

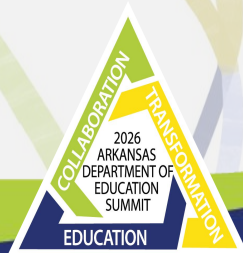
Leading District Improvement

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Is Your System Coherent?

Every system is perfectly designed to get the results it gets.

Mastering the 9 cells requires moving away from isolated initiatives and toward coherent systems.

Arkansas's Accountability System

Equal Weights for ELA, Math and Science
Focused on academic achievement, growth and opportunities.

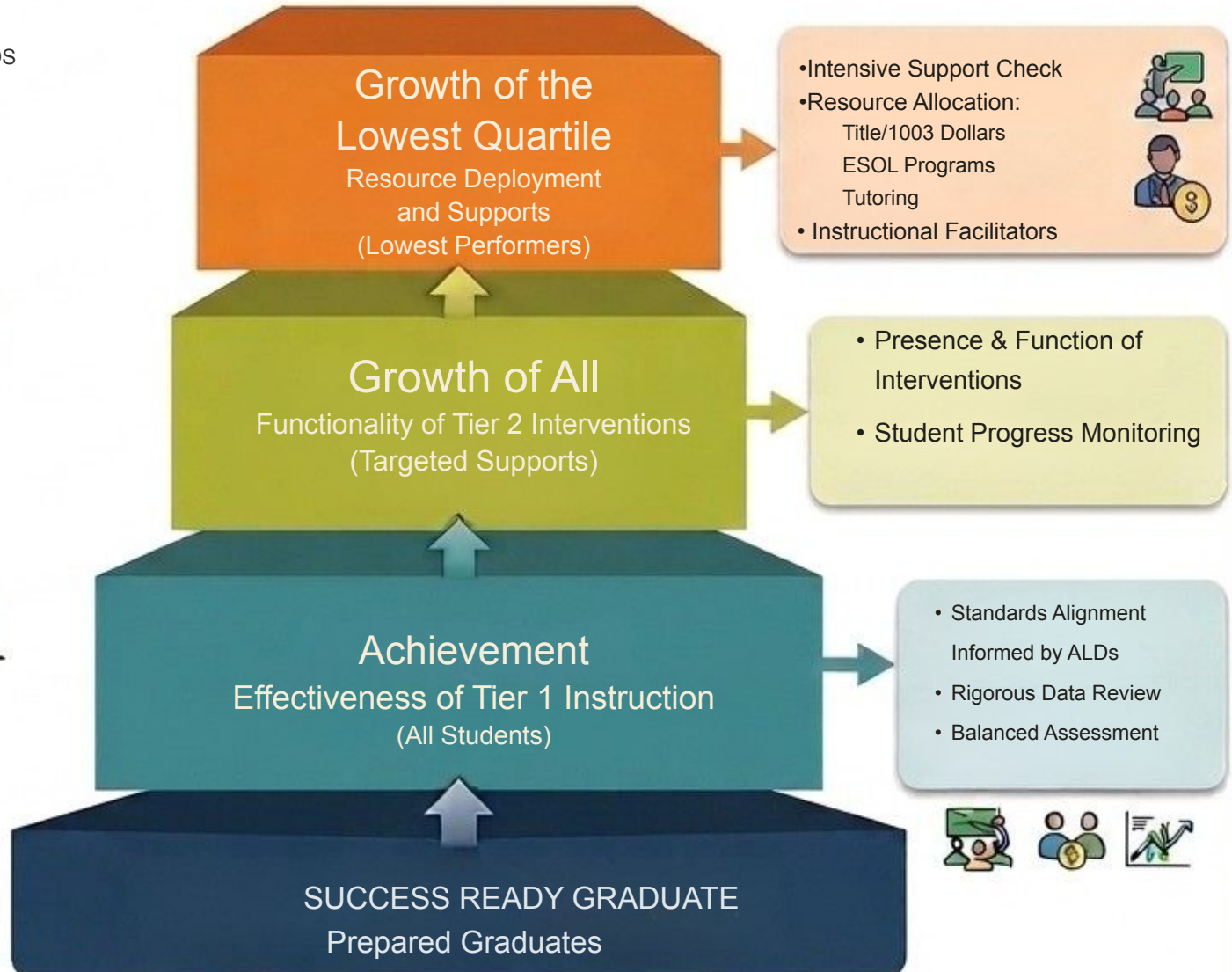
STANDARDS



ALDs



Data



District/School Profile Based on Rating

**High Achievement,
High Growth**

**Low Achievement,
High Growth**

**High Achievement,
Low Growth**

**Low Achievement,
Low Growth**

Building Profiles

High Achievement, High Growth

Description: This building demonstrates a highly coherent system where standard-aligned, high-rigor Tier 1 instruction is happening daily across all classrooms. Core instruction is strong, and robust tracking systems ensure that any small learning gaps are addressed immediately before they widen.

What District Leaders Should Look For / Next Steps:

- **Verify Sustainability:** Ensure that this high performance is consistent across all student subgroups, including the bottom quartile.
- **Examine Replication Potential:** Audit their collaborative team protocols and data-tracking systems to serve as a blueprint for underperforming schools in the district.
- **Focus on Enrichment:** Check if Tier 1 instruction includes extended learning opportunities or extension activities that continue to push top-performing students.

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Low Achievement, Low Growth

Description: This profile indicates that instruction is likely below grade level or severely misaligned across the board. Tier 1 core instruction lacks rigor, and the intervention systems (Tier 2 and Tier 3) are either disconnected from core standards or failing to track whether students are actually mastering prerequisite skills.

What District Leaders Should Look For / Next Steps:

- **Audit Tier 1 Alignment:** Conduct immediate walkthroughs to check if classroom activities and assessment practices are actually aligned to grade-level standards and Achievement Level Descriptors (ALDs).
- **Review Curriculum Fidelity:** Look for major gaps or inconsistent implementation of the curriculum from classroom to classroom.
- **Rebuild Intervention Foundations:** Investigate whether current interventions are scaffolded to help students reach grade-level expectations or if they are simply repeating low-level work.

Building Profiles

High Achievement, Low Growth

Description: While overall proficiency looks positive—often due to strong historical student baseline skills—students are not making meaningful progress over the school year. This typically indicates a lack of instructional urgency, low expectations for continuous growth, or weak Tier 2 intervention systems that fail to track live student progress.

What District Leaders Should Look For / Next Steps:

- **Evaluate Rigor & Differentiated Instruction:** Walk classrooms to determine if teachers are teaching to the ceiling or if instruction stalls once students hit basic "proficiency" targets.
- **Check Live Progress Monitoring:** Examine how the school tracks standard mastery dynamically rather than relying solely on end-of-year results.
- **Review Tier 2 Interventions:** Ensure that intervention systems are tightly aligned to core standards and actively driving growth for students who may be missing specific concepts.

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Low Achievement, High Growth

Description: This profile shows that things are moving in the right direction. High growth indicates that effective Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions are likely in place, or that Tier 1 practices are steadily improving. However, historical gaps or lingering inconsistencies in Tier 1 instructional rigor prevent these gains from translating into high overall proficiency yet.

What District Leaders Should Look For / Next Steps:

- **Identify Tier 1 Gaps:** Walk every classroom to pinpoint exactly where inconsistencies in grade-level rigor or instructional practices are occurring.
- **Review Assessment Practices:** Check if classroom assessments match the high expectations of state standards or if they lean toward lower-level tasks.
- **Capitalize on Growth Drivers:** Isolate what is working well in their collaborative teams or intervention blocks (especially within the bottom quartile) and anchor those successes into standard daily core instruction.

District Improvement Starts with the Right Questions

These three pillars provide the foundation for meaningful improvement.

CONDITIONS FOR LEARNING

Student Discipline

Classroom
Management

School wide
expectations



LEADERSHIP CAPACITY

Developing Teacher
Practice

Instructional
Leadership and
Feedback

Difficult Conversations

Progress Monitoring



GRADE-LEVEL INSTRUCTION

Curriculum and
Instructional Alignment

Data and
Decision-Making

Collaborative Team
Effectiveness

Student Engagement



*When discipline
breaks down,
instructional time is lost,
engagement decreases,
and student achievement
suffers.*

Reflective Questions:

Are disruptions occurring that impact student learning?

What discipline data trends exist to indicate barriers to learning?
(Locations, times of day, grade levels, etc.)

Practical Actions

Scenario: Classroom Disruptions Are Impeding Instruction

A building principal is receiving frequent reports of classroom disruptions across several grade levels.

Transitions are chaotic with minimal adult supervision. Teacher morale is declining, office referrals are increasing, and instructional time is being lost. While the principal is working hard to address individual incidents, the problem persists and is affecting student learning.

Establish a school behavioral team to create consistent expectations and monitor progress.

Provide targeted staff training on classroom management, student engagement and self-regulation.

Establish discipline systems and clear roles and steps for escalation.

Analyze behavior data to identify patterns by classroom, grade level, location, and time of day.

System 2: Leadership Capacity

*Schools improve when leadership extends beyond one person and becomes a **shared** responsibility across the organization.*

Leadership Capacity

ARE MY LEADERS:

- Equipped to lead effective data discussions, turn data into instructional next steps?
- Providing feedback that improves teacher practice?
- Equipped to address underperformance clearly and timely?

Scenario: Inconsistent Feedback and Accountability

A principal conducts classroom walkthroughs regularly but struggles to provide timely, actionable feedback. Teacher performance concerns linger for months without clear expectations, support, or accountability.

Practical Actions

Narrow the focus and communicate monthly look fors based on School Improvement goals.

Use tool that allows for immediate feedback.

Coach the principal on providing specific, actionable feedback tied to instructional expectations.

Establish consistent timelines for follow-up observations and support.

Monitor leadership actions to ensure concerns are addressed promptly and consistently.

Weak Feedback:

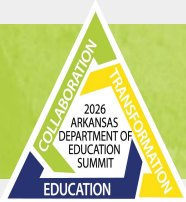
“You need to improve student engagement.”

Strong Feedback:

“During the 20-minute discussion, six students participated while the majority remained passive. To increase engagement, try having students discuss the question with a partner before calling on volunteers. This gives every student time to process and increases participation.”

The goal of feedback is not to prove you observed the lesson. The goal is to improve the next lesson.

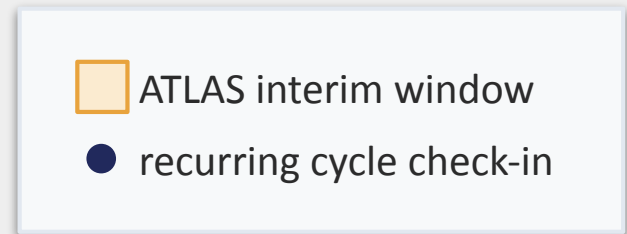
Practice: Pick one Low-Quality Feedback and Practice Rewording as High-Quality Feedback



Low-Quality Feedback	High-Quality Feedback
“Students weren’t engaged.”	“During independent practice, about half of the students finished early and began talking. Consider adding an extension task with higher-level application questions so early finishers remain cognitively engaged while you continue supporting other students.”
“You need better classroom management.”	“Transitions took about four minutes because students weren’t sure what to do next. Try posting and practicing a consistent transition routine with a visual timer and clear directions before releasing students.”
“Ask more higher-order questions.”	“Most of today’s questions required students to recall facts. During tomorrow’s lesson, intentionally plan two or three ‘why’ or ‘how’ questions that require students to justify their thinking before you reveal the answer.”
“Good job differentiating.”	“I noticed you provided sentence stems for students who needed language support while asking advanced learners to defend multiple solution strategies. Continue planning these supports ahead of time—they allowed more students to participate successfully.”

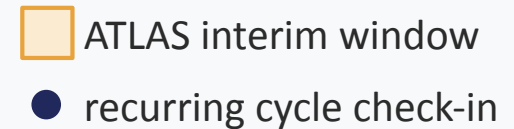
FEEDBACK DOWN

DATA UP



FEEDBACK DOWN

DATA UP



System 3: Grade-Level Instruction

Turn and Talk

*How does your district
know grade-level
instruction happens daily?*

Grade-Level Instruction

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS:

- Are standards, curriculum, and ALDs aligned across schools?
- How are my leaders ensuring grade-level instruction happens daily in every classroom?

Scenario: Ensuring Grade-Level Learning for All

After receiving a district rating of a D, the central office staff gathers walkthrough data in all buildings. While most classrooms are teaching grade-level standards, rigor is consistently low, resulting in low achievement across the district.

Practical Actions

Review curriculum, standards, and ALD alignment across schools to ensure consistent expectations.

Conduct classroom walkthroughs with principals to monitor evidence of grade-level instruction.

Establish common look-fors that define high-quality, grade-level teaching.

Use instructional data and student work to verify that grade-level standards are taught daily.

Review principal coaching and feedback for instructional consistency.

Grade-Level Instruction

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS:

Are my leaders equipped to guide teams to improve student outcomes?

Are team meetings focused on results, not compliance?

Scenario: Leading Teams Toward Results

A principal schedules regular collaborative and leadership team meetings, but discussions focus primarily on completing tasks, reviewing requirements, and sharing information. Little time is spent analyzing student outcomes or determining actions needed to improve results.

Practical Actions

Observe team meetings to evaluate the focus of discussions.

Coach leaders to use student outcome data to guide team decisions.

Establish meeting protocols centered on results, actions, and accountability.

Require clear next steps following each team discussion.

Monitor team outcomes to ensure meetings lead to improved student performance.

How do I tie this all together?

*Goals should serve as
your North Star for
action steps across the
year.*

District Goals Drive Building Actions

District Level Goal Structure

By [date], the district will increase [specific student outcome] as measured by [named assessment], from [use 2026 Atlas Summative as baseline data] to [target], resulting in approximately [number] additional students meeting expectations. Progress will be monitored using [interim assessments, CBMs, and HQIM-aligned measures] aligned to grade-level standards.

Example: By May 2027, the percentage of students scoring proficient or advanced (Levels 3 and 4) in ELA on the ATLAS Summative Assessment will increase from 42% (420 of 1,000 students) to 50% (500 of 1,000 students), resulting in approximately 80 additional students demonstrating proficiency. Progress toward this goal will be monitored through weekly standards, curriculum, and ALD reviews; strategic instructional walkthroughs; timely feedback to teachers; and the use of walkthrough and student performance data to inform next instructional steps aligned to grade-level standards.

District Goals vs. Building Goals: Clarifying the Difference

District Level (The Satellite)

What must be true across every school to improve outcomes system-wide?



Building Shared Understanding of System Coherence

Setting District-Wide Priorities and Expectations

Identify Specific Learning Gaps and Root Causes

Building Capacity in Building Leadership

Progress Monitoring Building Expectations and Timelines

Building Level (The Microscope)

What do our students need, and what must teachers do differently tomorrow?



Tier 1 Instruction

Analyzing Standards, Curriculum, and ALDs

Building Capacity in Collaborative Teams

Ensuring Student Practice with Grade-Level Content

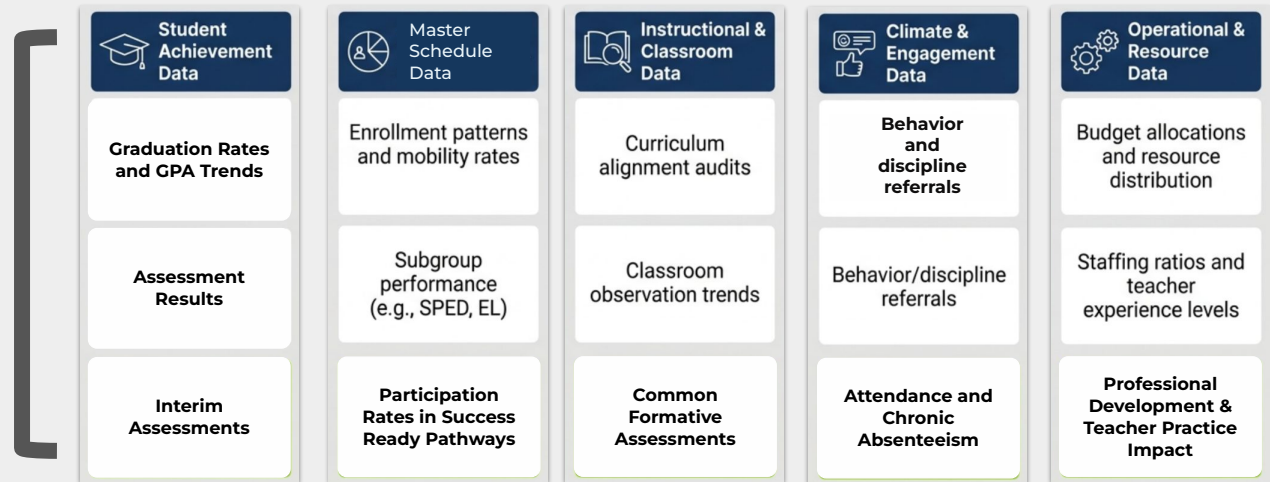
Delivering Tier 2 and Tier 3 Supports

Start Where Learning Happens



Leading District Improvement

Being data rich
can be
overwhelming.



So, start in the classroom.

What are teachers doing?

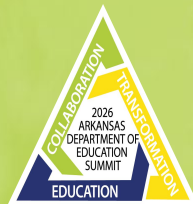
What are students doing?

Ask students, what are you learning?

The Questions We Ask Determine the Results We Achieve

*Effective district
leaders do more than
monitor compliance.*

*They build
leadership capacity,
remove barriers
to learning, and
create the conditions
for every student
to succeed.*



Reflection Resource

Data and Decision-Making

Am I prioritizing data that drives meaningful decisions?

Are data conversations leading to clear instructional actions?

Leader Capacity for Data Use

Are my leaders equipped to lead effective data discussions?

Can my leaders turn data into instructional next steps?

Curriculum and Instructional Alignment

Are standards, curriculum, and ALDs aligned across schools?

How are my leaders ensuring grade-level instruction happens daily in every classroom?

Collaborative Team Effectiveness

Are my leaders equipped to guide teams to improve student outcomes?

Are team meetings focused on results, not compliance?

Instructional Leadership and Feedback

Are my leaders providing feedback that improves teacher practice?

Is the feedback changing classroom instruction consistently?

Progress Monitoring

Are my leaders consistently monitoring progress toward goals?

Is progress reviewed, adjusted, and acted upon regularly?

Difficult Conversations

Are my leaders equipped to address underperformance clearly and timely?

Are expectations reinforced through consistent action?

Recognition and Culture

Are my leaders recognizing and celebrating effective practices?

Am I building a culture that reinforces success?



DIVISION OF ELEMENTARY & SECONDARY EDUCATION