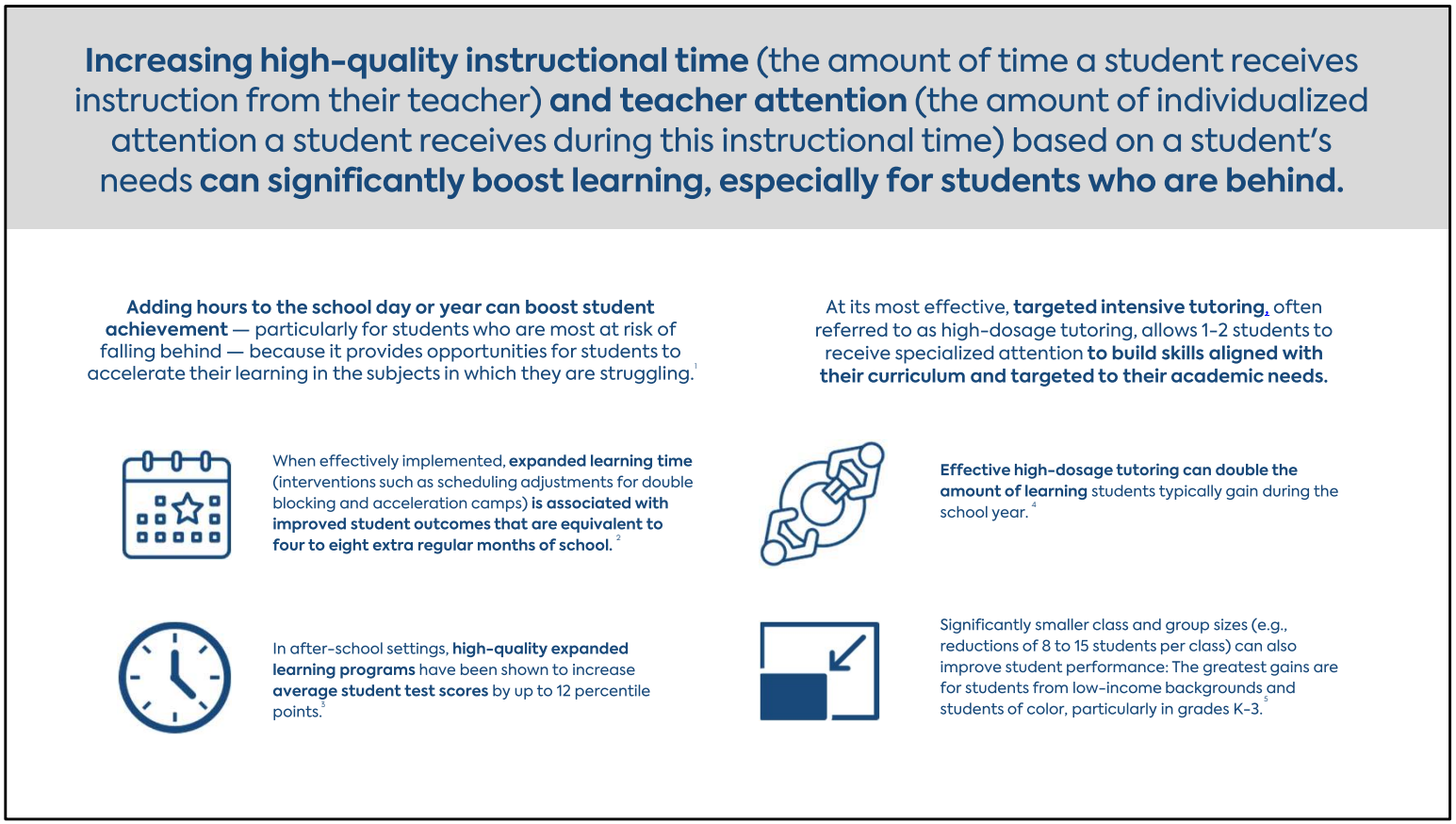
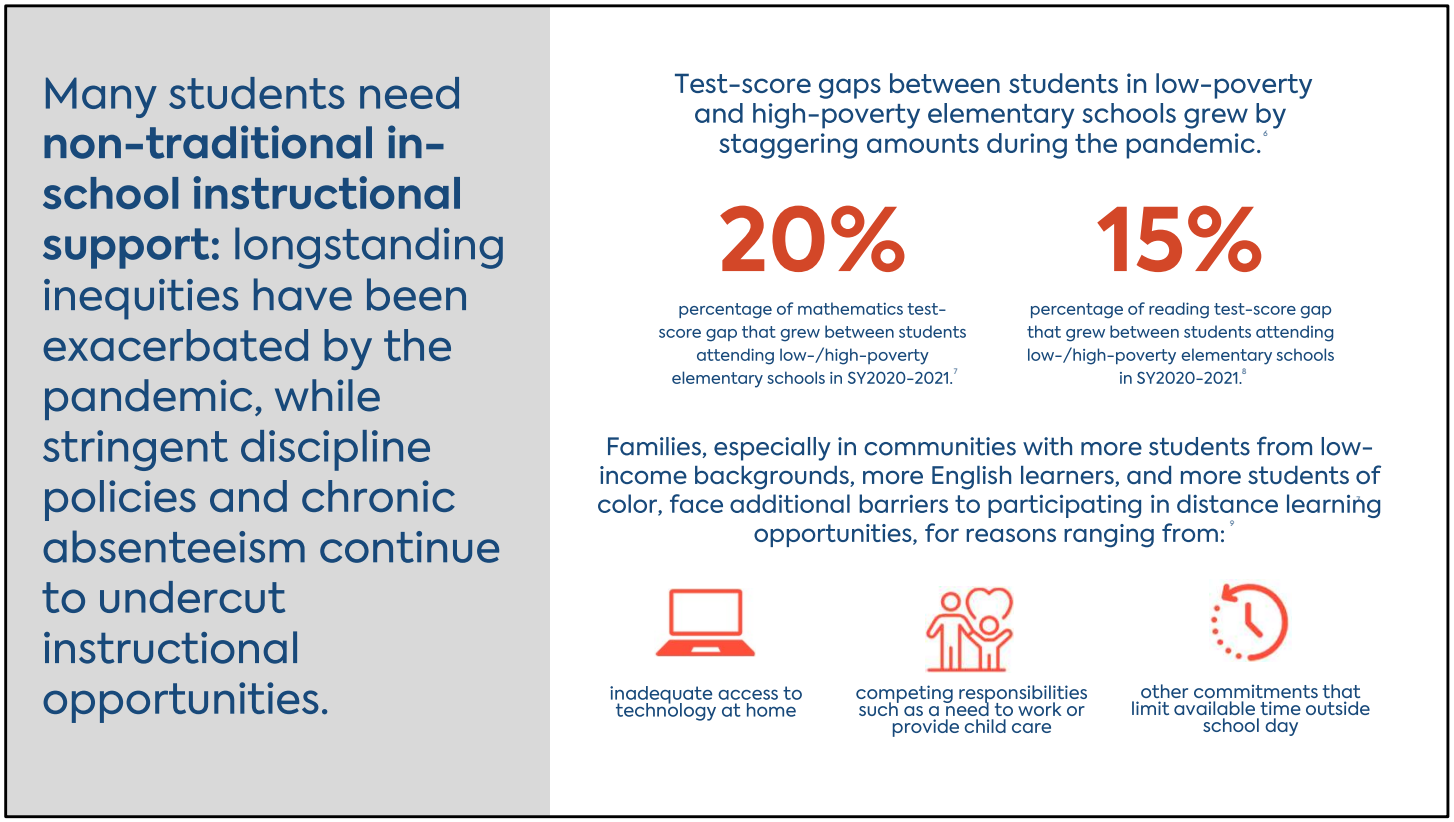
Your voice is important, and a necessary part of conversations on resource equity. The following slides will help you leverage your story and your community's data to “make the case” for equitable instructional time and attention.
The slides are broken down into three sections:

- 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.

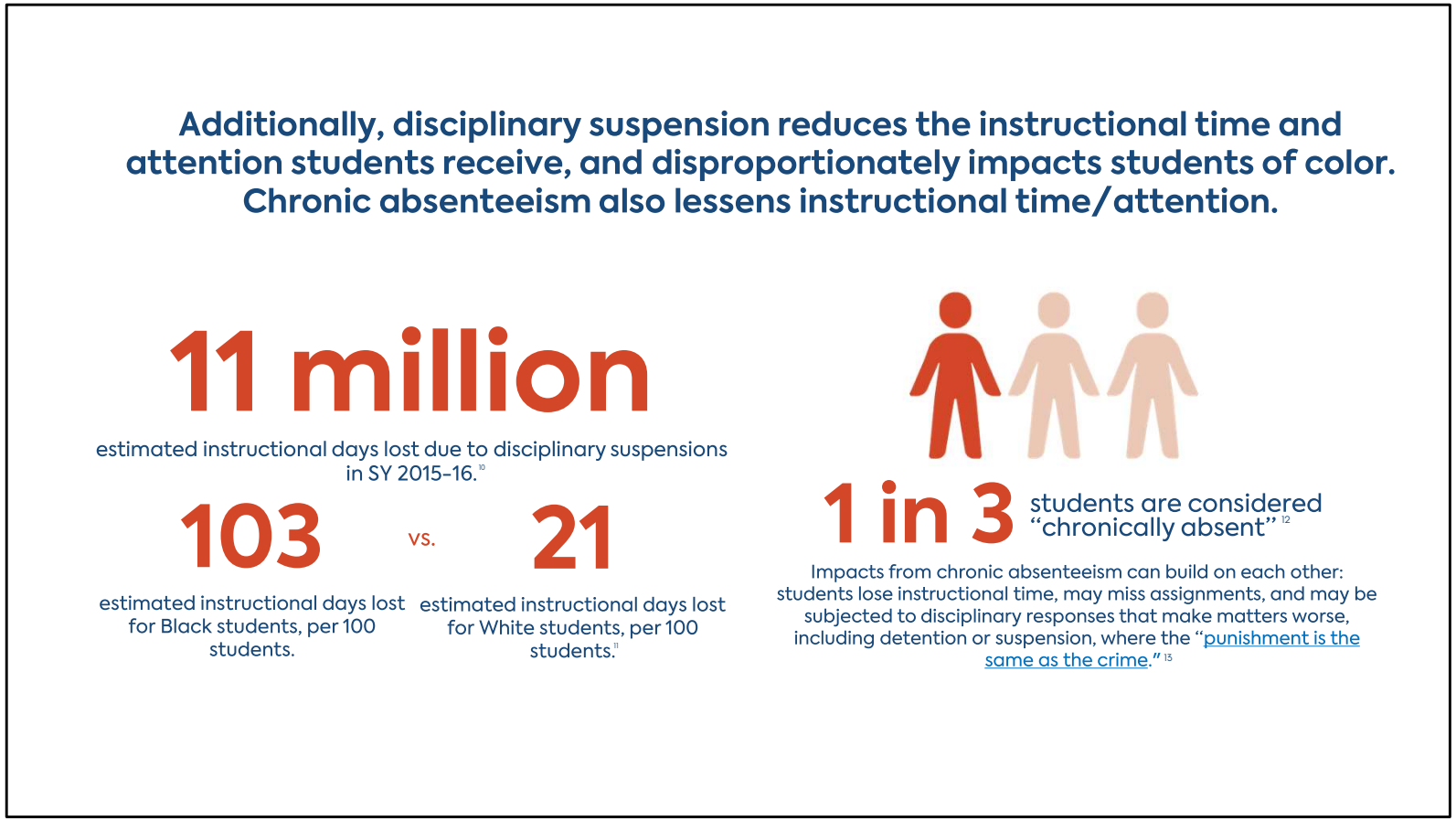


- When each student receives the personalized academic support they need, schools can help ensure all students can make meaningful strides in their learning
- Interventions such as extended learning time and high-quality targeted intensive tutoring afford students additional opportunities to receive 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.

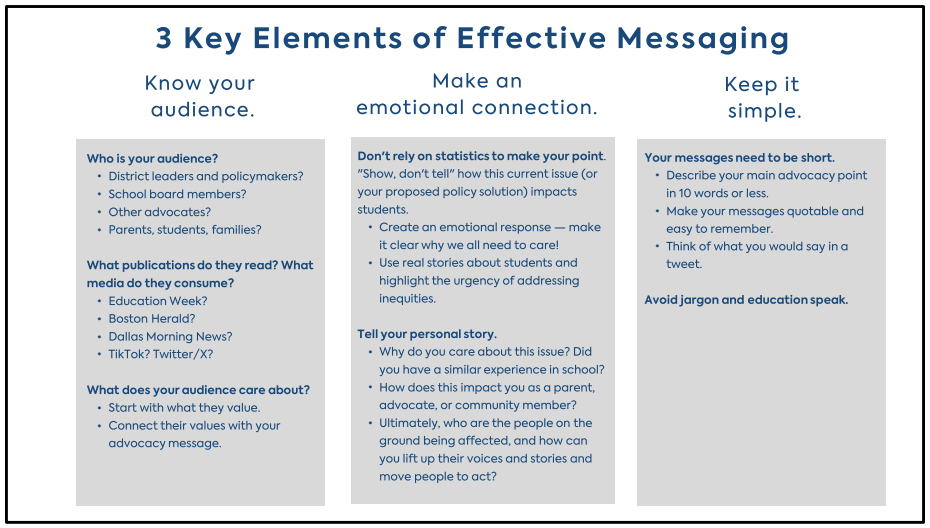
- However, school schedules during the day may not be set up in a way to provide the appropriate instructional support each student needs, and students may face additional barriers to participating in out of school or distance-learning opportunities.



- Additionally, disciplinary 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.

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.



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.

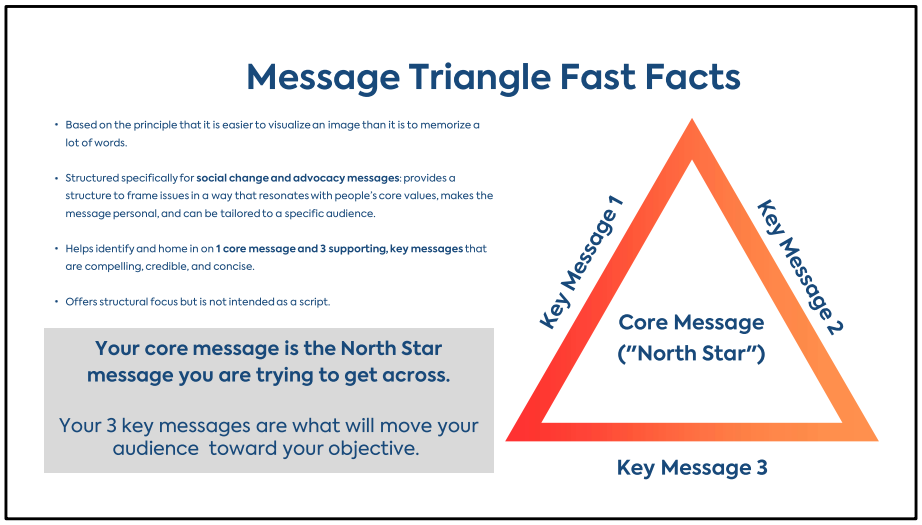
- Once you have your message, share it in places your audience frequents. Look for news outlets that cater to specific stakeholders, or public events your audience attends. Establishing trust is imperative for this strategy to be effective. Your audience will only listen to your message if they a) receive 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.

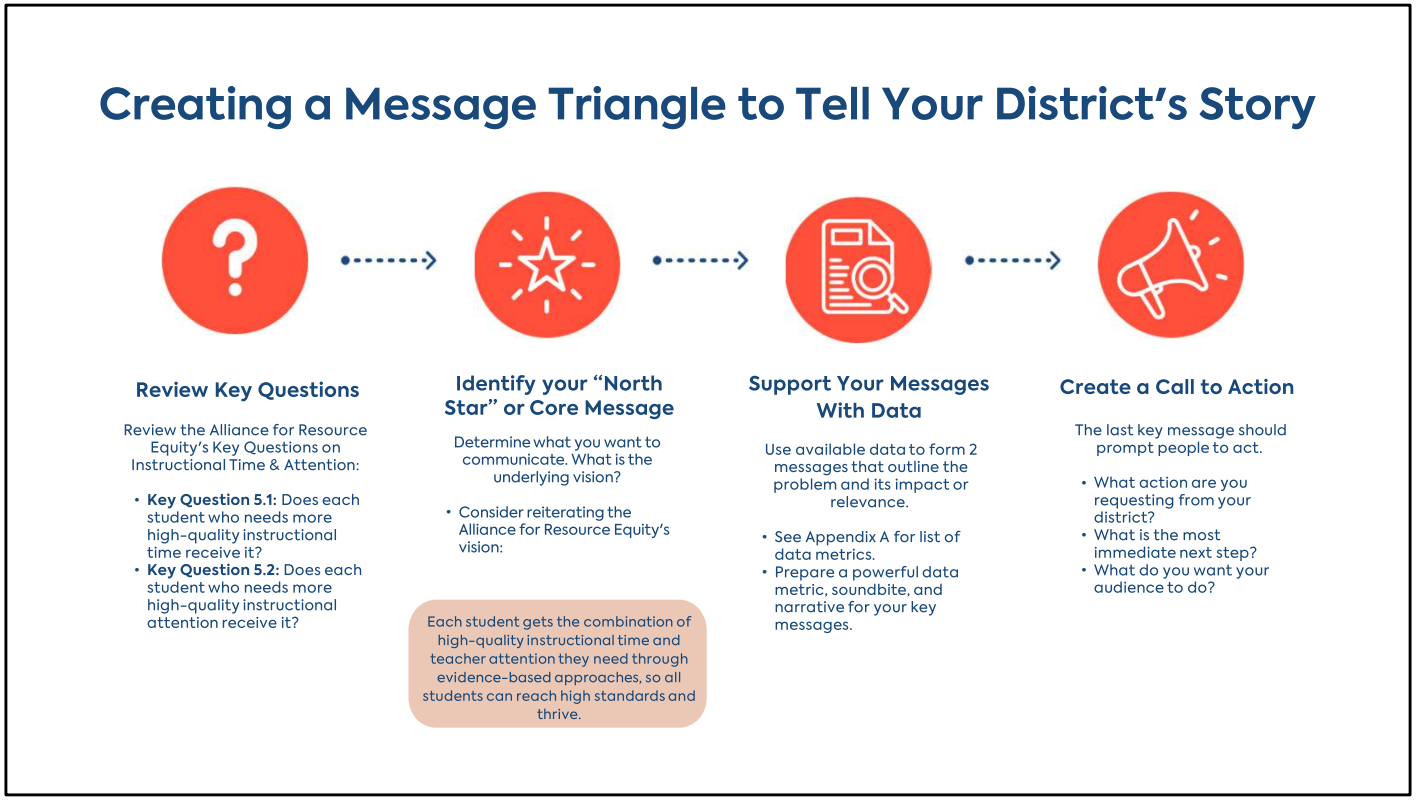
- **The Core Message:** The "Core Message" or "North Star" is your main point, goal, or value that you want to communicate to your audience. It drives all other messaging for your audience and is the message that, if nothing else, you want your audience to walk away remembering. If the message triangle 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.

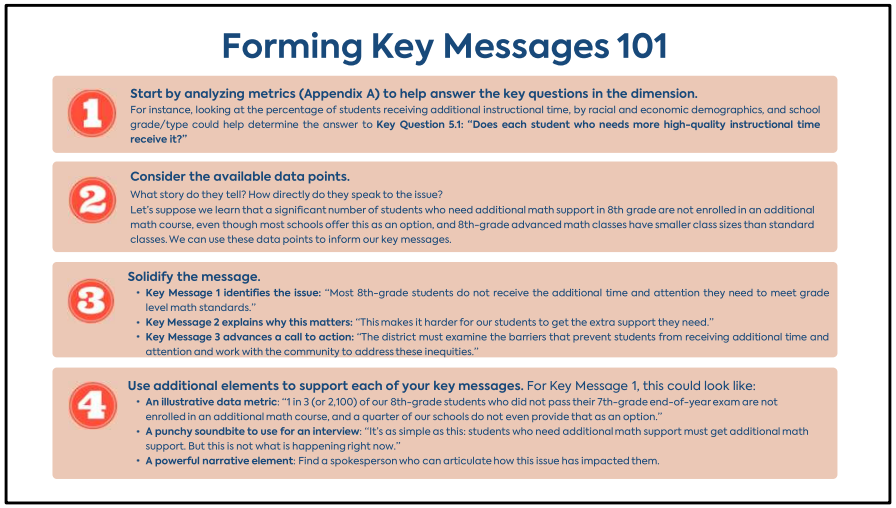
    - The second Key Message showcases the impact of this issue, either broadly or on your specific community, and how addressing it will have a positive impact on students in your area. In doing so, the second Key Message demonstrates why your audience should care about the issue you have raised, and why 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.



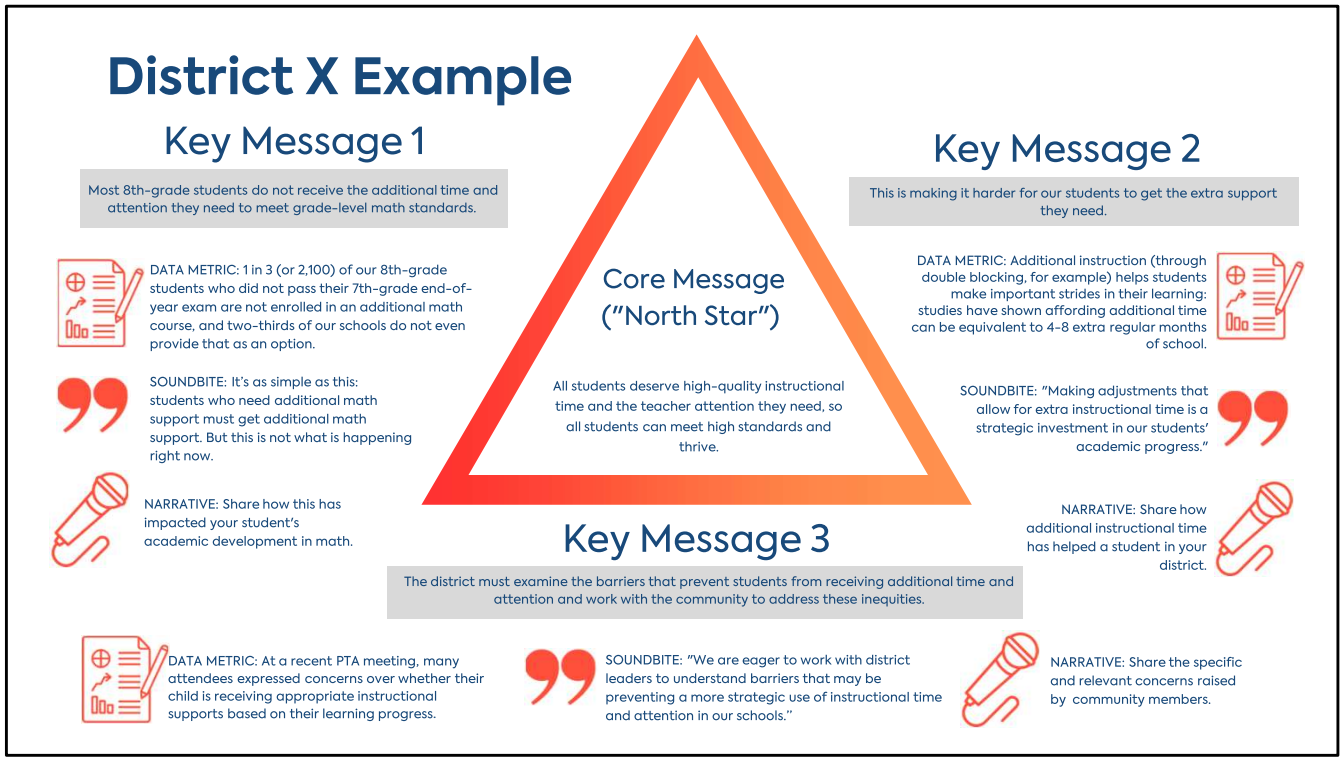
- Now that you know what a Message Triangle is, how do you create one? Start by reviewing the Alliance for Resource Equity's Key Questions on instructional time & attention to ensure you have considered all facets of this topic. You can also turn to the Instructional Time & Attention Section of the Education 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.



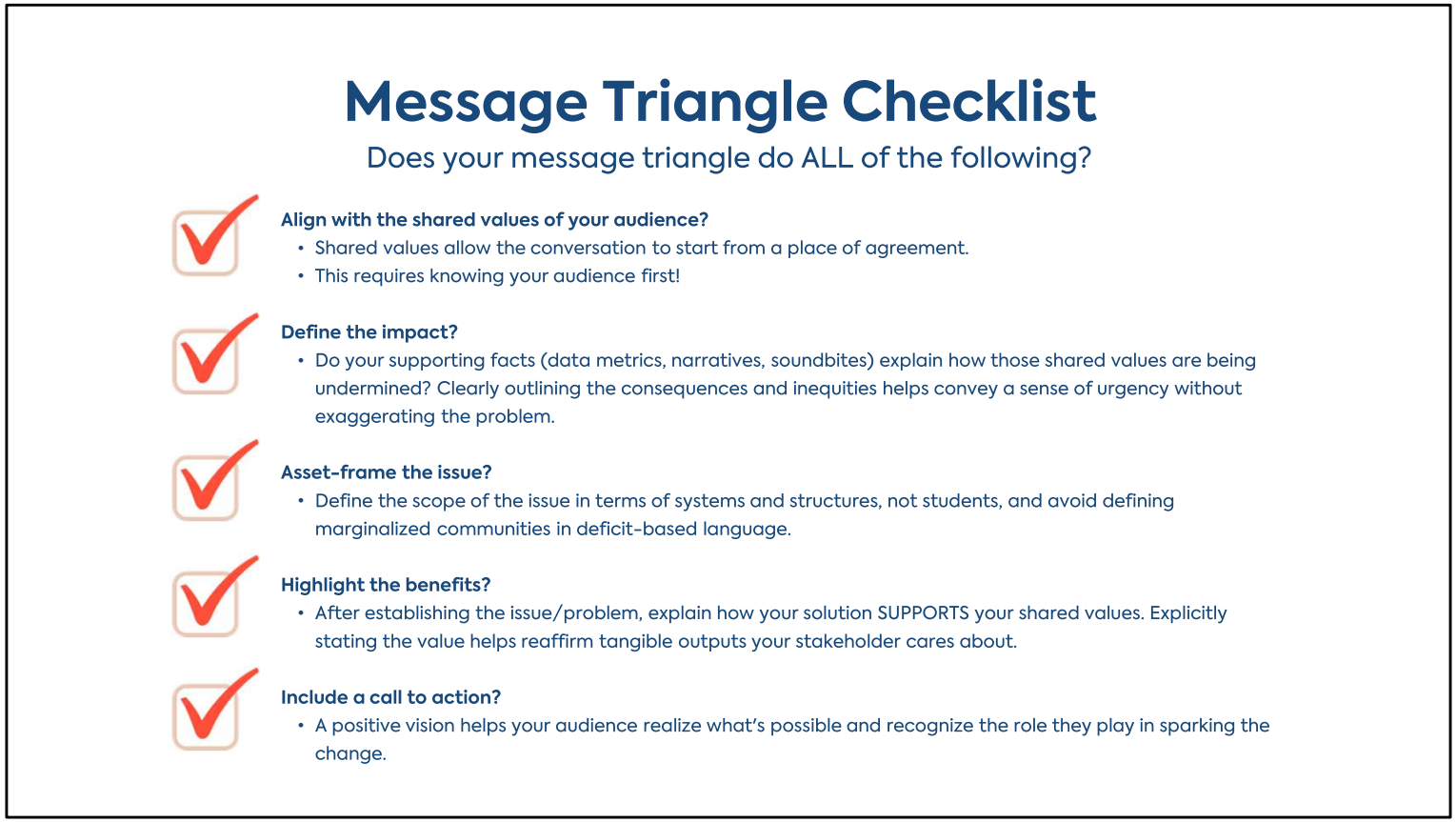
This slide provides an example for the 3rd step from the previous slide: Forming Key Messages. As a reminder, these 3 Key Messages will form each side of your Message Triangle in the end!

- 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.

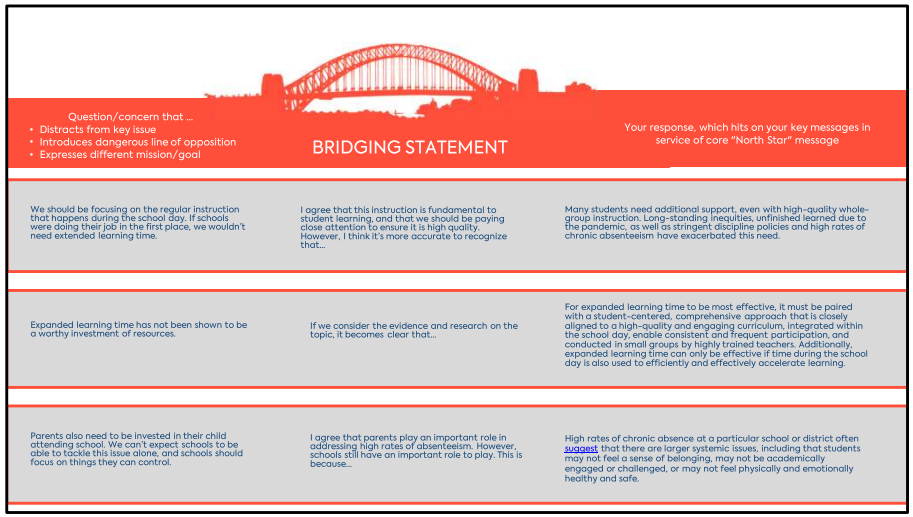
- It is important to note that, while the Message Triangle is a powerful tool for visualizing your goal and all the arguments you can make to get there, it is not prescriptive. We encourage you to view the Message Triangle as a jumping off point; used to further refine your own messaging and tailor it to the needs of your community and the values of your audience.



- 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).

- 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.



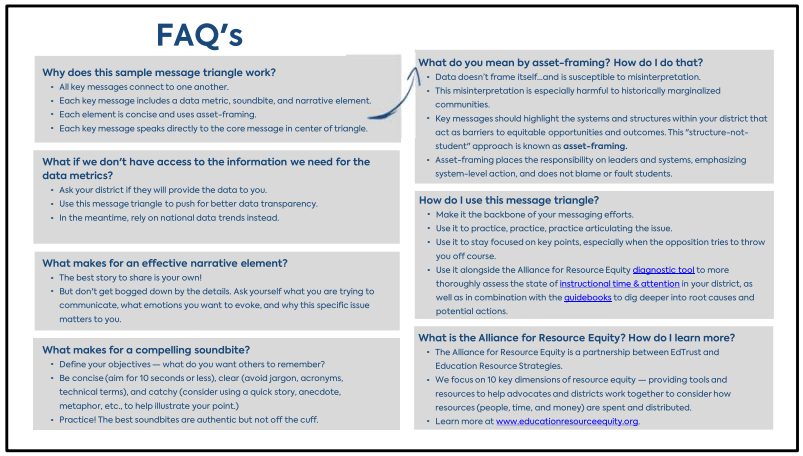
This slide identifies some of the opposing narratives you may encounter, and how to use the bridging statement format to bring the conversation back to a place where you can emphasize your own messaging.

- 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.



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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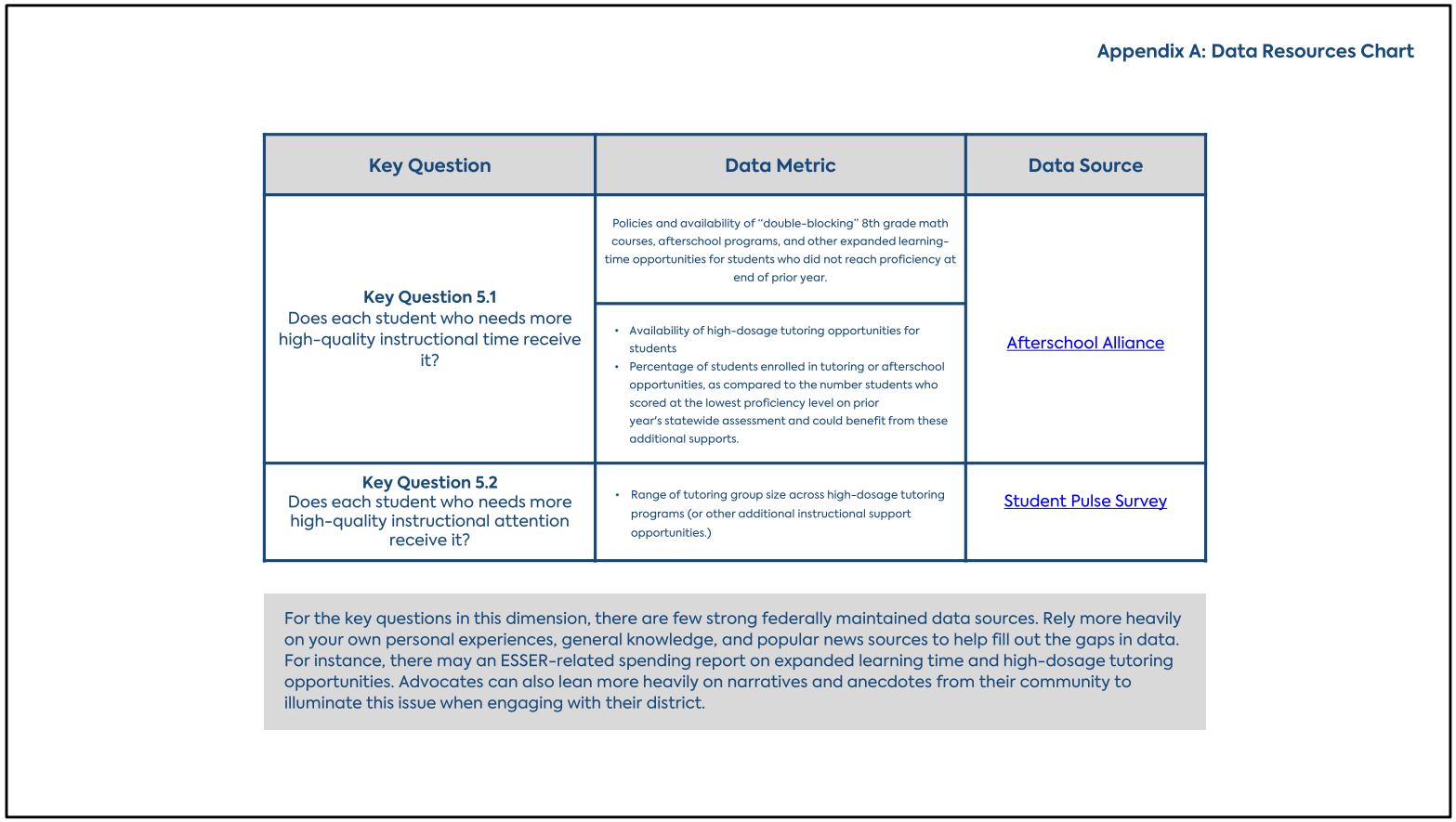
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid.
9. The Education Trust. (2020). COVID-19 Education Equity Guide: Expanding Learning Time. Available at: https://edtrust.org/resource/covid-19-education-equity-guide-expanding-learning-time.
10. Losen, D., Whitaker, A. (2018). "11 Million Days Lost: Race, Discipline, and Safety at U.S. Public Schools (Part I)." The Center for Civil Rights Remedies of UCLA's Civil Rights Project and The American Civil Liberties Union. https://www.aclu.org/wp-content/uploads/legal-documents/final_11-million-days_ucla_aclu.pdf
11. Ibid.
12. Vazquez Toness, B. (2023). "Millions of kids are missing weeks of school as attendance tanks across the US." *The Associated Press.* https://apnews.com/article/back-to-school-attendance-pandemic-chronic-absenteeism-90c05e3013b72802439565250d1adc33_2
13. Garcia Mathewson, T., Poletta, M. (2022). "When the punishment is the same as the crime: Suspended for missing class." *The Hechinger Report.* https://hechingerreport.org/when-the-punishment-is-the-same-as-the-crime-suspended-for-missing-class/

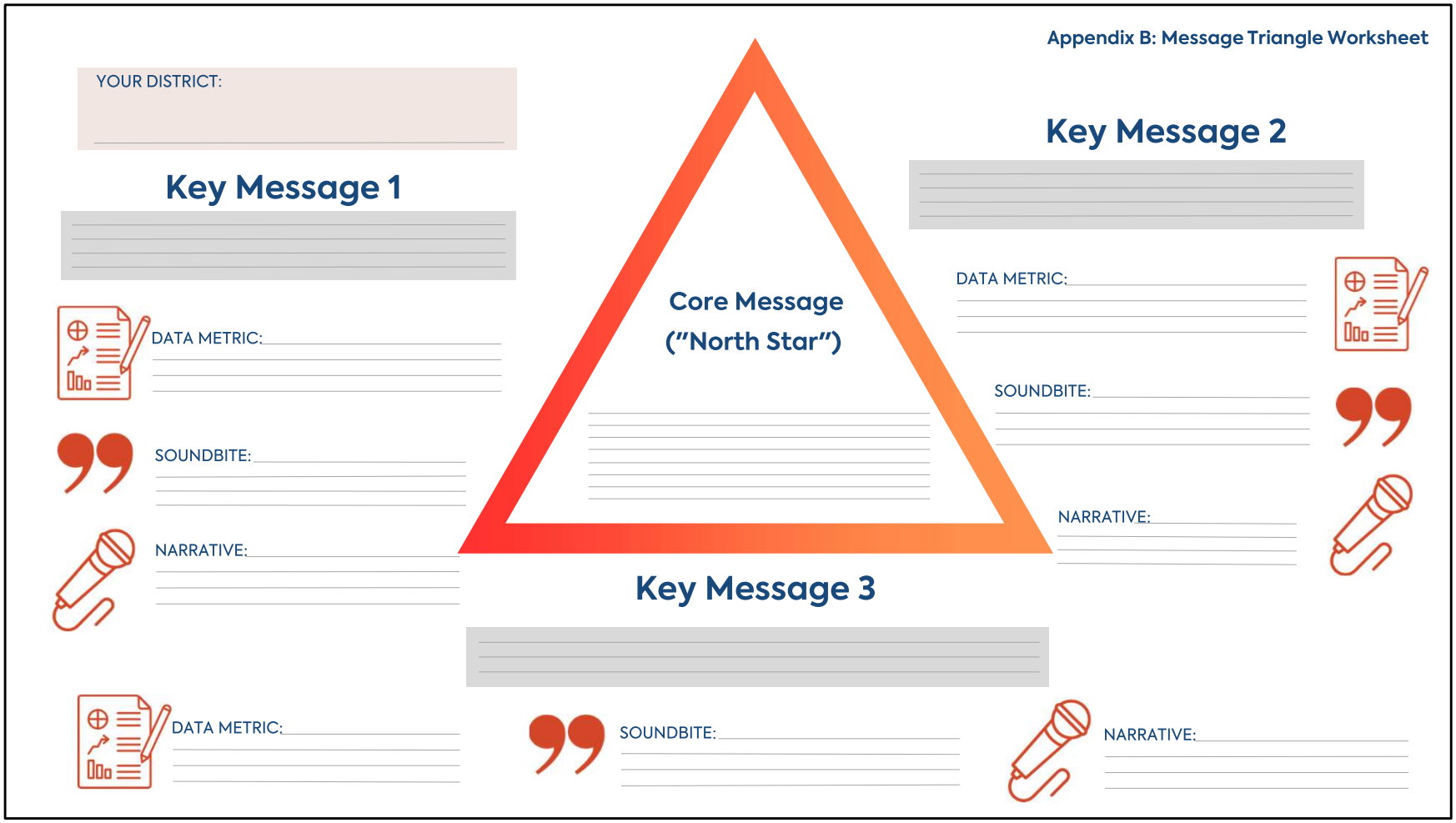


Appendix A: Data Resources Chart

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
	• 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?	• 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.



Use this slide to form your own message triangle!