

Turn MTSS Data Into Action: Identifying SLD With Confidence

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Session:

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Session Goal:

Use your MTSS framework to drive smarter SLD identification and program planning.

Session Overview

This session reviews proposed SLD criteria, identifies MTSS data that informs identification and program planning, and maps MTSS data directly to SLD criteria for a clear, systematic process.

You will review...	You will identify...	You will leave with...
Proposed SLD eligibility criteria (Parts A, B, and C)	MTSS data that informs each criterion and supports evaluation teams	A mapped process for connecting MTSS data to SLD determinations

Criterion A: Does the Student Achieve Adequately?

Key Question: The child does not achieve adequately for the child’s age or to meet State-approved grade-level standards when provided with appropriate learning experiences and instruction. (34 CFR 300.306)

Data Sources for Criterion A

Direct Measure of Standards	Curricular benchmark assessments and objectives (MCAs, ACCESS testing, etc.)
Screening (Indirect Measure)	Valid and reliable screeners, sensitive and specific to reduce false positives/negatives Screeners administered and interpreted per protocol
Criterion-referenced measures	Targeted clinical assessments or clusters of tests that align with performance Level Descriptors (PLDs) — ELA and Math K–2 coming soon
Visualization Guidance	Teams should visualize data for cohorts over time Cross-reference screening data with PLDs and curricular objectives

Special Education departments can repurpose MTSS data analyses for eligibility questions

MTSS Tools That Support Criterion A

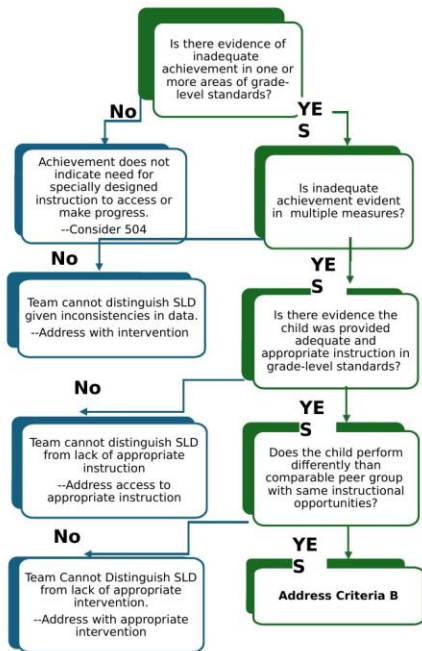
MN MTSS Data Guidebook Appendix E: Supports leadership improvement efforts in tiered interventions and progress monitoring; provides questions to ask about performance data for action planning.

MN MTSS Data Guidebook Appendix D: Provides a tool for reviewing data to support district leadership teams in systemic decision-making.

Reflection:

Who is preparing and sharing data from MTSS improvement cycles? How is that part of evaluation team decisions?

Slide Reference: Criterion A Decision Tree (Slide 10)



Recommended SLD Criteria Part A: Decision Tree

The evaluation team collected and used data to determine the child does **not** achieve adequately for their age or to meet state-approved grade-level standards when provided with appropriate learning experiences and instruction. 34 CFR 300.306

1. Team considered student data from **2 of 3 sources**—assessment of standards and screening, or criterion referenced assessment—to determine a pattern of inadequate of performance. C.F.R. 300.309
2. Team determined child received adequate and appropriate instruction... C.F.R. 300.304-6
 - Evidence instruction followed details about delivery of evidence-based practices outlined in local plans
3. Team determined that instruction was effective for comparable peer groups. 34 CFR 300.309(a)(2)
 - Chart and graph data demonstrate the effectiveness of instruction for relative peer group

Note: This is not training—it is intended to promote discussion and feedback to MDE

Slide Reference: MTSS District and School Process Flowchart (Slide 12)

District and School Process

Is the system of interventions intentionally designed to promote progress and accelerate student growth?

↓

Are the interventions evidence-based and intensified such that a lack of progress is unusual?

↓

Are the intensified interventions delivered with fidelity?

↓

Are interventions producing replicable results over time and sustainable?

↓

Are comparable groups receiving the intervention achieving success?

MTSS Data Guidebook Appendix E Supports Leadership Improvement Efforts in Tiered Interventions and Progress Monitoring

Appendix E

Inquiries to Guide Data-Based Decision Making

General Questions for Teams About Performance Evaluation

- What is the discrepancy between current performance and our expected performance relative to academic, behavior, school climate, parent engagement and/or social-emotional goals?
- What is the discrepancy between current rate of improvement and our criteria for expected rate of improvement?

Schoolwide (or Districtwide) Current Performance Questions for the School Leadership Team

- Are Tier 2 & 3 programming having the desired effect?
- What does our progress monitoring data reveal?
- How equitable is our system? Is every student group equitably benefiting from current programming and instruction?
- Are opportunity and outcome gaps closing or do some groups continue to show disparities in educational opportunity and achievement?

Classroom Current Performance Questions for Grade Level or Subject Area Teams (e.g., professional learning communities)

- Are tier 2 interventions having the desired effect?
- Are students receiving interventions making adequate progress?

Intervention Team Current Performance Questions for Individual Students or Small Group Support Questions

- Is this student(s) meeting grade-level expectations (e.g., at benchmark on screening measures)?
- Is this student(s) making adequate progress?
- Are interventions having the desired effect?

Root Cause Analysis

Criterion B: Does the Student Make Sufficient Progress?

Key Question: The child does not make sufficient progress to meet age or State-approved grade-level standards when provided with scientific research-based general education instruction and interventions that are aligned with the specific need, of research-based dosage, and have implementation fidelity.

Evidence Requirements for Criterion B

Evidence considered must meet criteria 1 and 2, OR criterion 3, and must be shared with parents:

- Progress presented with graphs showing beginning and ending, rate of growth, expected rate of growth, and points of adjustment to intervention
- The child’s rate of progress is lower than expected compared to peers, OR
- Conditions are such that the student requires special education to make adequate progress

Progress Monitoring Data Visualization Checklist

Best practice progress monitoring graphs must include (Kirsten Newell, 2026):

- Time graphed on the x-axis, measured in days or weeks of instruction (not session number)
- Index of skill graphed on the y-axis
- Equal-interval scale on both x- and y-axes
- Consecutive data points connected with lines
- Phase changes denoted; phase-related changes in performance captured

- Trend line plotted
- Goal line plotted
- Peer comparison included

Points of Pain — Progress Monitoring

Ownership / Responsibility	PM is often owned by MTSS for Tier 1–2; once a student enters evaluation, Special Education takes over PM for IEPs. Creating common and aligned procedures, messages, and expectations is a key challenge.
Implementation & Fidelity	A key priority is ensuring everyone is trained and supported to implement PM with fidelity. Consistent tools and protocols are essential.
Capacity Constraints	Time and capacity to progress monitor is the biggest sticking point, especially when there are no interventionists. Without interventionists, classroom teachers struggle to PM consistently.

Reflection:
If you were required to follow best practices in progress monitoring for SLD identification, where would you get stuck? Which point of pain is highest priority to solve first?

What Intensification Means in MTSS and in Special Education

Dimensions 1–3: Strength · Dosage · Alignment

1 Strength

DEFINITION

The evidence of effectiveness for students with intensive needs.

GUIDING QUESTION

Does evidence suggest that this intervention is expected to lead to improved outcomes in the identified area of need?

Source: National Center for intensive intervention (intensiveintervention.org)

2 Dosage

DEFINITION

The number of opportunities the student has to respond and receive feedback from the teacher.

GUIDING QUESTION

Will the group size, duration, structure, and frequency provide sufficient opportunities for students to respond and receive corrective feedback?

Source: National Center for intensive intervention (intensiveintervention.org)

3 Alignment

DEFINITION

How well the intervention matches the targeted academic skills ...of concern, and includes standards ...we would expect for a particular context.

GUIDING QUESTION

Does the intervention match the student's identified needs?

Source: National Center for intensive intervention (intensiveintervention.org)

Dimensions 4–6: Transfer · Comprehensiveness · Behavioral/Academic Support

4 Attention to Transfer

DEFINITION

Whether the intervention is explicitly designed to help students make connections between the skills taught ...in other contexts

GUIDING QUESTION

Does the intervention assist the student in generalizing target skills to general education or other tasks?

Source: National Center for intensive intervention (intensiveintervention.org)

5 Comprehensiveness

DEFINITION

How well the intervention incorporates a comprehensive array of explicit instruction principles.

GUIDING QUESTION

Does the intervention include elements of explicit instruction?

Source: National Center for intensive intervention (intensiveintervention.org)

6 Behavioral or Academic Support

DEFINITION

...intervention incorporates behavioral strategies ...with self-regulation, motivation, or externalizing behaviors that may impact their ability to learn, ...[vise versa]

GUIDING QUESTION

Does the student have opportunities to develop the behavior skills necessary to be successful?

Source: National Center for intensive intervention (intensiveintervention.org)

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What does it mean to match intervention based on the data?

ASK YOURSELF...
 Is my student's accuracy low or inconsistent? Are errors frequent, unpredictable, or does my student need modeling to attempt the skill at all?

Phase 1

Acquisition
The student is learning the skill for the first time. They do not yet performing accurately without support. The goal is correctness not speed.

Core Definition:

- ✓ Accuracy below 85% at the end of the session.
- ✓ Student does not recall with accuracy the next day
- ✓ Errors are frequent, random, or not logical
- ✓ Student requires modeling, think-alouds, scaffolds and visual support.

Critical Instructional Strategies:
 Explicit instruction — modeling, examples & non-examples, visual & verbal prompts, guided & prompted support during deliberate practice, practice options sequenced from simple to complex (task analysis).

→ **Move to Fluency when: student responds accurately**

ASK YOURSELF...
 Is my student accurate but slow or effortful? Do they need scaffolds or extra time to complete work they technically know how to do?

Phase 2

Fluency
The student can perform the skill correctly but has not yet reached automaticity or proficiency. High cognitive load limits application. The goal is accurate and efficient performance

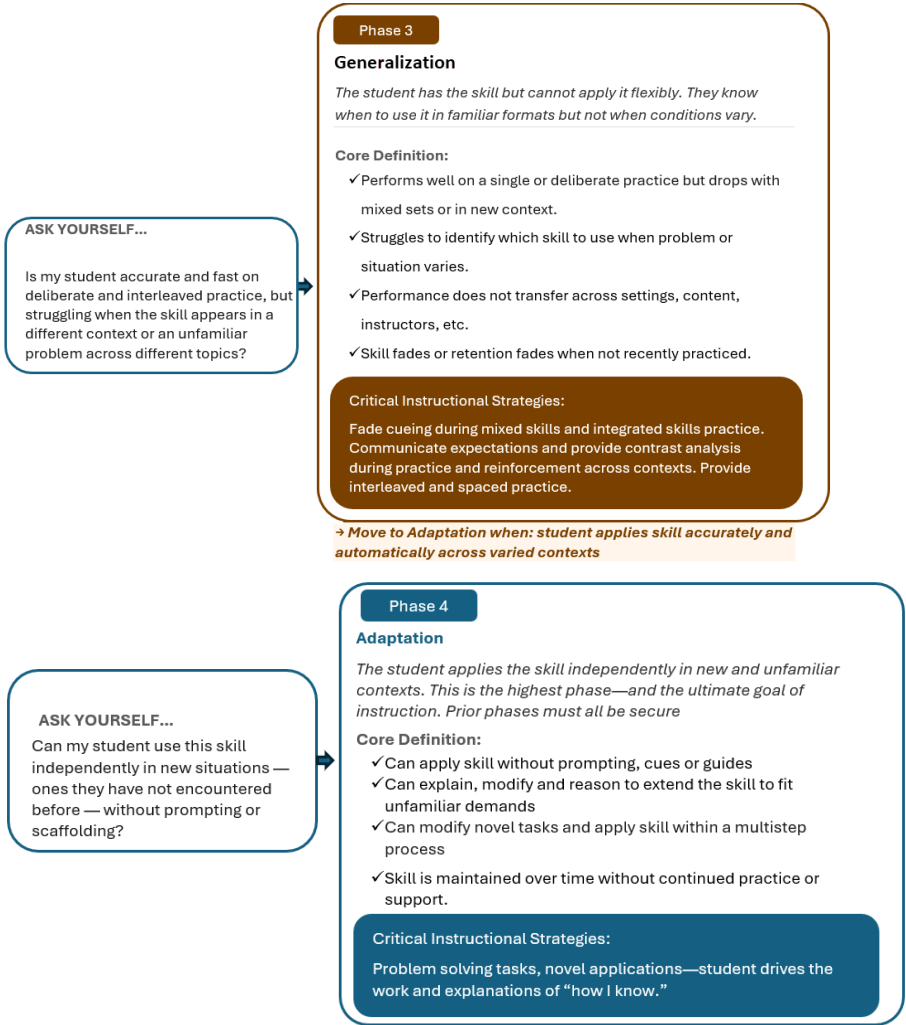
Core Definition:

- ✓ Accuracy is adequate (85-95%+) but rate is below expected level.
- ✓ Completes work correctly with ample time but struggle under timed or applied conditions.
- ✓ Still relies on scaffolds, reference tools or cues to produce responses.
- ✓ Performance drops when skill is integrated into larger tasks (reading connected text, part of multi-step problem).

Critical Instructional Strategies:
 Frequent and repeated practice with immediate performance feedback. Pull back on cues and supports. Sequence practice to increase discrimination and cognitive demand.

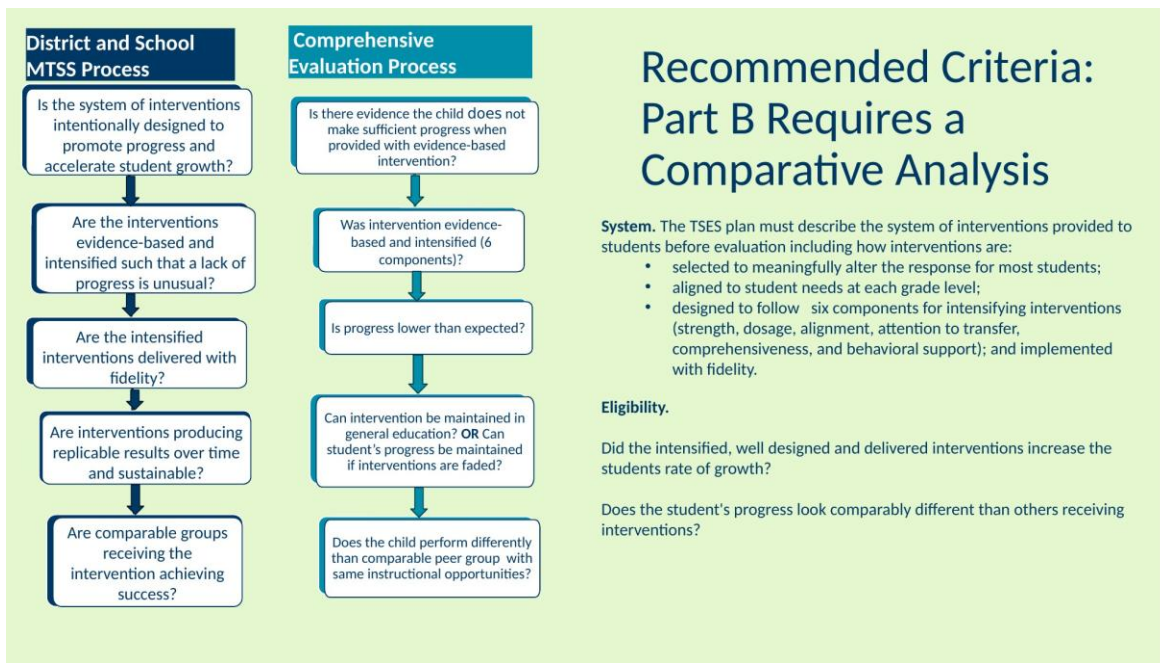
→ **Move to Generalization when: student is accurate and automatic**

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Slide Reference: Criterion B Comparative Analysis — MTSS and Evaluation Process Flowcharts (Slide 16)



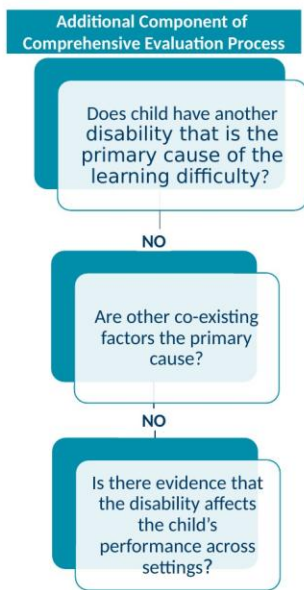
Criterion C: Comprehensive Evaluation and Primary Cause

Key Question: Did the evaluation team collect and use data to determine the primary cause of the student’s learning problem is an SLD, and was a comprehensive evaluation conducted?

<p>Process of Collective Consideration</p> <p>Team considered data from a comprehensive evaluation to determine:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning problems are not attributable to another disability (34 CFR 300.309(a)(1) and (2)) • Other factors that co-exist are not the primary cause of the learning problem • Data from two or more observations were considered 	<p>Process of Letting Go</p> <p>Transitioning away from IQ tests requires careful consideration:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IQ and measures of cognitive processing/executive function are not the same thing • Data for intensifying instruction and validating accommodations may still be valued by the team • Co-existing conditions do not disqualify a student from SLD identification
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Slide Reference: Criterion C Decision Tree (Slide 18)

Recommended SLD Criteria Part C



Did the evaluation team collect and use data to determine the primary cause of the student's learning problem is an SLD? Did the team conduct a comprehensive evaluation?

1. Team considered data from a comprehensive evaluation to determine the child's learning problems are not attributable to another disability. 34 CFR 300.309(a)(1) and (2)
2. Team considered data from a comprehensive evaluation to determine other factors that co-exist are not the primary cause of the child's learning problem. 34 CFR 300.309(a)(1) and (2)
3. Team considered data from two or more observations to further support the child's eligibility. 34 CFR 300.306(a)(1)

Systemic Data: Monitoring Health and Functioning of the System

The TSES plan may require systemic data for decision-making. Data should indicate students are provided with appropriate learning experiences using charts or graphs in plain language.

Types of Systemic Data

- Data indicating the effectiveness of instruction in state-approved grade-level standards at the district, school, or grade level
- Vertical teaming data — logically connecting entry and exit points so one team picks up where the last grade left off
- Horizontal teaming data — working toward low variation in enacted curriculum to avoid unnecessary gaps
- Tiered teams data — focusing on intensification of additional instruction and supports to accelerate growth
- Feedback loops and improvement cycles connecting district, school, and classroom levels

Point of Pain: Many districts lack a coherent system of teaming. Without coherent teaming across vertical, horizontal, and tiered levels, MTSS data cannot effectively drive SLD identification.

Slide Reference: Implementation Stages Framework (Slide 22)

Districts Implementing Evidence-Based Practices and MTSS will Revisit Exploration

	Exploration		Installation		Initial Implementation		Full Implementation
Is about...	Anticipating the change		Adjusting to reality		Progress and regeneration		Efficiencies, adaptations, and scaling
Implementation Team	Selection with intention		Adjusting who		Onboarding new		Adapting and adjusting for scale
Partnerships	Roles, functions, and data		Clarifying gaps and functions		Adjusting the level of engagement		Regenerating and improving
Internal Staff	Support and engagement		Pacing and intentions		Lessons learned		Sharing Results and efficiencies
Community	Perspectives and Expectations		Communicating commitment and progress to be made		Improvements		
			Removing barriers		Progress toward goals		

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Implementation: Moving From Isolation to Integration

“Change is inside out — not outside in. A change in SLD criteria will not be the reason this works for all students.”
— Angie Scott

Establishing a Valid and Reliable Identification Process

- Consistent regardless of zip code
- Distinguishes co-existing conditions from discriminatory practices
- Sustainable infrastructure with predictable results

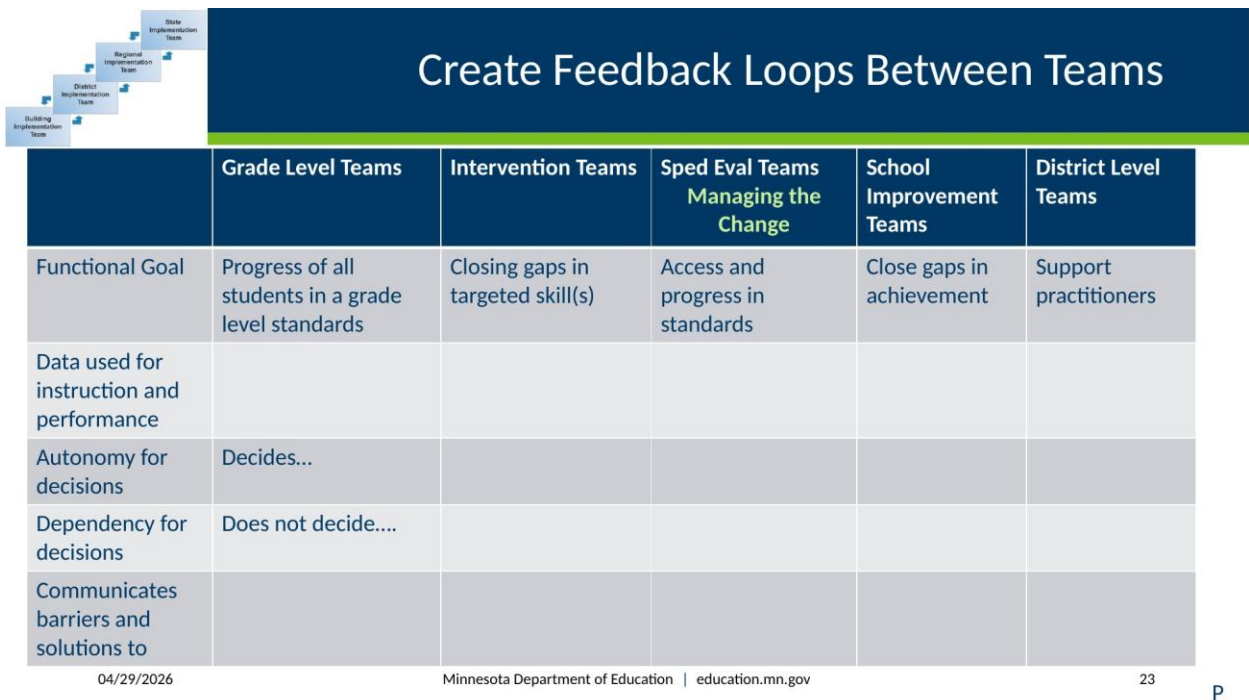
Key Implementation Questions

District Readiness	Can we move away from discrepancy before amended criteria are finalized? Do we have a system for sharing MTSS improvement cycle data with evaluation teams?
Team Capacity	Where is the stated role and function of SpEd providers to align compliance functions? What is the shared terminology for discussing what is taught and tested in standards?
Feedback Loops	How are district, school, and evaluation teams creating feedback loops between each other?

How do we use MTSS data analyses to address eligibility questions proactively?

Reflection:
 Now that we have reviewed the proposed SLD criteria: What has shifted in how you are feeling?
 What is your next step for your district or team?

Slide Reference: Create Feedback Loops Between Teams (Slide 23)



Create Feedback Loops Between Teams

	Grade Level Teams	Intervention Teams	Sped Eval Teams Managing the Change	School Improvement Teams	District Level Teams
Functional Goal	Progress of all students in a grade level standards	Closing gaps in targeted skill(s)	Access and progress in standards	Close gaps in achievement	Support practitioners
Data used for instruction and performance					
Autonomy for decisions	Decides...				
Dependency for decisions	Does not decide....				
Communicates barriers and solutions to					

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Key Resources

Resource	Use For
MN MTSS Data Guidebook Appendix D	Tool for reviewing MTSS data; supports district leadership teams in systemic decision-making
MN MTSS Data Guidebook Appendix E	Questions for action planning around performance data; supports improvement efforts in tiered interventions and PM
Best Practices in PM Data Visualization	Deliverable 1A (Google Docs) — QR code provided in session; checklist for PM graph components

MN MTSS Team Guide Appendix A and B	Consistent with the red box framework; outlines role and function of teams including SpEd alignment
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Notes

Action Planning

Based on what you heard today: What is one thing you will bring back to your team or district?

Focus Area	Action Step	Timeline / Who
Criterion A — Performance Data		
Criterion B — Progress Monitoring		
Criterion C — Comprehensive Evaluation		
Systemic Data / Teaming		
Other:		