

Summer 2021



VAI's Admin Guide

Beyond Learning Loss:
Six Ways Schools Can Thrive in the
Aftermath of the Pandemic

aaron.braunschneider@vaei.org
www.vaei.org



"A peacock that rests on his tail feathers is just
another turkey."

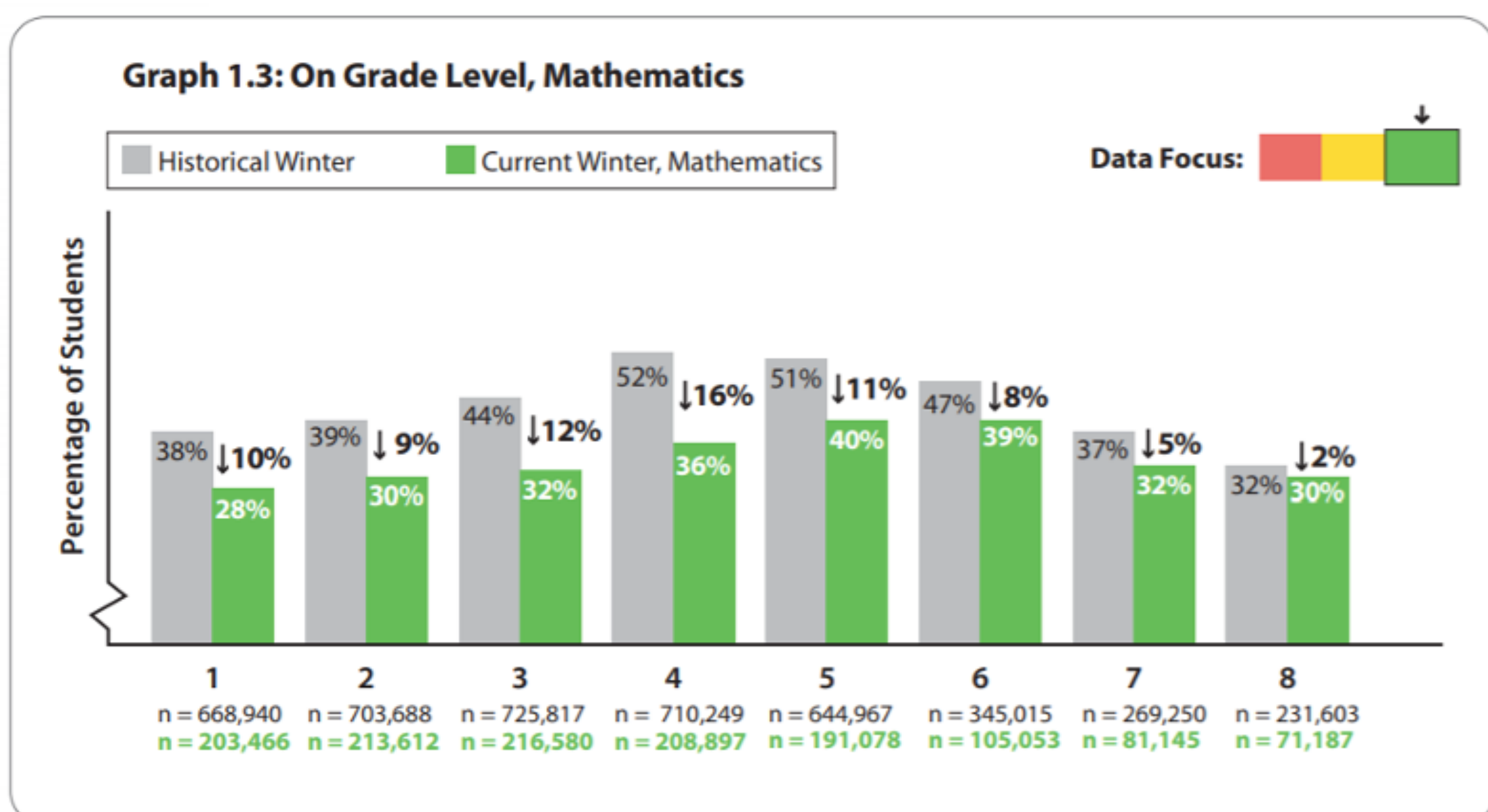
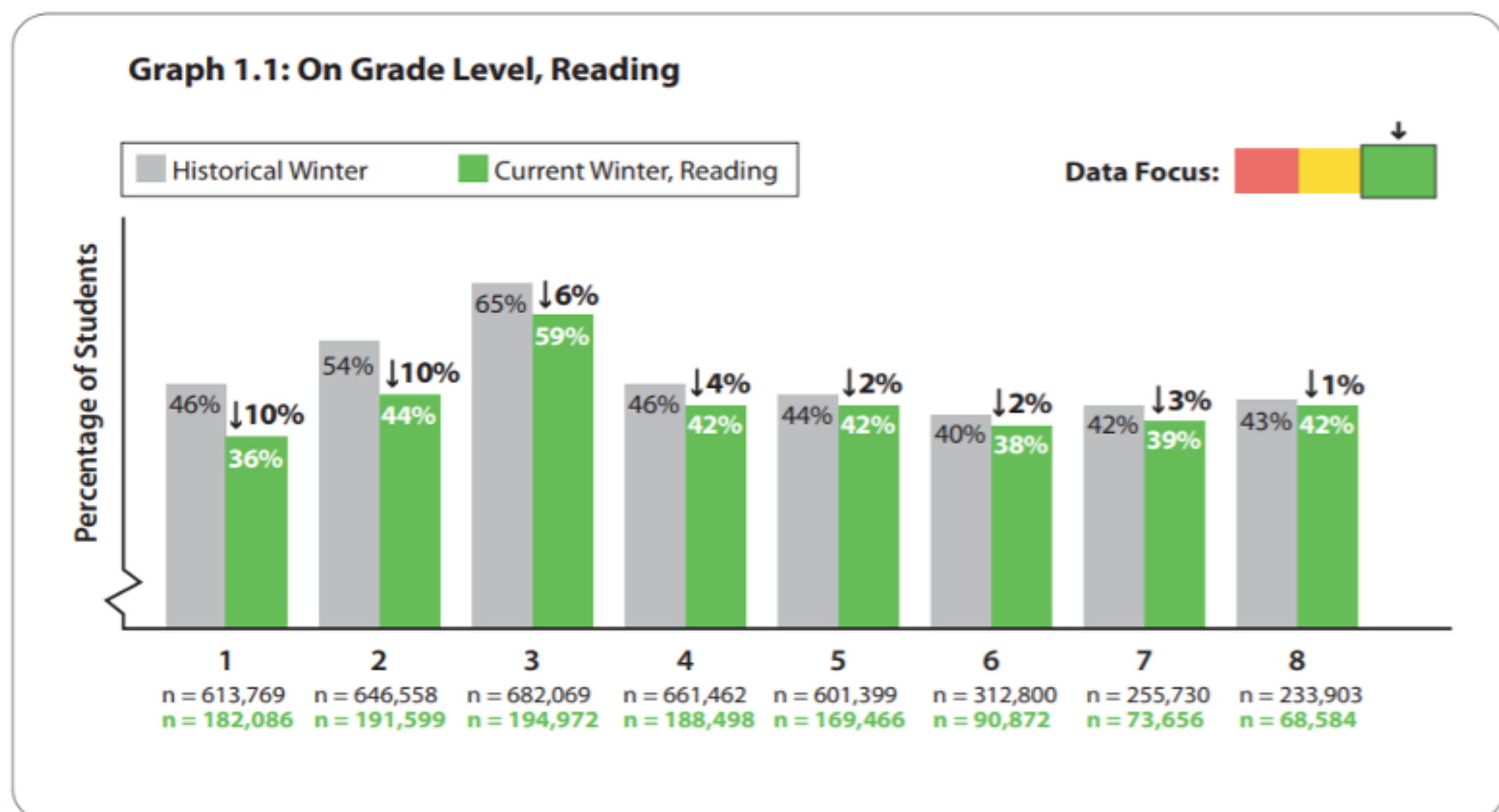
—Dolly Parton



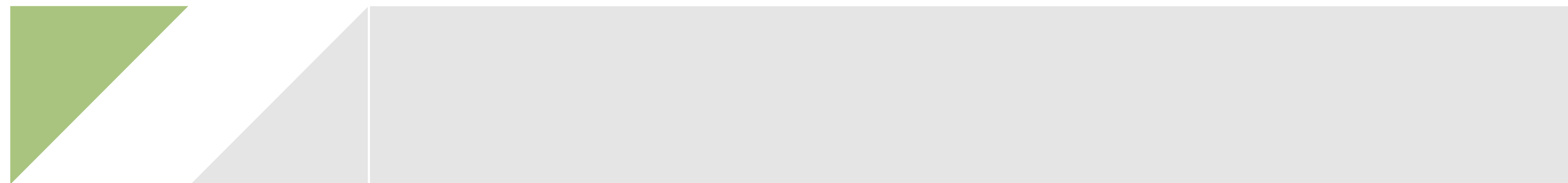
Learning Loss, Instructional Loss, Unfinished Learning...whatever you call it, the 2020–21 school year has left its mark on the learning process. But rather than focus on the negative, use this as an opportunity for schools to reimagine their instructional practices by leveraging the lessons learned from pandemic teaching and embracing authentic learning experiences as a way to accelerate learning and close the gaps. Here are some key ideas to help you rethink, refocus, and reimagine teaching and learning this fall.

Determining Learning Loss

There is no shortage of data on learning loss. Multiple assessment providers have published reports to highlight the impact the pandemic has had on learning. A recent [Curriculum Associates Report](#) found that winter 2021 scores for reading and mathematics in K–8 were down compared to historical winter scores. In reading, there was a bigger discrepancy in K–3, whereas in math, the discrepancy was greatest in K–6. Additionally, unfinished learning in math was greater than unfinished reading across all grade levels.



SOURCE: Curriculum Associates Report



Another report by [Renaissance \(March 2021\)](#) found that in reading, students are about 2 points behind pre-COVID expectations at midyear, and 6 points behind in math. However, by comparing fall 2020 and winter 2021 data, the gaps had begun to shrink. Overall, they found expected growth in reading and math approaching typical levels in the first half of the 2020–2021 school year. So what are we to believe? Is there learning loss?

Reading/Early Literacy				
	Winter Expected Mean Unified Scaled Score	Winter Observed Mean Unified Scaled Score	Scaled Score Difference (Observed minus Expected)	Percentile Rank Difference (Observed minus Expected)
Grade 1	815	823	8	2
Grade 2	932	929	-3	-2
Grade 3	967	968	1	1
Grade 4	1008	1002	-6	-3
Grade 5	1034	1031	-3	-1
Grade 6	1058	1053	-5	-3
Grade 7	1076	1070	-6	-3
Grade 8	1092	1087	-5	-3
Overall (1–8)			-3	-2

Mathematics				
	Winter Expected Mean Unified Scaled Score	Winter Observed Mean Unified Scaled Score	Scaled Score Difference (Observed minus Expected)	Percentile Rank Difference (Observed minus Expected)
Grade 2	904	900	-4	-4
Grade 3	961	954	-7	-5
Grade 4	1007	992	-15	-9
Grade 5	1043	1031	-12	-8
Grade 6	1069	1059	-10	-6
Grade 7	1085	1079	-6	-4
Grade 8	1099	1096	-3	-1
Overall (2–8)			-9	-6

SOURCE: Renaissance (March 2021)

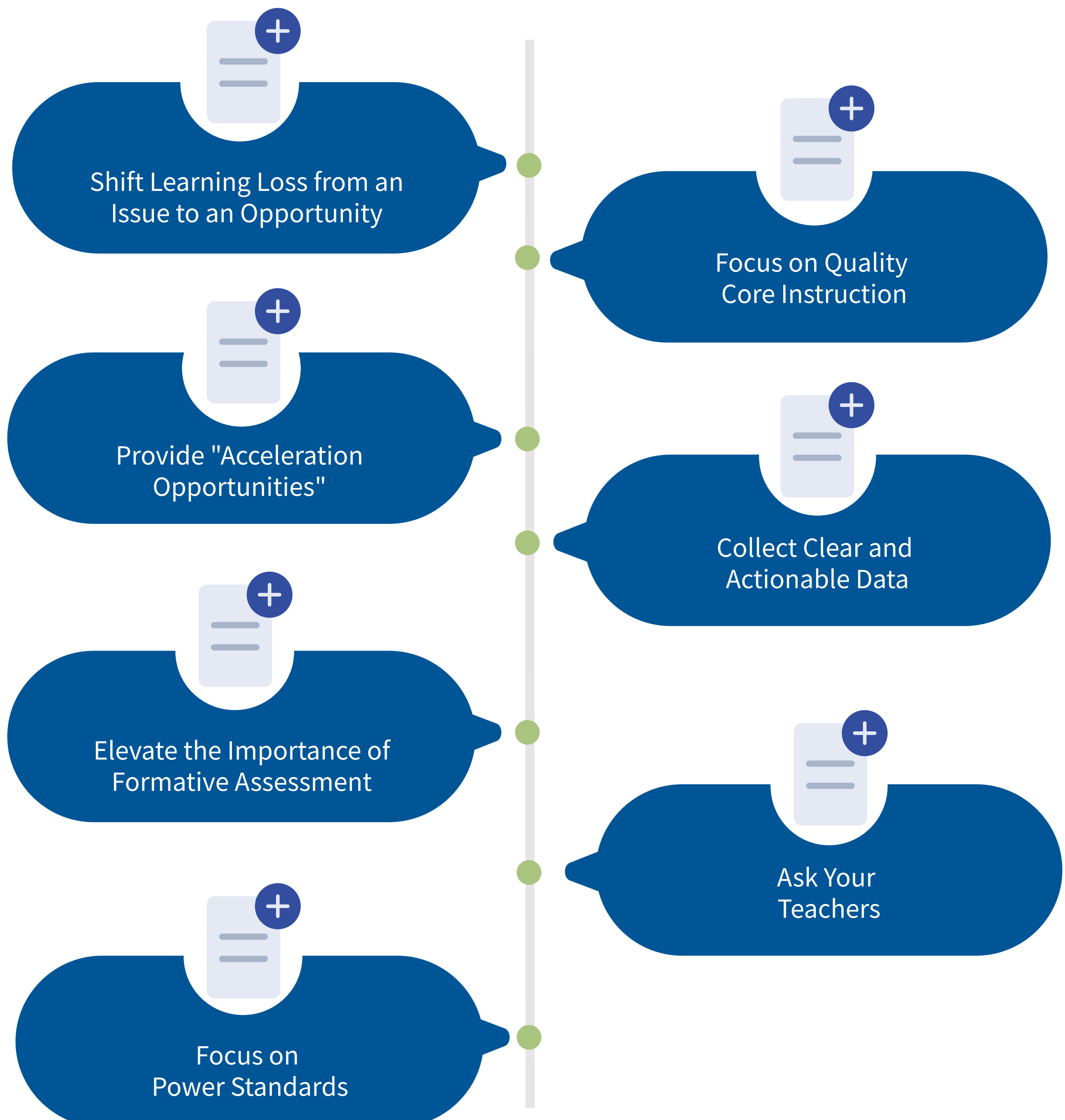
Whichever national report you choose to believe, what is most important is what is happening in *your* school. You know your students. You have your own data to collect and analyze. You know the pandemic caused gaps in some way, shape, or form, for your students. The biggest question remains: How will you bridge those gaps?

Here are 6 ways administrators can not only overcome learning loss, but move beyond it, accelerating learning for all students for years to come.

1

Have a Plan to Focus Your Efforts

It's always good to start with a plan. Consider these seven big ideas as you formulate a plan to address the gaps in learning for your particular school or district:





Shift Learning Loss from an Issue to an Opportunity.

Learning loss is not burdened on one person's or one group's shoulders. There is no one to blame here. This challenge is an outcome of the pandemic. You are not alone. Shift your mindset from a problem for you and your school to an issue facing all educators around the globe. Knowing that you are not alone in this battle doesn't make eradicating learning loss any easier, but it does help provide opportunities to collaborate outside of your school to find innovative solutions that help reimagine education.

It also provides a never-before opportunity to reset the educational paradigm. Educators reinvented teaching and learning practically overnight in shifting to virtual school. As we reopen the doors, we know change is possible, so use the newfound openness to change and pursue your most ambitious goals for your school.



Focus on Quality Core Instruction

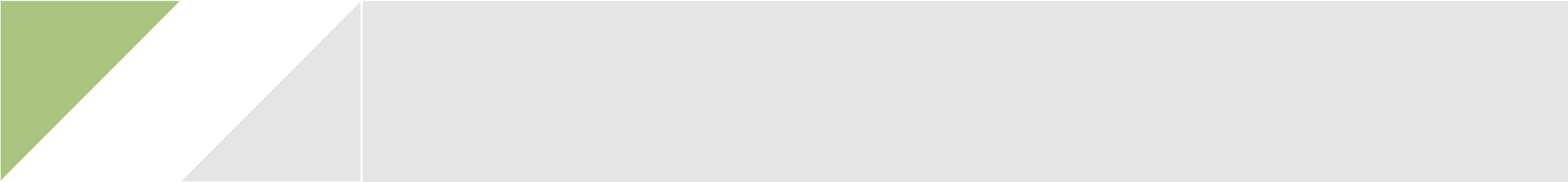
It's easy to think of remediation when trying to fill a gap, but remediation is not the complete answer to learning loss. When students are pulled out of their regular grade-level instruction for the skill and drill practices associated with remediation, they can fall further and further behind their grade level peers. "With the possible exception of one-on-one tutoring, the research literature on remediation generally finds few benefits for students." [EdWeek June 12, 2020](#)

Rather, focus on grade-level curriculum with supports built in to bring students to where they need to be. Provide engaging, high-quality instruction that is rigorous yet attainable. To avoid the "*learn it, test it, forget it*" cycle, content must be continually revisited throughout the year. It needs to be connected and not siloed. One of the best ways to accomplish this is through authentic or [project-based learning](#), where students participate in work that matters. They find meaning and relevance in everything they do. They see how the content and skills they learn connect to a broader world. Ensuring all students receive engaging, high-quality, grade-level instruction promotes an equitable learning environment where all students are expected to succeed.



Provide "Acceleration Opportunities."

Instead of remediation, focus on acceleration. Accelerate learning to close gaps through engaging and meaningful experiences outside of normal classroom instruction. Rethink your summer and afterschool programs. With the CARES Act, CRRSA Act, and ARP Act, schools are finally given the funding they so desperately deserve to provide [rich, authentic learning experiences](#) that truly accelerate learning. Use this opportunity to overhaul existing summer and afterschool programs to help close the learning gaps.



Invest in training high quality tutors or interventionists to work with students individually or in small groups. Additionally, leverage those lessons in flexibility learned during the pandemic to support your students outside of the classroom. Many of your students may now have accessibility and familiarity with using technology to learn. Use this new knowledge to your advantage by offering virtual support sessions, tutoring, and mentoring after hours, to ensure each student receives the necessary support to accelerate learning.



Collect Clear and Actionable Data.

Rely on the data from your own students over national surveys on learning loss, but avoid data overload. Only collect the data you need and be sure to eliminate any overlapping assessments. Consider making a list of the current assessments given at each grade level and their purpose. Find areas of overlap and reevaluate their use. Be leary of state tests and off-the-shelf “diagnostic tools.” Although they provide a snapshot of student achievement at a particular time, it is not the complete picture of who your students are and what they can do. Shift your focus more on the process (using assessment to inform instruction) rather than a product (creation of assessment or reports on results).



Elevate the Importance of Formative Assessment.

State and other standardized assessments can only tell you so much about a student. It is one set of data at one point in time. The most important data comes out of what is happening at the classroom level. Frequent formative assessments are critical in identifying and bridging gaps in learning. Prioritize teacher training on best formative assessment practices and pivot to assessments that are faster, smaller, and more actionable than the large-scale standardized tests.



Ask Your Teachers.

As an administrator you have a unique vantage point, one where you can grasp the big picture and synthesize information across all students. But don’t be blindsided by assumption. Don’t assume you know what the gaps are; ask your teachers! They are on the frontlines of assessment; they know their students the best. Consider having teachers take this quick survey ([K–5](#) or [6–12](#)) to reflect on any instructional gaps or unfinished learning they observed this past school year. Encourage them to share this within their PLC or grade level teams to help plan curriculum this fall.



Focus on Power Standards

There are always going to be more standards to cover than time to cover them. So we need to be selective. Use your formative assessment data, teacher surveys, and district/state assessments to prioritize your standards for fall. Teachers need opportunities to plan within their teams and discuss with the grade level teachers above and below them. Use these [standards-scoring sheets](#) to help guide planning and discussions. By determining your power standards, you are able to focus on teaching what really matters!

Use these big ideas to re-envision your post-pandemic school. How do you want students and teachers to feel? What do you want teaching and learning to look like? How do you want your school to integrate with the community? Use this opportunity to think big and create the school of your dreams! How will you pay for it? Good news...for the first time in living history, you can likely afford to make your dream school a reality.

2

Understand and Use ESSER Funding

Money is always tight. We always want more for our students and teachers than our budgets can provide. But schools are now being offered substantial funds to support the kind of teaching and learning that administrators have always wanted to deliver.

How Much Are We Talking About?

From March 2020 to March 2021, three legislative acts authorized \$189 billion in federal funds for the purpose of reopening schools safely and overcoming learning loss. These pieces of legislation have created the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) fund.

March 2020	December 2020	March 2021
ESSER I	ESSER II	ESSER III*
Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act	Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations (CRRSA) Act	The American Rescue Plan (ARP)
\$13B	\$54B	\$122B
Must be awarded by state within 1 year of receiving, which will be April-June 2021, depending on award date	Must be awarded by state within 1 year of receiving, which will be January 2022	Must be awarded by state "in an expedited and timely manner and, to the extent practicable, not later than 60 days after receiving those funds"
May be used for costs from 3/13/20 through 9/30/21	May be used for costs from 3/13/20 through 9/30/22	May be used for costs from 3/13/20 through 9/30/23

Along with these funds, an additional \$3 billion was allocated to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), over \$7 billion to the Emergency Connectivity Fund, and \$2.75 billion to support non-public schools (Emergency Assistance to Non-Public Schools).



How ESSER Funds Are Allocated

These funds were allocated to states in the same proportion as Title I, Part A funds are allocated. If you want to see how much of this funding was allocated to your state, check out the National [Conference of State Legislatures](#). You can type in your state, and this site will show you exactly how much funding your state received for each of the ESSER I, ESSER II, and ESSER III installments.

Drilling down even further, each state is required to publish on their website how these funds are being allocated to districts, so check your state's department of education website and see exactly how much ESSER funding your district (or a district you're curious about) has received.

The legislation for all three acts is clear that the funding is meant primarily for the local school districts. State Education Agencies (SEAs) can retain up to 10% of the money as a reserve fund, but 90% of it must go to Local Education Agencies (LEAs), such as a school district or qualifying charter school.

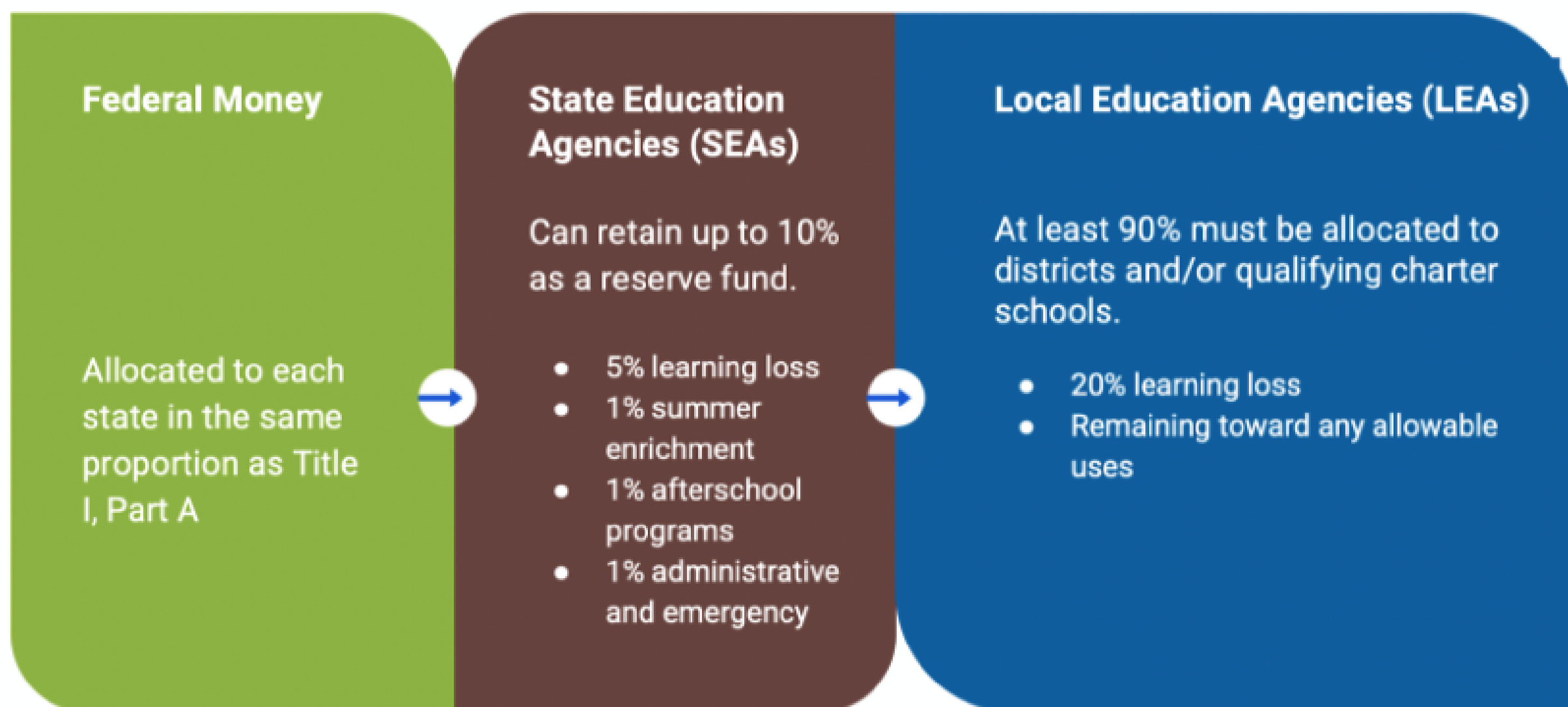
What ESSER Funds Can Be Used For

The legislation also clearly puts a priority on learning loss. At least 20% of the LEA's funds must go toward learning loss, which can include:

- Professional development
- Instructional materials
- Assessments
- Afterschool/extended day programs
- Summer learning/enrichment programs

In addition to learning loss, the funds can be widely applied to any activities associated with opening schools safely and addressing the effects of the pandemic. Some of these include:

- Coordination efforts
- Activities for disproportionately affected populations
- Software, hardware, and connectivity (including adaptive/assistive)
- Teacher pay (keeping staff)
- Safety in reopening
- Mental health services
- Anything authorized by the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) or Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)



If you are unsure about whether the funds can be used for a specific purpose, the [actual legislation](#) is easily accessible and lists out a variety of allowable expenditures. As with any grant money, there are a [few reporting requirements](#) to be aware of, but in general, the legislation is quite broad, giving schools the flexibility to apply the funds as they see fit to safely reopen schools and accelerate learning for all students.

Non-Public School Support

This federal support is not limited to public schools. The Emergency Assistance to Non-Public Schools (EANS) Program was created to support non-public schools that are non-profit, accredited with a state, in existence prior to March 13, 2020, and not receiving a loan under the Small Business Administration's Paycheck Protection Program. This includes faith-based non-public schools (though all services or assistance provided under the program must be secular, neutral, and non-ideological).

Want more information on ESSER Funding? [This ESSER Cheat Sheet](#) from the American Rescue Plan provides a great overview, and the [ESSER Fund FAQs](#) is a good resource as well. For more information about the EANS Program, visit the [EANS FAQ page](#). Also, if you're a fan of planning and spreadsheets, the Chiefs for Change organization has created [a workbook](#) designed to support your district's efforts to create a thorough plan for receiving and using ESSER funds.

3

Address Social and Emotional Needs

ESSER funding can help you reimagine your schools—give you the ability to rethink your curriculum, refocus your assessments, and provide high-quality instruction for all your students. However, as so eloquently stated on a meme floating around the internet, “If a child can do advanced math, speak 3 languages, or receive top grades, but can’t manage their emotions, practice conflict resolution, or handle stress, none of that other stuff is really going to matter.”

SEL for Teachers

To say social and emotional well-being is important is an understatement. This goes for both teachers and students. Schools have worked tirelessly this school year identifying and supporting the physical, social, and emotional needs of their students. But what about the needs of our teachers? What about your needs?

In the [EdWeek Research Center November 2020](#) survey, nearly 75% of the teachers said their own morale was lower than it was before the pandemic. 85% said overall teacher morale at their school was lower in November than pre-pandemic. Compare that to the 63% of teachers who said morale was lower in March than it was pre-pandemic, and it’s clear the longevity of the pandemic has proven harder on teachers than the shock of it.

According to the [Feb 2021 RAND Report](#), stress was the top reason why teachers leave the profession, even before the pandemic.

Top Reasons for Leaving Teaching, Both Before and During the Pandemic

43%

The stress and disappointments of teaching weren't worth it

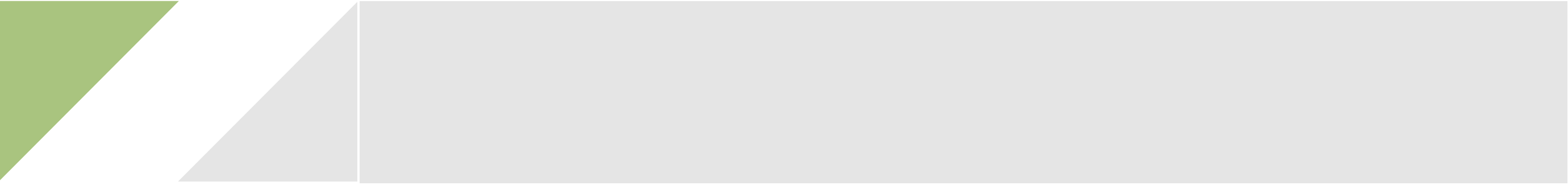
32%

I didn't like the way things were run at my school

29%

I did not get enough support from my district or school

SOURCE: RAND Corporation



Bottom line: we need to take care of our teachers! It is in all of our best interests to help teachers find ways to maintain a healthy work-life balance and invest in themselves. Here are a few tips to support the social and emotional well-being of your staff:

- **Celebrate and Affirm:** Find opportunities to acknowledge your staff. Give shout-outs at meetings. Send post-it note affirmations or quick email thank-yous when you can. Put this on your calendar so you make sure to connect with all your staff members at some point.
- **Rethink Meetings:** Keep any housekeeping items to an email or video, and make staff time more collaborative and PD-focused.
- **Ask for Input:** Survey your staff on various topics such as learning loss, school improvement, mental well-being etc... Keep these surveys very short and purposeful.
- **Be There:** When possible, attend professional development with your teachers. They will know that not only do you value the training, you also value them and their time.
- **You are the Coach:** Turn your conversations into coaching conversations. Support your teachers in reflection of their practice. *How are you feeling about.....? How do you know? How will you use this knowledge to move forward?*
- **Give a Lightswitch:** An idea taken from principal [Gerry Brooks](#), give every teacher a lightswitch at the beginning of the year and have them physically and mentally have “turn off” their educator brain.
- **Equip Your Teachers:** Provide training and [resources](#) to support teacher well-being. An investment in your teachers is an investment in your students.

SEL for You

It is also important to not lose sight of the tremendous stress that is placed on administrators. You need to take the advice you are giving your teachers. Check in with yourself. Use [Stephen Covey's](#) important v. urgent matrix to assess where you are at.

	Urgent	Not Urgent
Important	<div>Quad I</div> <div><div><u>Activities</u></div><div><ul style="list-style-type: none">• Crisis• Pressing Problems• Deadline Driven</div><div><u>Results</u></div><div><ul style="list-style-type: none">• Stress• Burn-out• Crisis management• Always putting out fires</div></div>	<div>Quad II</div> <div><div><u>Activities</u></div><div><ul style="list-style-type: none">• Prevention, capability improvement• Relationship building• Recognizing new opportunities• Planning, recreation</div><div><u>Results</u></div><div><ul style="list-style-type: none">• Vision, perspective• Balance• Discipline• Control• Few crisis</div></div>
Not Important	<div>Quad III</div> <div><div><u>Activities</u></div><div><ul style="list-style-type: none">• Interruptions, some callers• Some email, some reports• Some meetings• Proximate, pressing matters• Popular activities</div><div><u>Results</u></div><div><ul style="list-style-type: none">• Short term focus• Crisis management• Reputation – chameleon character• See goals/ plans as worthless• Feel victimized, out of control• Shallow or broken relationships</div></div>	<div>Quad IV</div> <div><div><u>Activities</u></div><div><ul style="list-style-type: none">• Trivia, busy work• Some email• Personal social media• Some phone calls• Time wasters• Pleasant activities</div><div><u>Results</u></div><div><ul style="list-style-type: none">• Total irresponsibility• Fired from jobs• Dependent on others or institutions for basics</div></div>

Stephen Covey School Edition

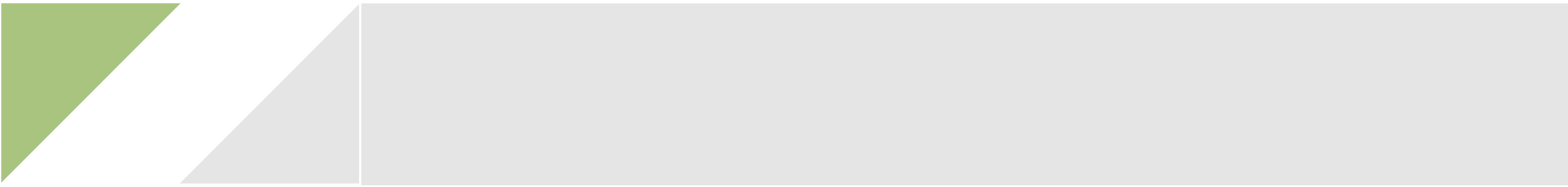
Most of an administrator’s time is spent in Quadrant 1, handling matters that are highly important and highly urgent—misbehavior, parent calls, sub coverage, meetings, budgets, etc.... Ideally, you want to lessen your time in Quadrant 1 and focus your time in Quadrant 2 where you are strategizing, building school climate, developing your staff, and planning for the future. According to Covey, spending more time on activities associated with Quadrant 2, will lessen the number of those important/urgent events so you can focus on what really matters most.

SEL for Students

“The pressures of this global pandemic and its impact on social-emotional learning (SEL) are creating an additional complex phenomenon. Many students will be found in a psychological predicament perplexed by grief, anxiety, and confusion while searching for a sense of normalcy. This is coupled with pre existing disparities and inequities while trying to establish ways to succeed in a different and, to some, strange way of learning. As schools anticipate the numbers of students needing additional support to increase, SEL must become a priority.”

Excerpt from the article, Addressing the [SEL Needs of Students During and After COVID-19](#), by The International Center for Leadership in Education.

The pandemic has taken a tremendous toll on our young people. According to [Edweek \(March 2021\)](#), the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention cited a 24% increase in emergency room visits due to a mental health crisis from April 2020–October 2020 for ages 5–11 and a 31% increase for ages 12–17. Many experts agree that the effects of the pandemic on students are likely to be felt for years to come.



How do we combat these troubling statistics? Our teachers are most likely not licensed psychologists, but we must arm them with best practices for effective and seamless SEL integration at the classroom level. Provide your teachers with [strategies](#) they can use to integrate the [Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning](#) (CASEL) core competencies in their daily instruction.

The Five Core Competencies of SEL

1. Self-Awareness
2. Self-Management
3. Social Awareness
4. Relationship Skills
5. Responsible Decision-Making

Consider using the [SEL Roadmap \(CASEL\)](#) and sharing [SEL strategies from the Greater Good in Education](#) as you prepare for effective SEL integration in 2021–2022.

4

Prepare Teachers with Flexible, Customizable Professional Development

Let's face it; PD has a bad reputation, and deservedly so. Our teachers have likely attended PD where the content wasn't relevant to the subject they taught or covered a skill they had mastered years ago. They've undoubtedly seen PD delivered by facilitators who had clearly never taught a day in their life, and many of them have never been asked for any input on PD. Bottom line, teachers don't have patience or time for PD that doesn't respect their expertise, experience, or time.

The Need for PD

But that doesn't mean we throw out PD altogether. According to research compiled by the [U.S. Department of Education's Institute for Educational Sciences](#), student achievement can improve by as much as 21 percentile points if teachers receive substantial professional development.

In fact, with so much instructional time lost and unprecedented strain on our students' social and emotional well-being, teachers need PD more than ever to gain the confidence and competence to accelerate learning in the upcoming school year. Not surprisingly, many of the topics most in demand are those that help teachers teach more deeply and engage every student.



Topics of Greatest Need

- Social and Emotional Learning in the Classroom
- Student Engagement
- Differentiated Instruction and Equity
- Meaningful Learning Experiences/Project-based Learning
- Inquiry-based Instruction
- 21st Century Thinking Skills (Creativity and Critical Thinking)
- Avoiding Burnout

PD Trends 2021 and Beyond

Like pulling up menus with QR codes, the pandemic has changed PD in ways that are likely to stick around a while.

- **PD in PJs:** There is a newfound acceptance of online learning, especially for adults. They are now comfortable sharing screens, getting into breakout rooms, participating in chats, and utilizing all the tools of virtual learning that once seemed enormous obstacles to collaboration. Teachers have enjoyed the flexibility of accessing PD webinars from the comfort of their own home and as much as they are looking forward to teaching in person, they are likely to still enjoy learning in virtual environments from time to time.
- **Bite-sized and Personalized:** Pandemic PD required shorter, more frequent, virtual engagements, and they tended to be more personal than the traditional full-day, in-person workshop. These sessions increased teacher engagement and participation and allowed for easier differentiation, and are likely here to stay.
- **Continuity through School Year:** Shorter sessions allow teachers to focus on one topic at a time, try it out in their classroom, and reflect on how it worked. Doing this in small doses throughout the year is the best way to create lasting change in teacher behavior.
- **Teacher Driven:** Most teachers found themselves in unfamiliar territory in switching to online learning during the pandemic. They had to seek help, and in doing so, they remembered what it's like to learn something new that makes you a better teacher. It's a feeling they innately relish, and they are stepping up and wanting to learn. But they want a voice in the content. When they have some choice and ownership in the PD content, they are more invested in it, more likely to implement the learning in the classroom, and more apt to use that knowledge to accelerate learning in their students.

- **In-person Matters:** Despite a newfound appreciation for learning online, teachers for the most part are social creatures, and they crave connection and in-person collaboration. Virtual PD is likely to stay, but not at the expense of in-person PD. The buzzword of education in 2020—“hybrid”—might just be the way of future PD.

[Best practices in PD haven't actually changed much at all](#), but these new trends, induced by the pandemic, may help schools finally make effective and meaningful PD a reality once and for all.

What to Look for in PD

Look for PD that is flexible, allowing you and your staff to customize the content according to your needs. Ideally this would consist of a few in-person workshop days that offer hands-on, in-depth content and collaboration followed by short, monthly sessions based on content teachers actually want and need. Look for providers who have a proven track record in establishing and showing improvement on specific learning objectives that match your content goals. Ideally these learning objectives should be coupled with ongoing coaching and personalized action plans so each teacher is supported in their contribution to your overall goals for teaching and learning.



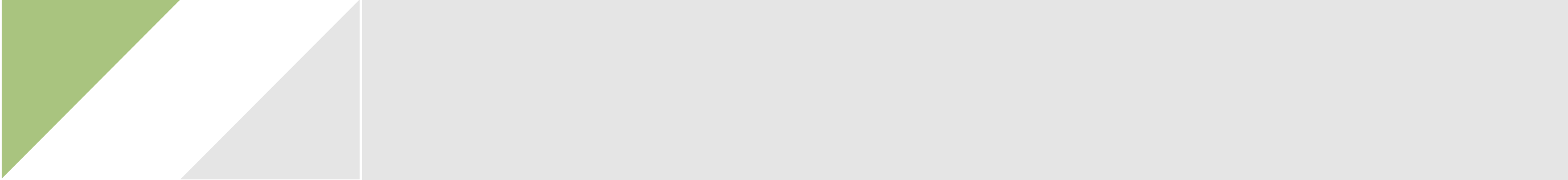
For Administrators

- Clear, measurable learning objectives that successfully improve teaching and learning
- Current, customizable content that is complementary to existing initiatives
- Specific suggestions for how admins can provide support
- Ongoing support with practical applications and built-in accountability
- Teacher buy-in
- Flexible delivery methods and pacing models
- Minimal sub time
- Affordable



For Teachers

- Practical, classroom-proven strategies
- Options for choice
- Time to digest, apply, reflect, and iterate
- Differentiated for different levels of experience
- Self-directed implementation of content
- Personalized action plan and support
- Models successful strategies
- Valuable use of their time



Not sure what your teachers need or how to build a post-pandemic PD plan? This [Needs Assessment Survey](#) is a quick tool to capture the content areas where your teachers are excelling and where they may need PD support. You complete the survey and VAI will provide a report of the findings for you to use in mapping out a PD plan. Or check out VAI's [Learning Loss Recovery Plan](#) for a sample plan that exemplifies best practices in PD.

5

Equip Teachers with Practical Instructional Resources

Building teacher capacity through high-quality professional development is integral to overcoming learning loss. But in order to get the most out of your PD investment, you need to also equip teachers with the instructional resources to bring teaching and learning to life.

Professional development gives teachers the “why” and “how” of instruction, and instructional resources give them the “what.” Providing high-quality resources ensures implementation of high-quality teaching. These resources model best practices for teachers and most importantly, they save teachers time—your school’s most precious resource.

Resources for Your Teachers

Make it a goal to use each staff meeting to offer teachers a practical resource they can use in their classrooms. To get you started, here are several free resources aligned to the PD topics of greatest need:

Social Emotional Learning in the Classroom

- [Strategies and Resources](#)

Student Engagement

- [Timely Topics](#)
- [Engagement in Distance Learning Webinar](#)

Differentiated Instruction and Equity

- [Strategies](#)
- [Three Ways to Differentiate Webinar](#)

Meaningful Learning Experiences/Project-based Learning

- [Blue Apple Projects](#)
- [Virtual PBL Units](#)

Inquiry-Based Content

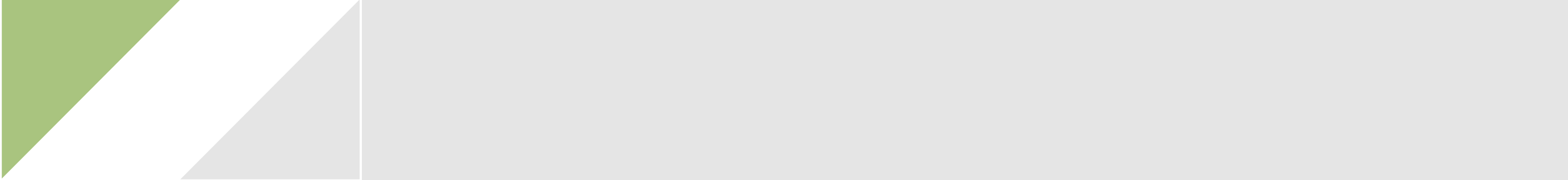
- [Inquiry Science Lessons](#)
- [Inquiry Model Posters](#)
- [Inquiry Science Strategies](#)

21st Century Thinking Skills (Creativity and Critical Thinking)

- [Student Activities](#)
- [Creative and Critical Thinking Strategies](#)

Avoiding Burnout

- [Strategies and Resources](#)



In addition to providing teachers with quality resources, ask them what resources they need to achieve the goals you have set for your school. Use this [Funding Request Form](#) to solicit ideas from your teachers.

What to Look for in Instructional Resources

Look for instructional resources that have enough support to genuinely save teacher time, but aren't so rigid that teachers can't modify them for their own needs and take advantage of those organic teachable moments. You'll also want resources that embed some form of PD (explicitly or implicitly) so that as teachers use the resource they are also building their understanding and can apply what they learn in a new context.

For example, if you are looking to implement project-based learning in your school, it's likely not enough to just provide professional development. To successfully transform instruction, teachers need to see a model and they don't have time to build units from scratch until they've had a significant amount of practice. Providing evidence-based PBL units, such as [Blue Apple projects](#), gives them the project plan and supplies, real world connections, content connections, and collaboration opportunities built-in. You get the authentic learning experiences you want for your students; the teacher gets to focus less on lining up experts and building lesson plans, and more on what they do best—teaching.

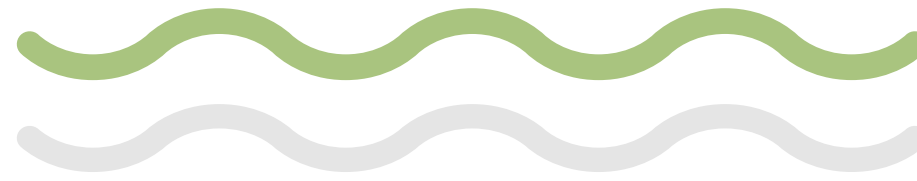
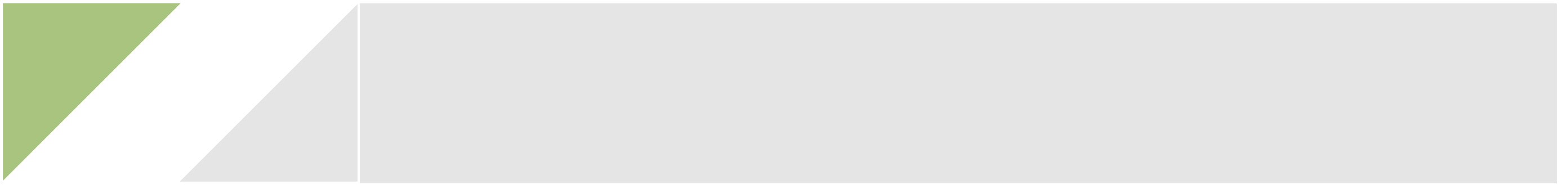
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Give Teachers Meaningful Ongoing Support

Teaching is a craft, and like any craft, it requires time and practice to master it. Make sure teachers have access to thought partners, such as mentor teachers or instructional coaches to guide them on their never-ending path to mastery.

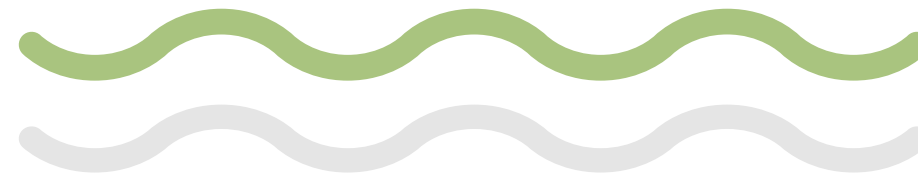
[Instructional coaching](#) is most effective when the teacher and coach work together to define goals and tackle one discrete item at a time. For example, if infusing more opportunities to exercise student creativity is an agreed-upon goal, coaches can offer up a few strategies for the teacher to try. The teacher tries them, discusses what works and what doesn't, modifies them to his/her particular needs and style, and then folds the refined strategy into their pedagogical repertoire.

In addition to coaching, consider repurposing class field trips for professional development gains. For example, if a teacher is less confident or has difficulty finding time for science, work with a [science experience provider](#) to determine instructional goals and have the teacher observe the field trip and mine any instructional take-aways that seem to be effective with the class.



The 2020–2021 school year brought tremendous pressure on students, teachers, and administrators, as we all grappled with the ongoing, ever changing demands of the pandemic. And now, in the aftermath, we're left with students and teachers working through varying levels of trauma while also facing the effects of undeniable gaps in instructional time and in some cases profound learning loss.

It won't be easy to reverse the effects of a 1.5 year disruption to traditional schooling. It will be hard. But it will be worth it. Especially if we can return not back to normal, but to something we've always wanted but never had the time or funds to pursue, something extraordinary.



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