in the process of supporting their students in navigating postsecondary opportunities are consistently and equitably implemented across schools, and schools have the resources to adequately address communication or logistical barriers.

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**KEY QUESTION 7.4: DOES EACH STUDENT HAVE ACCESS TO EFFECTIVE GUIDANCE TO SUPPORT POSTSECONDARY SUCCESS?**

**WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL ACTIONS?**



**Other Root Cause**

You can add a custom root cause depending on your district's unique context.

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**KEY QUESTION 7.4: DOES EACH STUDENT HAVE ACCESS TO EFFECTIVE GUIDANCE TO SUPPORT POSTSECONDARY SUCCESS?**

For prompts to help your team think about next steps, go to page 38.

# NOTES



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# Plan Next Steps



1. PRIORITIZE



2. CUSTOMIZE



3. ALIGN



4. PLAN

Now that your team has begun to uncover the root causes of your school system's challenges and explored possible actions to improve **Student Supports & Intervention**, it's time to plan next steps. You can continue to build on the momentum your team has built so far by beginning to outline what you will do next and who will help to move this work forward.



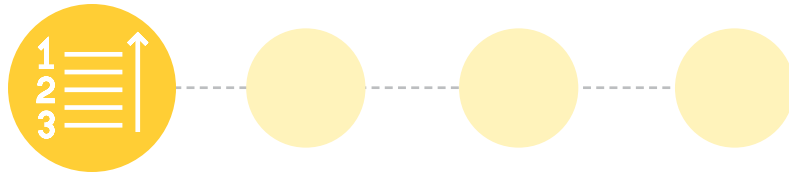
The Alliance for Resource Equity partners directly with state and local systems and communities to support education resource equity. Reach out to bring our team to you for workshops, in-depth engagements, or other support as you analyze resources, design strategies, and gear up for implementation.

[educationresorceequity.org](https://educationresorceequity.org)

RESOURCE EQUITY GUIDEBOOK SERIES  
**DIMENSION 7: STUDENT SUPPORTS & INTERVENTION**



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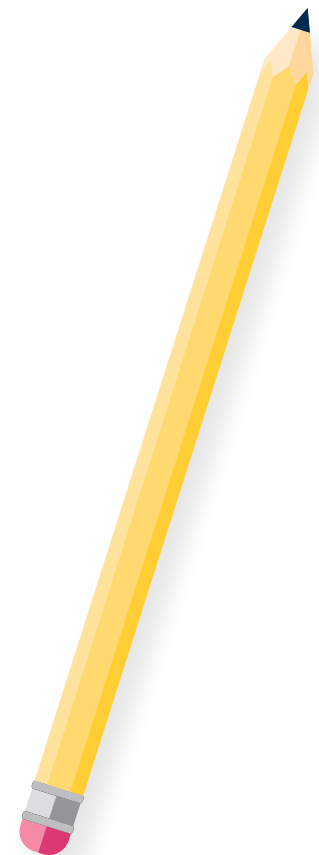
## 1. PRIORITIZE

How will we choose which promising actions to pursue—and when?

Important considerations:

- How do we believe this action could address our current challenges?
- How does the ease of implementing this action compare with the degree of impact it will have?
- What do we believe are the likely outcomes of implementing this action? For which students? Over what timeframe(s)?
- What is the opportunity cost of *not* moving forward with this action?
- To what extent is there energy and momentum in our community around moving forward with this action?

## NOTES



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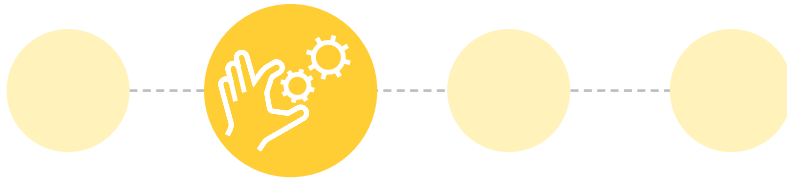
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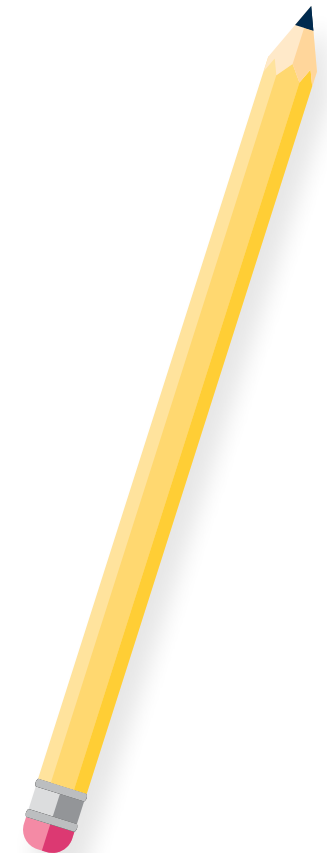
## 2. CUSTOMIZE

How will we adapt the most promising potential actions to fit our community's unique context?

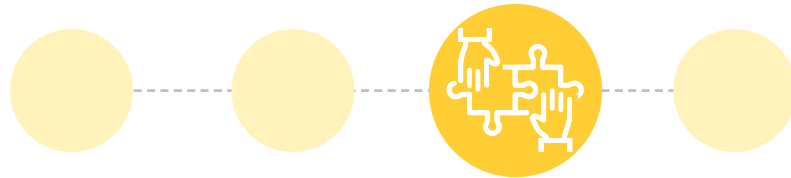
Important considerations:

- Are there past or current efforts that have been successful that we can adapt or build off of?
- What unique risks or barriers might threaten success?
- How will we get our community involved in making progress on this action?
- What prerequisite steps might be needed before we move forward?  
(For example, learning more through focus groups or community sessions, partnering with local advocacy groups, or changing existing policies or timelines)

## NOTES



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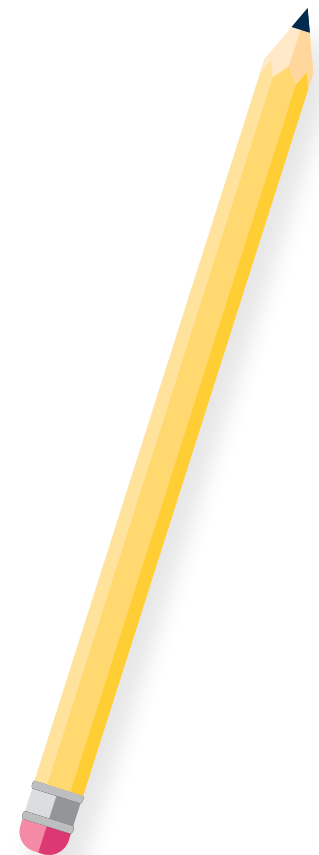
### 3. ALIGN

How do the most promising potential actions align with other strategic priorities in our district?

Important considerations:

- What is our big-picture theory of action? How does it tie any new actions that we choose to pursue to our district- or school-level priorities?
- How can we make sure that our strategic plan accurately reflects our equity goals?
- How might our efforts in this action area connect to [other dimensions](#) of education resource equity?
- What related efforts or investments does this work rely on? What else do we need to start, stop, or continue doing for implementing this action to be effective?
- How does this action align with the goals and priorities of different groups of people, including families, educators, and students?

### NOTES



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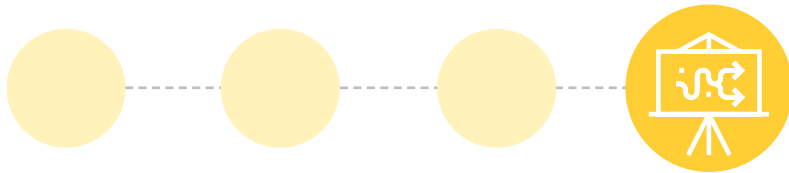
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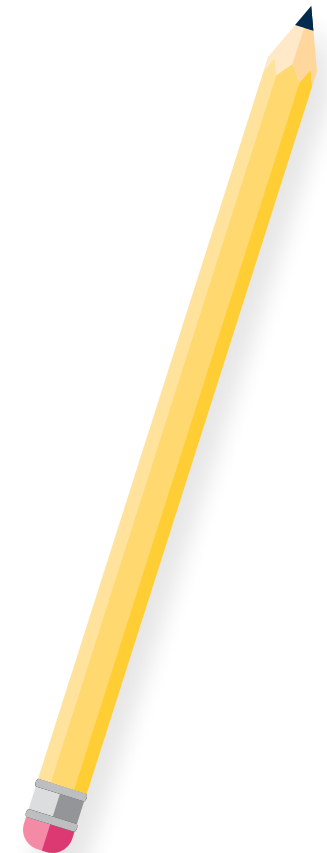
## 4. PLAN

What is needed to successfully implement the most promising actions?

Important considerations:

- What resources, processes, and mindsets will this work require? What shifts might we need to make? Will these shifts impact other district or school priorities?
- What can we do to proactively mitigate potential risks and barriers to success?
- What are our short-, medium-, and long-term timelines for planning and implementing this action?
- How might we build buy-in around this action?
- How will we measure impact? How will we know we are on track?

## NOTES







# APPENDIX



# ADDITIONAL NOTES

## **i** CULTURALLY SUSTAINING

In teaching and learning, **culturally sustaining practices** support and encourage students to express, preserve, and perpetuate their cultural identities (including race and ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, disability, and language), home practices, and lived experiences in their educational environments—especially those whose cultures typically get eroded or erased. Culturally sustaining practices seek to sustain—rather than just represent—students’ cultures and identities.

In districts, schools, and classrooms, this work entails crafting policies and learning experiences that are grounded in students’ real-life contexts, while validating and leveraging their cultural capital. For educators, it means building cultural competencies (understanding culture and its role in education), adopting asset-based mindsets with continual efforts to reduce bias, and forming strong relationships with individual students. Infusing students’ identities and experiences into the curricula and content itself is foundational to engaging and empowering students—therefore, **culturally relevant materials** (such as literature that features different types of families and characters who look like students or who face relatable challenges, without resorting to stereotypes) are a key component of culturally sustaining teaching and learning.

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## When using this work, please cite as:

Alliance for Resource Equity. *Resource Equity Guidebook: Student Supports & Intervention*. Education Resource Strategies and The Education Trust, 2021. [educationresourceequity.org/toolkit/guidebooks](https://educationresourceequity.org/toolkit/guidebooks)







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