# Instructional Excellence Action List:

# Plan Ahead and Raise Sights

***Pre-plan high standards for each grade/course—with schoolwide curriculum, lessons, and useful assessments up to and beyond standards—to support achievement and growth.***

This action list is concerned with **planning ahead to raise everyone’s sights, quality, and consistency for ensuring high-standards, high-growth student learning** across the school. Items with checkboxes are suggested actions; add your own.

The schoolwide team of leaders, which includes multi-classroom leaders and is led by the principal, should take most of the Planning Ahead actions, except as noted. When actions are not taken at this level, they must be taken by individual MCLs, which may produce inconsistencies for students across grades and classes.

* In this action list, **all actions occur before the school year**.
* Some actions focus on **planning ahead to** ***deliver* instruction.**
* Other actions focus on **planning ahead to** ***improve* instruction** during the year.



| **PLAN AHEAD TO DELIVER INSTRUCTION—Led by Schoolwide Instructional Team of Leaders** |
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| Principal—communicate to all staff that key steps below are expected schoolwide. Also see the “Before the School Year” row under “Deliver Instruction” in the [*Instructional Excellence Summary*](https://www.opportunityculture.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Instructional_Excellence_Summary-Public_Impact.pdf)) * **ARTICULATE THE VISION FOR TEACHERS, STUDENTS, & FAMILIES**

[ ]  Individually envision the success you believe is possible for *all* students—at school and in their adult lives[ ]  Form a collective vision through sharing your visions—in words, pictures, other—and group discussion[ ]  Prepare communications through writing, short videos, and graphics to convey your common vision [ ]  Prepare activity for MCLs to lead teaching teams through forming of a motivating vision of student success [ ]  Prepare common activities for teachers to lead students in forming a motivating vision of their own success [ ]  See [***Connect Action List***](https://www.opportunityculture.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Instructional_Excellence_Action_List_Connect-Public_Impact.docx)for more detail for MCLs and teachers* **CHOOOSE HIGH ANNUAL STANDARDS & GROWTH GOALS**

[ ]  Determine source for higher standards to meet your high bar (see Choose Curricula below)[ ]  Establish schoolwide target and stretch *average* learning growth goals for students, per subject and grade[ ]  Set school growth goals for students who start at differing achievement levels: students starting further behind need more growth (1.5–2 years); students far ahead still need at least 1 year of growth annually[ ]  Prepare to simply and clearly communicate student learning growth goals to teachers, to make it easy to measure progress toward growth goals during year and communicate progress to families[ ]  If possible, based on known students entering, establish target and stretch *student* achievement goals per subject and grade—% passing, % scoring at designated higher levels—on standardized, common assessments (such as state tests); do math carefully to match growth goals with resulting achievement percentages[ ]  Clarify additional standards for school to pursue, if any: scores on assessments of critical thinking skills, scores on assessment of social-emotional skills—if not included in standardized, common assessments* **CHOOSE AND/OR DEVELOP HIGH-STANDARDS CURRICULA ALIGNED WITH GOALS ACROSS GRADES AND SUBJECTS**

[ ]  [Select curricula](https://www.opportunityculture.org/instructional-excellence/#curriculum) that are high-standards and research-based for producing high-growth learning, and aligned with state requirements—this may require “raising the bar” if state-specified curricula aim too low[ ]  Select supplementary curricula, if needed, to ensure more than a year of growth by students starting behind[ ]  Select supplementary curricula, if needed, to ensure continued year of growth for students starting ahead* **SELECT AND/OR DEVELOP ASSESSMENTS ALIGNED TO STANDARDS**

For details, see the [Monitor Learning and Adjust Instruction Instructional Excellence Action List](https://www.opportunityculture.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Instructional_Excellence_Action_List_Monitor_and_Adjust-Public_Impact.docx)[ ]  Select or write unit pre-assessments aligned to annual and interim assessments; plan ahead to adjust lessons for students behind/ahead (see [Monitor Learning and Adjust Instruction Instructional Excellence Action List](https://www.opportunityculture.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Instructional_Excellence_Action_List_Monitor_and_Adjust-Public_Impact.docx))[ ]  Select or write sub-unit assessments [ ]  Select or write daily mini-assessments for beginning and/or end of class\*[[1]](#footnote-2)* **SELECT AND/OR DEVELOP ENGAGING LESSON PLANS.** *Over the summer, follow these steps to plan lessons for the first quarter; repeat the steps for lessons throughout the year:*
* **Align with curriculum**

[ ]  Select high-quality lessons aligned with your high-standards curriculum, if available, to reduce need to create lessons from scratch[ ]  MCLs edit pre-written lessons for units taught in first quarter:* Backward map to ensure that engaging lesson content includes *at least* the content in standards and curriculum
* Backward map to ensure that engaging lesson content matches aligned assessments

[ ]  If no pre-written lessons are available, MCLs should write lessons: –Backward map content from standards, curricula, and aligned assessments* **Administer frequent checks for understanding**

[ ]  Use data to adjust lessons(see [Monitor Learning and Adjust Instruction Instructional Excellence Action List](https://www.opportunityculture.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Instructional_Excellence_Action_List_Monitor_and_Adjust-Public_Impact.docx))* **Include personalization/differentiation and reteaching and acceleration**

[ ]  *If students will work primarily at own pace*, pre-plan materials for individual goals and learning pacesWhen using a traditional teaching method with *standard topics for whole classes*: [ ]  Prepare lesson add-ons/on-ramps to help students starting behind per unit[ ]  Prepare advanced or extended work for student starting ahead per unit[ ]  Edit/write lessons to ensure culturally relevant examples, problems, prompts, and readings (using race, gender, and other cultural matches for the students in each class)[ ]  Motivate students with inquiry-based problems and projects, balanced with teacher guidance about facts and known frameworks and perspectives (see “Execute rigorous, personalized lessons for mastery & growth” in [Instructional Excellence Summary](https://www.opportunityculture.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Instructional_Excellence_Summary-Public_Impact.pdf)) [ ]  Pre-plan alternative reteaching and acceleration methods to adjust instruction fast during year, per unit* **SYSTEMATIZE SCHOOLWIDE PROCEDURES & ROUTINES**

[ ]  Clarify procedures and routines to norm schoolwide (principal) or per MCL team. For details, see “Before the School Year” sections of the following action lists:[ ]  [**Connect**](https://www.opportunityculture.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Instructional_Excellence_Action_List_Connect-Public_Impact.docx) with student and families to cultivate a culture of learning[ ]  [**Lead**](https://www.opportunityculture.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Instructional_Excellence_Action_List_Lead_the_Classroom-Public_Impact.docx) the classroom |

1. May be called a “do now” at beginning of class (see *Teach Like a Champion*) or “exit ticket” at end of class. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)