

Introduction

A focused set of school priorities should drive each of the decisions you make as part of the school planning process, including developing your school calendar, establishing a school's master schedule, setting educator working conditions, and identifying the highest-leverage instructional partners and supports for your school. Your priorities can also play an important role in engaging families, recruiting new staff, and ensuring the entire school team maintains focus throughout the year. **The final draft of your school priorities will be a public document and part of your overall school plan.**

Directions for Completing School Priorities

Please provide a brief **description and rationale for the two to three top priorities you intend to work on next school year (SY 18-19), using the template on the next page.** Priorities should be specific, school-wide, and connected to student needs based on performance data. The provided template includes two examples that indicate the suggested length and depth of priorities, which can serve as a model for completing this task.

When setting your priorities, you will want to consider using the [On the Right Path: Best Practice Guide for High Quality Schools](#). These practices are based on research about what has worked to rapidly increase academic and non-academic student outcomes in turnaround schools.

For reference, the four turnaround practices are:

- Turnaround Practice 1: Instructional Leadership, Shared Responsibility and Professional Collaboration
- Turnaround Practice 2: Intentional Practices for Improving Instruction
- Turnaround Practice 3: Student-Specific Supports & Instruction to All Students
- Turnaround Practice 4: Climate & Culture for Students, Families and the Community

Helpful Tips for Setting Priorities

Principals and TLTs may want to consider the following steps in developing priorities for next year. This is intended as a helpful resource only; school teams do not have to use this approach and can run the priority-setting process however they see fit.

1. Review the *On the Right Path: Best Practice Guide for High Quality Schools*. This document can be useful for sparking ideas, shaping priorities, and developing action steps later in the planning process.
2. Review a comprehensive set of current data about your school. This could include data reports from the Mock Quality School Review, last year's state assessment data, MAP and ANet data, stakeholder survey data (student, teacher, community), this year's MSV report, discipline data, attendance data, progress on the current school plan, and other relevant school indicators found on Tableau and other input from the school community.
3. Develop a few key findings from the data. Pose critical questions including, "What are the persistent student achievement issues at your school?" and "Based on the data, what are school-wide issues that should and can be addressed next year?" If possible, share these findings with the faculty at large and solicit their feedback on these critical questions as well.
4. Brainstorm a list of potential areas of focus. It may be helpful to classify brainstormed focus areas as short-term vs. longer-term. A priority should be a complex issue that is high leverage for impacting student achievement and warrants focused time, energy and resources. You may also want to map your priority back to the *On the Right Path: Best Practice Guide for High Quality Schools*.
5. Once the team has agreed on two to three key priorities for improvement, write up the priority in a short statement and provide the rationale using data to support your decision, using the provided template. Share these draft priorities with the school faculty for feedback and incorporate into the final priorities as appropriate.

Deadlines & Review

Draft Phase I deliverables, including School Priorities, must be approved by principals and TLTs and submitted via Google Drive to SEZP by 5pm on Tuesday, Feb. 27. The SEZP team will review the Phase I documents and provide feedback by Tuesday, March 6. If needed, principals may be asked to revise and resubmit priorities by Monday, March 12. **The SEZP will post priorities on the website as "final draft pending Board approval" by Wednesday, March 14,** prior to the SPS transfer window. Phase I documents will also be shared with the SEA and SEZP Board.

[Please note the priorities listed below are provided as examples only. Delete these and fill in your own.]

Priority 1: Intentional Practices for Improving Instruction (Turnaround Practice #2)

We will improve our students' proficiency in literacy skills across all content areas, enabling students to access grade-level content and explain their thinking in writing in each subject area. To accomplish this, the school will develop a cohesive literacy strategy across all subject areas and teachers will receive professional development to improve literacy instruction. As a result, students will have more exposure and practice with literacy skills throughout the school day. Progress will be measured by MAP growth, MCAS, and school-created assessments.

Rationale:

Results of our quality school review indicate that while we are making effective progress in standards 2a-2f, we are not currently seeing changes in instructional practices across all content areas. Some classrooms still struggle with standard-aligned lessons or scaffolding grade level rigorous tasks to meet the needs of all students in core instruction.

MCAS data indicates that many students have difficulty clearly explaining their thinking in writing across content areas. Open response data in English Language Arts (ELA) is below the state average by 17 percentage points (grade 6), 13 percentage points (grade 7), and 22 percentage points (grade 8). Grades 6-8 received an average score of 1.65, 1.78, and 1.69 on a 4 point scale.

In math, our students' ability to write a response to a question to explain their thinking was below the state average by 16 percentage points (grade 6), 30 percentage points (grade 7), and 24 percentage points (grade 8), with average scores of 1.67, 1.11 and 1.50 on a 4 point scale.

In addition, this past year, only 15% of our students showed growth in literacy skills on MAP between fall and winter.

Priority 2: Student-Specific Supports & Instruction to All Students (Turnaround Practice #3)

We will improve our intervention / acceleration supports for ELL students and professional development for teachers to effectively serve our ELL students, thereby improving ELL subgroup outcomes. During the 18-19 school year, we will provide ELL students with opportunities for acceleration and targeted intervention in reading and/or math 3-6 times per week in order to fill identified gaps in learning and accelerate growth. In addition, teachers will receive targeted professional development to ensure ELL students can successfully access grade-level content. To assess progress, we will analyze MAP data specifically for ELL students.

Rationale:

Our ELL student outcomes indicate that our school needs to increase the quality of student-specific, targeted support and instruction for this subgroup. While our school's cumulative PPI for all students increased from 125 points awarded in 2014 to 325 points in 2015, for ELL and former ELL students, PPI actually dropped 25 points awarded in 2015.

In addition, a rating of "developing" for academic interventions for ELL students was one of the lowest scores on our MSV report. Core teachers also reported in the MSV survey that ELL supports are a major challenge: *"Challenges to supporting ELL students are reflected in the survey data as well, which showed that, on average, instructional staff have mixed opinions about whether there are adequate resources and time to support English Language Learners."*