



Your voice is important, and a necessary part of conversations on resource equity. The following slides will help you leverage your story and your community's data to “make the case” for equitable instructional time and attention.

The slides are broken down into three sections:

- Issue & Impact
- Building Your Message
- Dismantling Opposition

The next two slides will provide further background information and data on instructional time and attention, and its impact on students. Consider utilizing these national trends as important context as you begin to craft your own local message on the slides immediately following these two. This information may also be helpful to refer back to as you consider ways to dismantle opposition, as discussed later in the slide deck.

Increasing high-quality instructional time (the amount of time a student receives instruction from their teacher) **and teacher attention** (the amount of individualized attention a student receives during this instructional time) based on a student's needs **can significantly boost learning, especially for students who are behind.**

Adding hours to the school day or year can boost student achievement — particularly for students who are most at risk of falling behind — because it provides opportunities for students to accelerate their learning in the subjects in which they are struggling.¹

At its most effective, **targeted intensive tutoring**, often referred to as high-dosage tutoring, allows 1-2 students to receive specialized attention **to build skills aligned with their curriculum and targeted to their academic needs.**



When effectively implemented, **expanded learning time** (interventions such as scheduling adjustments for double blocking and acceleration camps) is **associated with improved student outcomes that are equivalent to four to eight extra regular months of school.**²



Effective high-dosage tutoring can double the amount of learning students typically gain during the school year.⁴

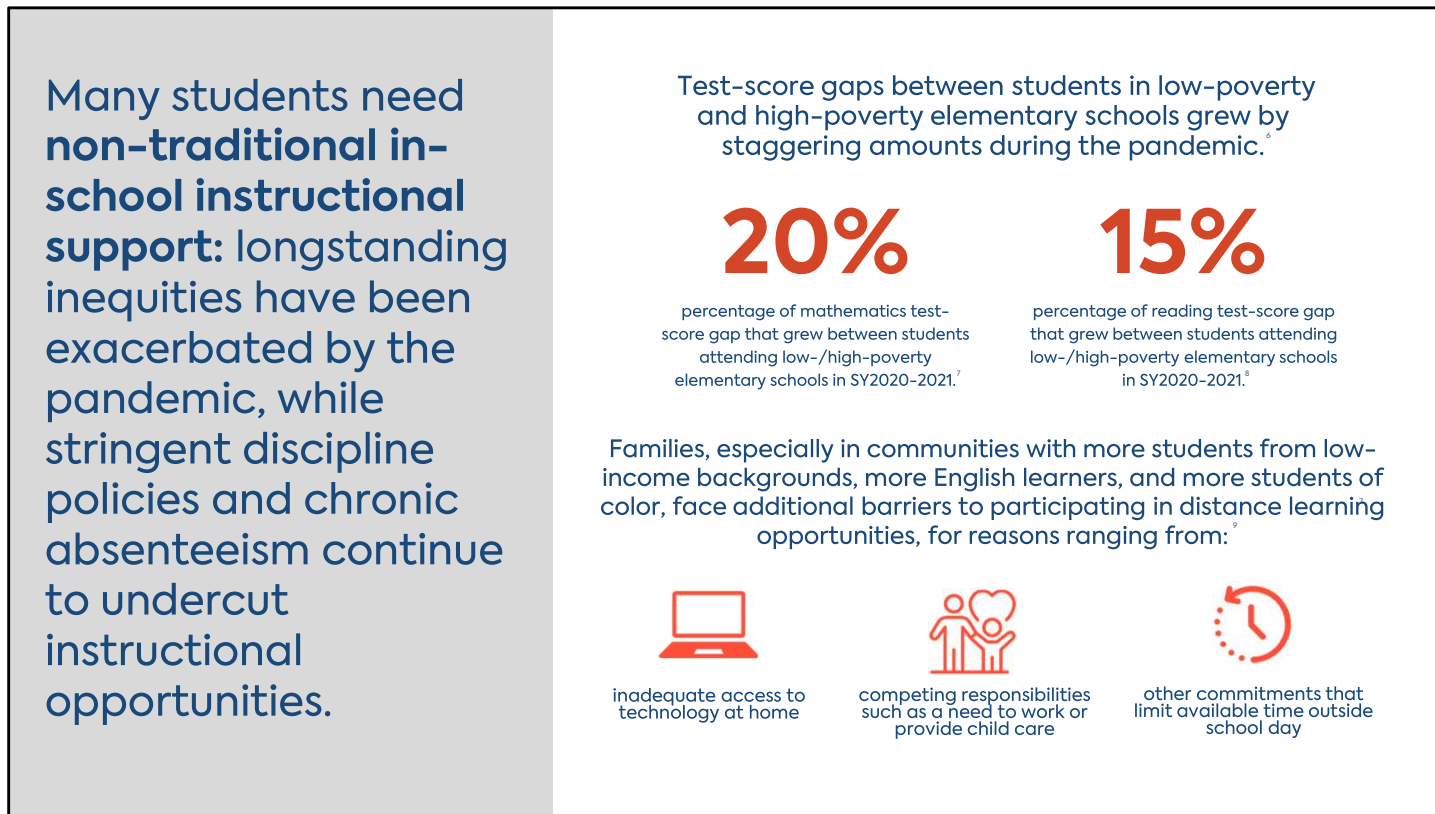


In after-school settings, **high-quality expanded learning programs** have been shown to increase **average student test scores** by up to 12 percentile points.³



Significantly smaller class and group sizes (e.g., reductions of 8 to 15 students per class) can also improve student performance: The greatest gains are for students from low-income backgrounds and students of color, particularly in grades K-3.⁵

- When each student receives the personalized academic support they need, schools can help ensure all students can make meaningful strides in their learning
- Interventions such as extended learning time and high-quality targeted intensive tutoring afford students additional opportunities to receive personalized support, allowing students to gain a deeper understanding of academic content in a manner that addresses their individual learning needs.
- Research has consistently demonstrated these interventions, when implemented with fidelity to best practice, can significantly boost student learning, especially for students furthest behind academically.



- Effective use of instructional time and attention is crucial to help ensure that students who need extra individualized support receive it, so to accelerate their learning and academic success.
- However, school schedules during the day may not be set up in a way to provide the appropriate instructional support each student needs, and students may face additional barriers to participating in out of school or distance-learning opportunities.

Additionally, disciplinary suspension reduces the instructional time and attention students receive, and disproportionately impacts students of color. Chronic absenteeism also lessens instructional time/attention.

11 million

estimated instructional days lost due to disciplinary suspensions in SY 2015-16.¹⁰

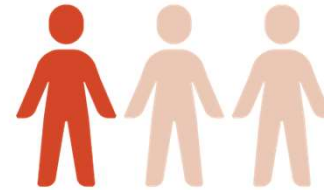
103

vs.

21

estimated instructional days lost for Black students, per 100 students.

estimated instructional days lost for White students, per 100 students.¹¹



1 in 3 students are considered “chronically absent”¹²

Impacts from chronic absenteeism can build on each other: students lose instructional time, may miss assignments, and may be subjected to disciplinary responses that make matters worse, including detention or suspension, where the [“punishment is the same as the crime.”](#)¹³

- Additionally, disciplinary action that removes students from instructional settings disrupts their continuity of learning and reduces their access to core instructional time and attention.
- High rates of chronic absenteeism also compound, and students lose important instructional time, running the risk of falling behind academically.

Making the case for improving access to **Instructional Time and Attention** hinges on effectively communicating its importance, urgency, and connection to your community.

3 Key Elements of Effective Messaging



Keep it simple.



Know your audience.



Make an emotional connection.

The following slides will help you build an effective message to increase instructional time and attention in your community. All effective messages have 3 key components. Adhering to these components is by no means easy given the complexity of resource equity work, but the more you can do so, the larger an impact your message is likely to have. These 3 components are: keeping it simple, knowing your audience, and making an emotional connection. The next slide will explain each in more detail.

3 Key Elements of Effective Messaging

Know your audience.	Make an emotional connection.	Keep it simple.
<p>Who is your audience?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• District leaders and policymakers?• School board members?• Other advocates?• Parents, students, families? <p>What publications do they read? What media do they consume?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Education Week?• Boston Herald?• Dallas Morning News?• TikTok? Twitter/X? <p>What does your audience care about?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Start with what they value.• Connect their values with your advocacy message.	<p>Don't rely on statistics to make your point.</p> <p>"Show, don't tell" how this current issue (or your proposed policy solution) impacts students.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Create an emotional response — make it clear why we all need to care!• Use real stories about students and highlight the urgency of addressing inequities. <p>Tell your personal story.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Why do you care about this issue? Did you have a similar experience in school?• How does this impact you as a parent, advocate, or community member?• Ultimately, who are the people on the ground being affected, and how can you lift up their voices and stories and move people to act?	<p>Your messages need to be short.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Describe your main advocacy point in 10 words or less.• Make your messages quotable and easy to remember.• Think of what you would say in a tweet. <p>Avoid jargon and education speak.</p>

1. Knowing your Audience

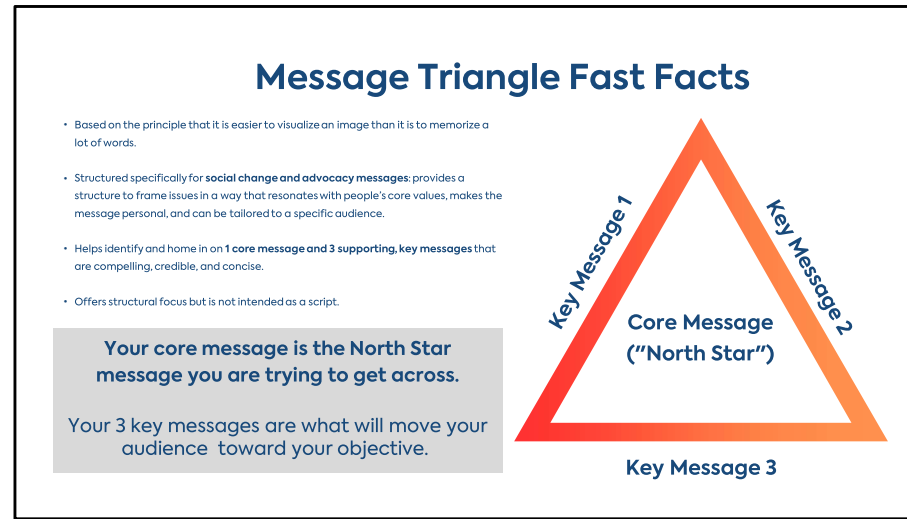
- While it may be tempting to label “everyone” as your audience, the more personalized you can make your message, the more likely it will be to have an impact. Once you’ve identified your specific audience, consider their values or what they cares deeply about, keeping in mind that this will likely differ from what you value most. Then, connect your message to your audiences’ values and priorities.
- Once you have your message, share it in places your audience frequents. Look for news outlets that cater to specific stakeholders, or public events your audience attends. Establishing trust is imperative for this strategy to be effective. Your audience will only listen to your message if they a) receive it and b) trust you as a reliable and accurate source of information.

2. Make an Emotional Connection

- People respond to emotion and passion, so use it in your messaging! The more personal and local you can make the issue, the more likely your audience will be to act. Stories are one of the most effective ways to do this. Often the most powerful stories come from the people most affected by the issue itself – in this case children and families. When asking these stakeholders to share their stories, make the process as easy as possible for them by offering training and removing barriers to participation like transportation and childcare. Offering multiple modes through which stakeholders can share their story, such as virtual or written options, is also helpful when feasible.

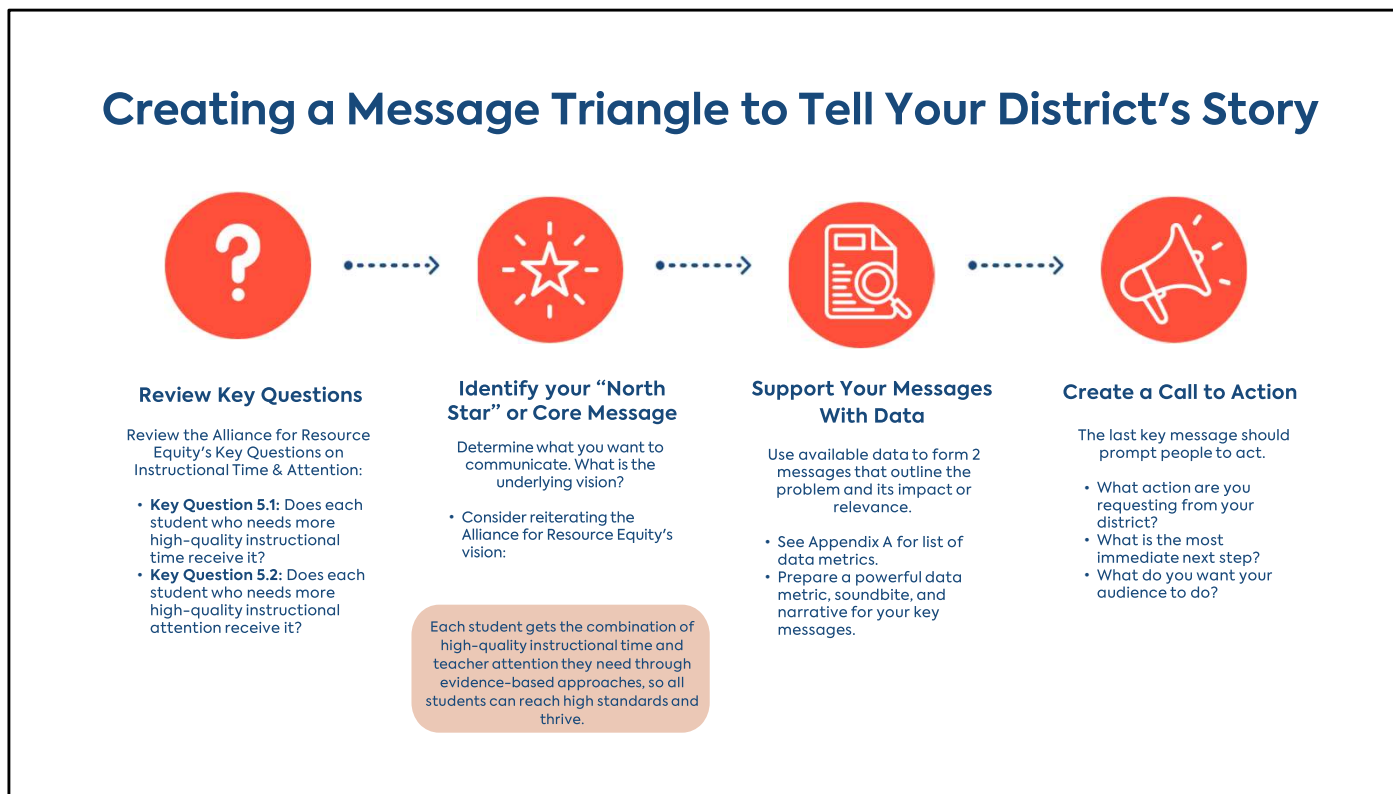
3. Keep It Simple

- Your audience can’t act on your message if they don’t understand what you’re asking of them. Your messaging should be simple, concise, and easy to understand. This means avoiding any language that requires advanced knowledge of the education field and being clear from the start about what you are asking your audience to do. It also means being consistent in your messaging over time and across coalitions to avoid confusing your targets.



The Message Triangle is one useful strategy for structuring your messaging. It distinguishes between two types of messages - “core” and “key” messages, which are outlined below. When building your Message Triangle, use asset framing to ensure you are placing the blame for inequity on systems and structures, instead of students or communities.

- **The Core Message:** The “Core Message” or “North Star” is your main point, goal, or value that you want to communicate to your audience. It drives all other messaging for your audience and is the message that, if nothing else, you want your audience to walk away remembering. If the message triangle is an essay, the core message serves as the essay’s thesis.
- **The Key Messages:** There are three “Key Messages” in every Message Triangle, each of which intentionally build off one another to drive your audience to support and take action towards your main goal (or Core Message).
 - The first Key Message identifies and establishes the issue affecting your community that you want your audience to address. It breaks down the federal, state, and/or local inequity you have identified so that your audience, who will likely not be as well versed on the issue as you, has a full understanding of the topic you will go on to discuss.
 - The second Key Message showcases the impact of this issue, either broadly or on your specific community, and how addressing it will have a positive impact on students in your area. In doing so, the second Key Message demonstrates why your audience should care about the issue you have raised, and why they should act now to address it.
 - The third Key Message is your call to action, prompting your audience to act in service of your goal. It explains exactly what you want your audience to do about the issue you have brought to their attention.



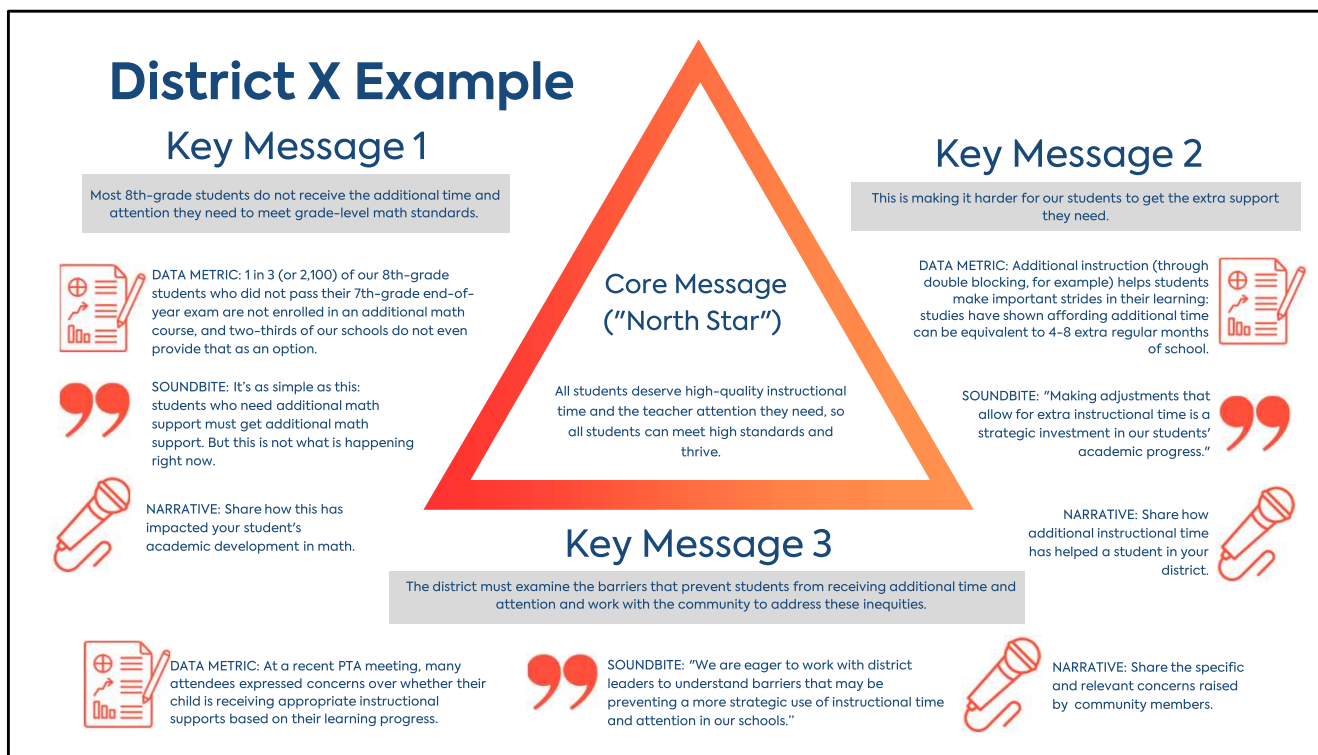
- Now that you know what a Message Triangle is, how do you create one? Start by reviewing the Alliance for Resource Equity's Key Questions on instructional time & attention to ensure you have considered all facets of this topic. You can also turn to the Instructional Time & Attention Section of the Education Combination (pgs. 21-23) for more information. Then, develop a goal or vision for your work. This overarching vision will become your Core Message – a succinct but comprehensive description of what it is you are advocating for and why.
- You can then move on to developing your Key Messages. To do so, first look at available data, such as that from the Afterschool Alliance, in order to develop a thorough understanding of instructional time & attention in your community. Appendix A provides additional suggestions for data sources to explore. Then use your findings to craft your first two Key Messages, which define the scope and impact of the problem on your community. Build off these to create your third Key Message – your call to action – which tells your audience what to do in response to the problem you've identified. More information on drafting Key Messages can be found in the following slide.

Forming Key Messages 101

- 1** **Start by analyzing metrics (Appendix A) to help answer the key questions in the dimension.**
For instance, looking at the percentage of students receiving additional instructional time, by racial and economic demographics, and school grade/type could help determine the answer to Key Question 5.1: "Does each student who needs more high-quality instructional time receive it?"
- 2** **Consider the available data points.**
What story do they tell? How directly do they speak to the issue?
Let's suppose we learn that a significant number of students who need additional math support in 8th grade are not enrolled in an additional math course, even though most schools offer this as an option, and 8th-grade advanced math classes have smaller class sizes than standard classes. We can use these data points to inform our key messages.
- 3** **Solidify the message.**
 - Key Message 1 identifies the issue: "Most 8th-grade students do not receive the additional time and attention they need to meet grade level math standards."
 - Key Message 2 explains why this matters: "This makes it harder for our students to get the extra support they need."
 - Key Message 3 advances a call to action: "The district must examine the barriers that prevent students from receiving additional time and attention and work with the community to address these inequities."
- 4** **Use additional elements to support each of your key messages.** For Key Message 1, this could look like:
 - An illustrative data metric: "1 in 3 (or 2,100) of our 8th-grade students who did not pass their 7th-grade end-of-year exam are not enrolled in an additional math course, and a quarter of our schools do not even provide that as an option."
 - A punchy soundbite to use for an interview: "It's as simple as this: students who need additional math support must get additional math support. But this is not what is happening right now."
 - A powerful narrative element: Find a spokesperson who can articulate how this issue has impacted them.

This slide provides an example for the 3rd step from the previous slide: Forming Key Messages. As a reminder, these 3 Key Messages will form each side of your Message Triangle in the end!

- Step 1: First, consult Appendix A in this deck for suggested metrics and data sources that could help inform your message triangle. (You can also utilize district-specific data or materials you may have access to, or if you previously completed the Resource Equity Diagnostic, you could refer back to those data sources.)
- Step 2: Let's imagine that the first metric listed in Appendix A (Key Question 5.1) reveals a significant finding: many students who need additional 8th grade math support are not receiving it even though most schools offer such services. Given this, you decide to use this data point to inform your Message Triangle, and later, you can reference it to help illustrate the issue.
- Step 3: It's now time for you to build your message! Now, you can go back and add more detail to each Key Message in the next step.
 - Key Message 1 states the issue: "**Most 8th-grade students do not receive the additional time and attention they need to meet grade level math standards.**"
 - Key Message 2 identifies why the issue presented in the first Key Message matters. It answers the question of why your audience should care about this issue: "**This makes it harder for our students to get the extra support they need.**"
 - Key Message 3 presents a call to action to mobilize your audience. It answers the question of what you want my audience to do about it: "**The district must examine the barriers that prevent students from receiving additional time and attention and work with the community to address these inequities.**"
- Step 4: Return to each Key Message to add some supporting information.
 - Preparing an illustrative data metric, a punchy soundbite (a very brief, catchy statement intended to capture interest of audience and ideal for a media quote) , and a powerful narrative element (personal story, anecdote of a child's experience, etc.) can help you be ready when the right opportunities arise to leverage them.
 - See FAQ's (Slide 14) for more information on what makes for a compelling soundbite and effective narrative element.
 - You'll use the data metric, soundbite, and narrative element in the ways that will be most powerful to the specific audience you're engaging with. For instance, you may be likely to use soundbites when engaging with the media, share a personal story when in conversation with other advocates, and a data metric with district leaders.
 - Make sure the data metrics you are preparing are easily understood and explained in a straightforward manner.



- This is an example of a completed Message Triangle on instructional time & attention. Notice the presence of a data metric, soundbite, and narrative under each of the key messages presented here. As discussed above, these different methods of communicating can be useful for ensuring your message “lands” with different audiences. It is up to you to determine what method (or combination of methods) will work best for your audience. For example, if you were using the message triangle here to make the case for a more diverse teacher workforce to your school board, you might first present Key Message 1 as a data metric to describe the overall issue to the school board. You might then choose to present Key Message 2 as a narrative to exemplify how the lack of a diverse teacher workforce impacts the experiences of many students in the district, bringing the statistic shared in Key Message 1 into clearer focus with a tangible and personal story with Key Message 2. Finally, you might close with a soundbite for Key Message 3 to leave the school board with a clear call to action that sticks in their minds.
- It is important to note that, while the Message Triangle is a powerful tool for visualizing your goal and all the arguments you can make to get there, it is not prescriptive. We encourage you to view the Message Triangle as a jumping off point; used to further refine your own messaging and tailor it to the needs of your community and the values of your audience.

Message Triangle Checklist

Does your message triangle do ALL of the following?



Align with the shared values of your audience?

- Shared values allow the conversation to start from a place of agreement.
- This requires knowing your audience first!



Define the impact?

- Do your supporting facts (data metrics, narratives, soundbites) explain how those shared values are being undermined? Clearly outlining the consequences and inequities helps convey a sense of urgency without exaggerating the problem.



Asset-frame the issue?

- Define the scope of the issue in terms of systems and structures, not students, and avoid defining marginalized communities in deficit-based language.



Highlight the benefits?

- After establishing the issue/problem, explain how your solution SUPPORTS your shared values. Explicitly stating the value helps reaffirm tangible outputs your stakeholder cares about.



Include a call to action?

- A positive vision helps your audience realize what's possible and recognize the role they play in sparking the change.

- Use this checklist to ensure your message triangle meets all the suggested criteria. Adjust as necessary.
- This is the last step in this section of the deck, Constructing Your Messaging. The next section discusses how to dismantle opposition.
- For more information on asset-based framing, see Slide 14 (FAQs).

Dismantling Opposition and Avoiding Traps

- **Bad information:** Don't repeat negative, incorrect or inflammatory language. Instead, find a positive spin in your response and/or calmly correct misinformation before moving to your positive response.
- **Speculation:** Instead of trying to predict the future, reiterate your key message and the information you know.
- **Irrelevant Question:** Use a bridging statement to connect back to your key message.



- It is inevitable that you will face criticism when presenting your message. The following slides will help you respond to criticism and focus attention back on your message. There are three main types of criticism: Bad Information, Speculation, and Irrelevant Questions. This slide offers best practices when responding to each.
- One tactic that is useful in responding to any type of criticism is bridging statements. These statements create a bridge between the opposition's argument and your own. Their goal is to bring the conversation back to, and therefore reinforce, your own points. When using a bridging statement, it is important to never reiterate the opposing argument. Instead, briefly acknowledge that your opposition's point was shared, before using a bridging statement to connect back to your messaging.

Question/concern that ...	BRIDGING STATEMENT		Your response, which hits on your key messages in service of core "North Star" message
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distracts from key issue • Introduces dangerous line of opposition • Expresses different mission/goal 	<p>We should be focusing on the regular instruction that happens during the school day. If schools were doing their job in the first place, we wouldn't need extended learning time.</p>	<p>I agree that this instruction is fundamental to student learning, and that we should be paying close attention to ensure it is high-quality. However, I think it's more accurate to recognize that...</p>	<p>Many students need additional support, even with high-quality whole-group instruction. Long-standing inequities, unfinished learning due to the pandemic, as well as stringent discipline policies and high rates of chronic absenteeism have exacerbated this need.</p>
<p>Expanded learning time has not been shown to be a worthy investment of resources.</p>	<p>If we consider the evidence, and research on the topic, it becomes clear that...</p>	<p>For expanded learning time to be most effective, it must be paired with a student-centered, comprehensive approach that is closely aligned to a high-quality and engaging curriculum, integrated within the school day, enable consistent and frequent participation, and conducted in small groups by highly trained teachers. Additionally, expanded learning time can only be effective if time during the school day is also used to efficiently and effectively accelerate learning.</p>	
<p>Parents also need to be invested in their child attending school. We can't expect schools to be able to tackle this issue alone, and schools should focus on things they can control.</p>	<p>I agree that parents play an important role in addressing high rates of absenteeism. However, schools still have an important role to play. This is because...</p>	<p>High rates of chronic absence at a particular school or district often suggest that there are larger systemic issues, including that students may not feel a sense of belonging, may not be academically engaged or challenged, or may not feel physically and emotionally healthy and safe.</p>	

This slide identifies some of the opposing narratives you may encounter, and how to use the bridging statement format to bring the conversation back to a place where you can emphasize your own messaging.

- For example, the misguided-yet-popular claim that parents are the cause for high rates of absenteeism, and there is little the school can do about this topic, is found on the left-most column in this slide. As a suggested response to this opposition, advocates can use the bridging statement in the middle column to first, recognize the important role that parents play in attendance, and second, clarify how this doesn't mean that schools do not have a role to play in addressing absenteeism as well. This bridge allows advocates to then further dismantle the opposing claim and reinforce key messages about the importance of districts and schools examining their own policies for how they may be affecting attendance (response in right-most column).
- These examples are intended to be representative in nature: they reflect the broad lines of opposition that advocates may often hear when engaging on this issue. However, it's important to note that opposing narratives might be framed differently as presented on this slide. When this is the case, you may still be able to use a bridging statement and response that is similar to what is presented on this slide. For instance:
 - You may encounter opposition that sounds like: "We don't have enough money in the budget for the staff and resources it would take to extend our school day or offer after-school tutoring."
 - While this does not explicitly mention the belief that instructional time is an unworthy investment, it expresses a similar core claim: Both opposing narratives **imply a scarcity of funds** that justifies **de-prioritizing the importance of expanding instructional time and attention**. Therefore, you could use many of the arguments listed under the second example in this slide, even though the original opposing message is not identical, to make the case for why investing in this expanded learning time is important.

FAQ's

Why does this sample message triangle work?

- All key messages connect to one another.
- Each key message includes a data metric, soundbite, and narrative element.
- Each element is concise and uses asset-framing.
- Each key message speaks directly to the core message in center of triangle.

What if we don't have access to the information we need for the data metrics?

- Ask your district if they will provide the data to you.
- Use this message triangle to push for better data transparency.
- In the meantime, rely on national data trends instead.

What makes for an effective narrative element?

- The best story to share is your own!
- But don't get bogged down by the details. Ask yourself what you are trying to communicate, what emotions you want to evoke, and why this specific issue matters to you.

What makes for a compelling soundbite?

- Define your objectives — what do you want others to remember?
- Be concise (aim for 10 seconds or less), clear (avoid jargon, acronyms, technical terms), and catchy (consider using a quick story, anecdote, metaphor, etc. to help illustrate your point).
- Practice! The best soundbites are authentic but not off the cuff.

What do you mean by asset-framing? How do I do that?

- Data doesn't frame itself...and is susceptible to misinterpretation.
- This misinterpretation is especially harmful to historically marginalized communities.
- Key messages should highlight the systems and structures within your district that act as barriers to equitable opportunities and outcomes. This "structure-not-student" approach is known as **asset-framing**.
- Asset-framing places the responsibility on leaders and systems, emphasizing system-level action, and does not blame or fault students.

How do I use this message triangle?

- Make it the backbone of your messaging efforts.
- Use it to practice, practice, practice articulating the issue.
- Use it to stay focused on key points, especially when the opposition tries to throw you off course.
- Use it alongside the Alliance for Resource Equity [diagnostic tool](#) to more thoroughly assess the state of **instructional time & attention** in your district, as well as in combination with the [guidebooks](#) to dig deeper into root causes and potential actions.

What is the Alliance for Resource Equity? How do I learn more?

- The Alliance for Resource Equity is a partnership between EdTrust and Education Resource Strategies.
- We focus on 10 key dimensions of resource equity — providing tools and resources to help advocates and districts work together to consider how resources (people, time, and money) are spent and distributed.
- Learn more at www.educationresourceequity.org

We hope this resource acts as either a culmination of – or a jumping off point to – several additional resource equity conversations. Additional resources in the Alliance for Resource Equity toolkit can aid in these discussions:

- Want a primer on what resource equity means?
 - It's important to begin with a solid understanding of why resource equity is a necessary frame to consider how schools are providing supports to all students to learn and thrive. Review the [Education Combination](#) to break it down.
- Not sure which dimension of resource equity should be the focus of your message?
 - Use our [Resource Equity Diagnostic and Tools](#) to identify opportunities in all 10 dimensions of resource equity to improve equity and excellence.
- Not sure who your audience should be to craft your message around?
 - Your audience influences how to effectively develop your message. Use our [Advocating Across Government Guides](#) to help clarify various levels of education authority and governance.
- Not sure what to specifically ask your district (and/or other decisionmakers) in the call to action?
 - Our [Guidebooks](#), specific to each Dimension of Resource Equity, explores underlying causes and the potential actions based on underlying challenges.
 - The dimension-specific Diagnostic Blueprints break down the types of analyses that districts can conduct to learn more about resource equity in their district and includes a DIY Analysis Tool for districts to input and analyze their own data.
 - Propose using the [sample meeting agenda](#) to structure additional conversations with your district about resource equity.
- If you are interested in learning more about asset-based framing, you may find the following resources helpful:
 - [Video series](#) about “The Power of Asset Framing”
 - [Blog](#) about “The Power of Asset-Based Language”
 - [Blog](#) about “Asset Framing: The Harder Data Work”

Endnotes

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Appendix A: Data Resources Chart

Key Question	Data Metric	Data Source
Key Question 5.1 Does each student who needs more high-quality instructional time receive it?	Policies and availability of “double-blocking” 8th grade math courses, afterschool programs, and other expanded learning-time opportunities for students who did not reach proficiency at end of prior year.	Afterschool Alliance
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Availability of high-dosage tutoring opportunities for students • Percentage of students enrolled in tutoring or afterschool opportunities, as compared to the number students who scored at the lowest proficiency level on prior year’s statewide assessment and could benefit from these additional supports. 	
Key Question 5.2 Does each student who needs more high-quality instructional attention receive it?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Range of tutoring group size across high-dosage tutoring programs (or other additional instructional support opportunities.) 	Student Pulse Survey


For the key questions in this dimension, there are few strong federally maintained data sources. Rely more heavily on your own personal experiences, general knowledge, and popular news sources to help fill out the gaps in data. For instance, there may an ESSER-related spending report on expanded learning time and high-dosage tutoring opportunities. Advocates can also lean more heavily on narratives and anecdotes from their community to illuminate this issue when engaging with their district.


Use this chart to identify data metrics useful to informing your key message(s), in addition to your own knowledge about what is happening in your community. Refer to the slide on how to form key messages for more information.


Appendix B: Message Triangle Worksheet


YOUR DISTRICT: _____

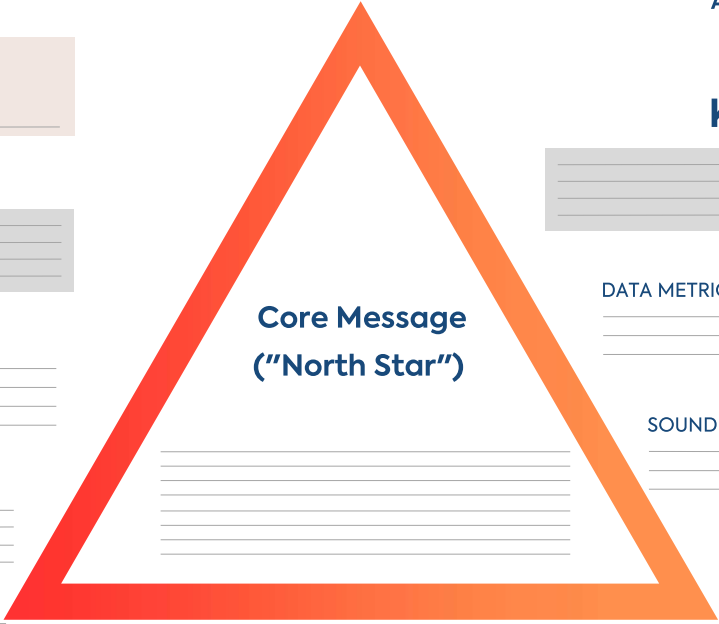
Key Message 1

 DATA METRIC: _____

 SOUNDBITE: _____


 NARRATIVE: _____

 DATA METRIC: _____



**Core Message
("North Star")**

Key Message 3




 SOUNDBITE: _____


Key Message 2

DATA METRIC: _____

SOUNDBITE: _____

NARRATIVE: _____

 NARRATIVE: _____

Use this slide to form your own message triangle!