

Delaware School Performance and Support Framework

Working Draft for Stakeholder Feedback

**Including the Early Literacy Success and Pre-Retention
Framework**

FALL 2026

Start with Students. Build for Impact.



Delaware
Department of Education



We Want Your Feedback

Delaware is developing a School Performance and Support Framework to create a clearer, more consistent approach to supporting schools and responding when student outcomes do not improve.

Today, we will:

- Share the direction and key elements of the working draft
- Explain how support and accountability work together
- Begin a broader feedback process to strengthen and refine the framework
- Share a full draft of the framework with a feedback collection form

This is a working draft. Final recommendations have not been made.

Superintendents & Administrators	School Leaders	Parents, Caregivers & Families	Students
Policymakers & Government	Business & Nonprofit Partners	Charter School Leaders	Educators & School Staff
School Board Members	Education & Community Groups	Higher Education Leaders	Faith Community

Clear Goals Require Clear Follow-Through

Delaware’s Strategic Plan is built on five building blocks: (1) Bright Beginnings (2) Safe, Supportive Schools (3) Great Teaching and Learning (4) Fair Opportunities for Every Learner (5) Families and Communities as Partners

In the Strategic Plan, Delaware has set measurable goals for **2028** and is making significant investments in students, educators, and schools.



GRADE 3 READING

38% → 53%

GRADE 8 MATHEMATICS

26% → 35%

GRADUATION RATE

89% → 91%

CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM

15% → 13%

TEACHER RETENTION

72% → 75%

DSSF COMPOSITE

264 → 300

Measuring progress is only the first step. We also need a clear response when students and schools are not improving.

The Missing Link: What Happens Next?

Delaware already measures performance and provides support. What we do not yet have is one clear statewide continuum connecting the two.

WHAT DELAWARE ALREADY HAS

DE School Success Framework (DSSF)

Measures school performance. Under **Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)**, we identify schools and student groups needing support.

Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS)

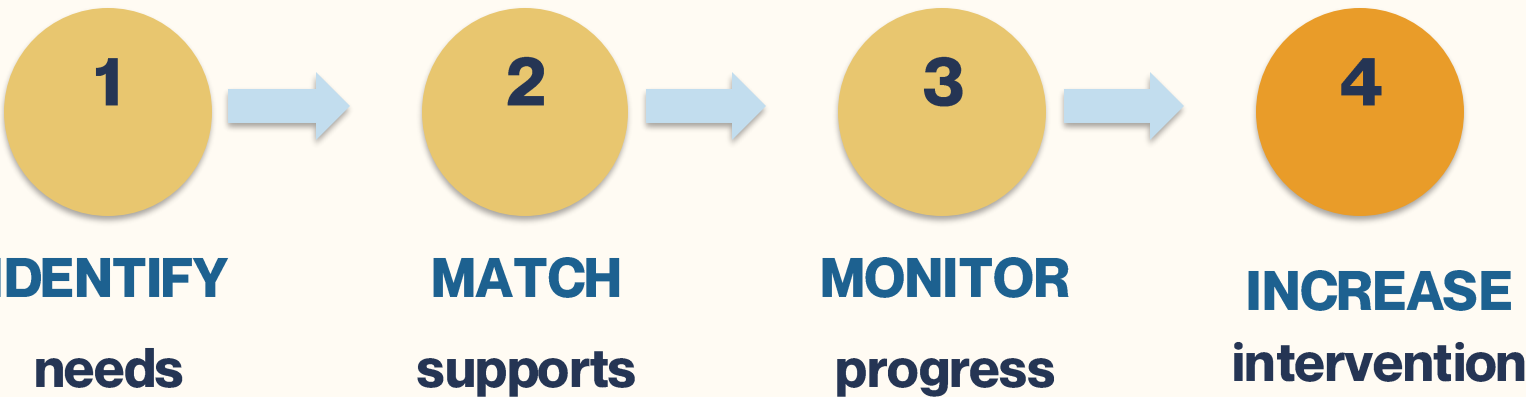
Organizes instruction, intervention, and progress monitoring

School improvement supports

Literacy, mathematics, leadership, coaching, and technical assistance

WHAT THE NEW FRAMEWORK ADDS

One clear statewide process to:

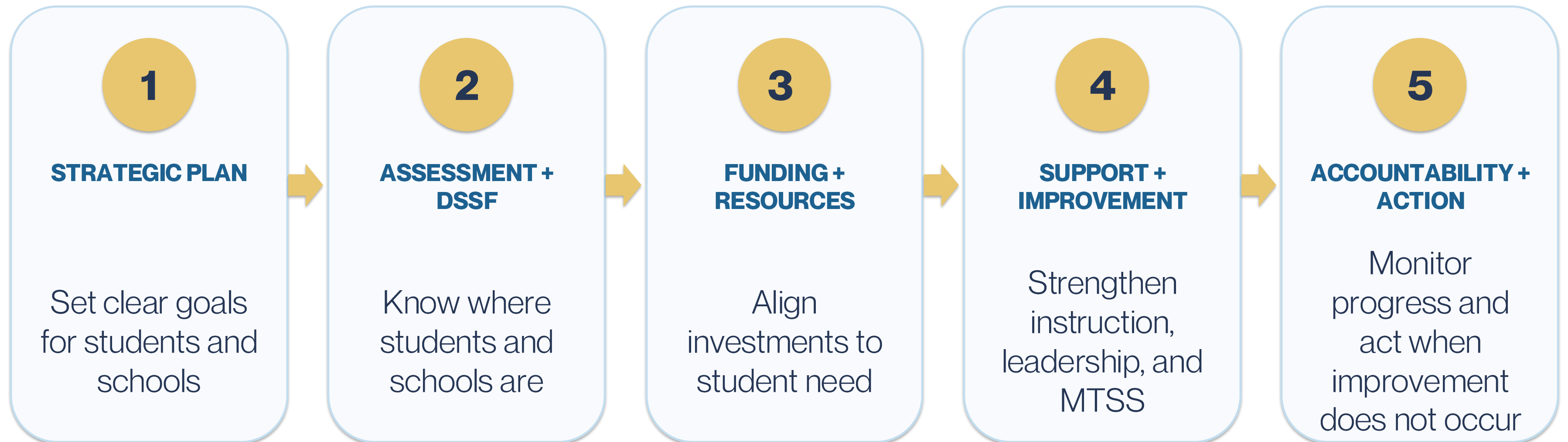


The Delaware School Performance and Support Framework defines the response after identification.

We recognize that some elements require legislative and regulatory action.

One Connected Strategy for Improvement

Assessment, funding reform, support, and accountability should operate as one system.



One system of responsibility: clear goals → transparent data → aligned support → follow-through

What Stays. What Changes.

WHAT STAYS

- DSSF remains Delaware's school performance system
- ESSA, CSI, TSI, and A-TSI requirements remain
- MTSS remains the foundation for instruction and intervention
- Local leaders remain responsible for school improvement
- Existing school improvement, literacy, mathematics, and leadership work continues

WHAT CHANGES

- Earlier identification using multiple indicators
- Tiered continuum tied to demonstrated need
- Implementation monitored alongside student outcomes
- Supports and resources more clearly aligned to priorities
- Clearer responsibilities, public reporting, and next steps
- Predictable escalation when sustained improvement does not occur

The framework aligns the systems schools are already using rather than creating a separate accountability system.

The Theory of Action

IF

Delaware sets clear expectations, strengthens Tier 1 instruction and leadership, aligns resources to demonstrated need, monitors implementation and student outcomes, and increases support and state involvement when sustained improvement does not occur ...

THEN

schools are more likely to improve instruction, build stronger systems, accelerate student learning, and sustain better outcomes.



Tier 1 first • Support and accountability together • Local responsibility first • Continuous improvement over compliance

Decisions Look at More Than Test Scores

No single measure determines a school's tier.

STUDENT OUTCOMES

What results are students achieving?

- Achievement (proficiency)
- Student progress (growth)
- Graduation and readiness
- Multilingual learner and subgroup outcomes

LEADING INDICATORS

What early signs suggest progress or risk?

- Literacy and math benchmarks
- Attendance and chronic absence
- Course completion
- Behavior and engagement

IMPLEMENTATION

Is the improvement work being done well?

- High-quality instructional materials & science of reading
- MTSS & intervention fidelity
- Improvement plan benchmarks
- Leadership practices

OPPORTUNITY + ACCESS

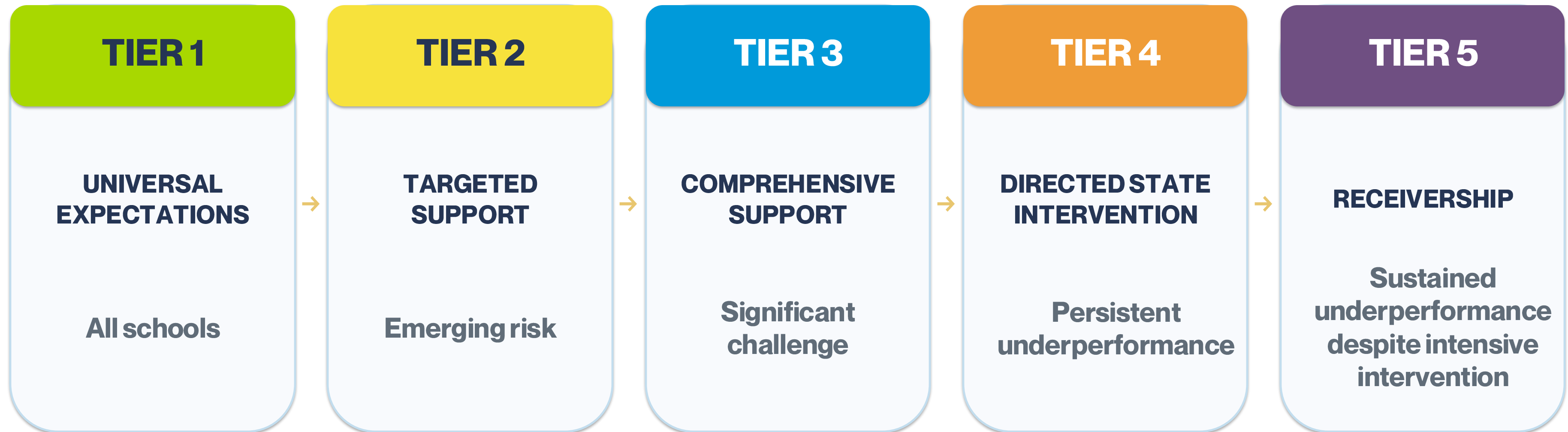
Do students have the conditions for success?

- Access to effective educators
- Leadership stability
- Access to rigorous coursework
- Access to supports and resources

Placement decisions also consider sustained trends over time, context, implementation progress, organizational capacity, and professional review.

Five Levels of Support and Accountability

Support, monitoring, accountability, and state involvement increase with student need.



Goal: improve through the lowest level of intervention necessary while preserving local decision-making whenever possible.

Tier 1 Is the Foundation for Every School

Tier 1 is not “no support.” It is the statewide baseline that makes earlier improvement possible.

1

STRONG CLASSROOM INSTRUCTION

High-quality instructional materials, evidence-based reading and mathematics practices, and strong core instruction.

2

MTSS + INTERVENTION

Screen, identify needs, provide evidence-based interventions, and monitor student response.

3

LEADERSHIP + RESOURCE ALIGNMENT

Principal and superintendent goals, staffing, professional learning, and resources aligned to improvement priorities.

4

TRANSPARENCY + CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Annual DSSF review, implementation monitoring, public reporting, and clear improvement priorities.

The strongest accountability system starts by making sure every school has clear expectations, strong instruction, and the support to implement them well.

As Need Increases, Support and Intervention Increase

TIER 2 TARGETED SUPPORT

- ✓ Targeted DDOE technical assistance and coaching
- ✓ Subgroup and root-cause review
- ✓ 30-60-90 day improvement cycles
- ✓ Quarterly implementation review

TIER 3 COMPREHENSIVE SUPPORT

- ✓ Assigned DDOE school improvement lead
- ✓ Intensive literacy, math, and leadership supports
- ✓ Needs, curriculum, and resource reviews
- ✓ Public improvement plan and quarterly reviews

TIER 4 DIRECTED STATE INTERVENTION

- ✓ State-approved turnaround partner
- ✓ State-directed instructional and operational actions
- ✓ Leadership or staffing redesign when needed
- ✓ Monthly implementation and performance review

Schools remain responsible for improvement. DDOE responsibility also increases as needs become more significant or persistent.

Receivership Is the Final Intervention, Not the Starting Point

WHEN IT WOULD BE CONSIDERED

- Sustained underperformance after Tier 4 state-directed intervention
- Required actions and benchmarks are not producing improvement
- Leadership, governance, operational, or financial conditions substantially impede improvement
- Existing Tier 4 authority is insufficient to achieve sustained improvement

TIER 5

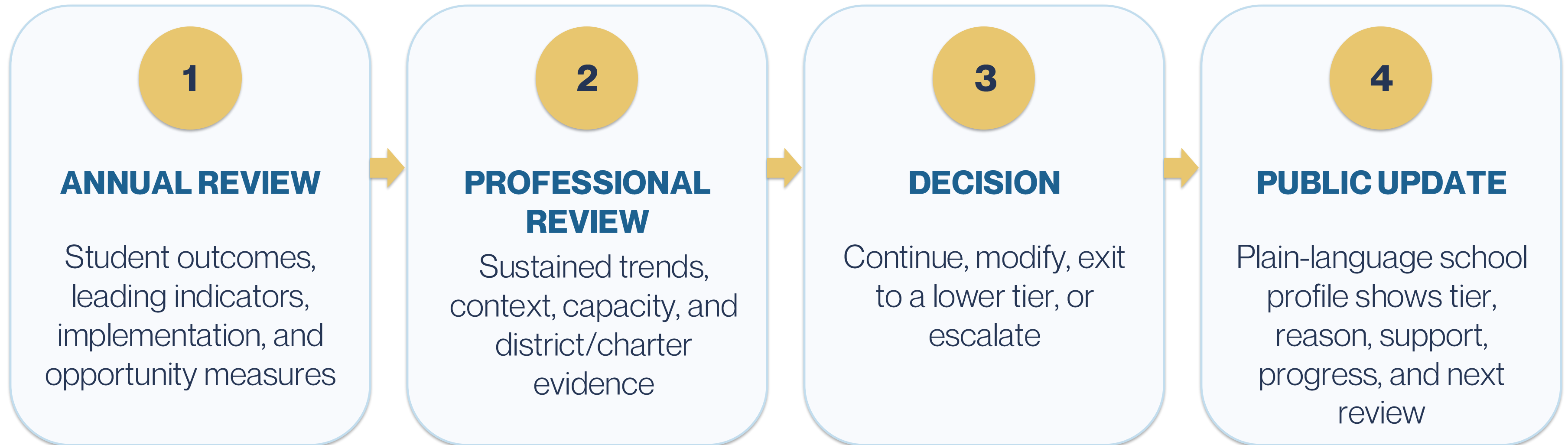
WHAT THE WORKING DRAFT ESTABLISHES

- State-appointed receiver or recovery leader with defined authority
- State receivership order and public recovery plan
- Intensive instructional, leadership, operational, and governance support
- Frequent public monitoring and reporting
- Exit tied to sustained progress and local capacity, followed by phased return to local governance

Receivership is intended to build the conditions for sustainable local improvement, not permanent state control.

Movement Between Tiers Should Be Predictable

No surprises. Everyone should know where a school stands, what support is being provided, when progress will be reviewed, and what happens next.



Existing CSI/TSI history is not erased. Sustained improvement moves a school toward greater local responsibility.

The Early Literacy Framework Applies the Same Logic to Students

SCHOOL PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK

Identify need



Match support



Monitor implementation +
results



Increase intervention when
needed

K-3 LITERACY FRAMEWORK (embedded in Tier 1)

Screen early



Strengthen Tier 1 + intervene



Monitor progress +
implementation



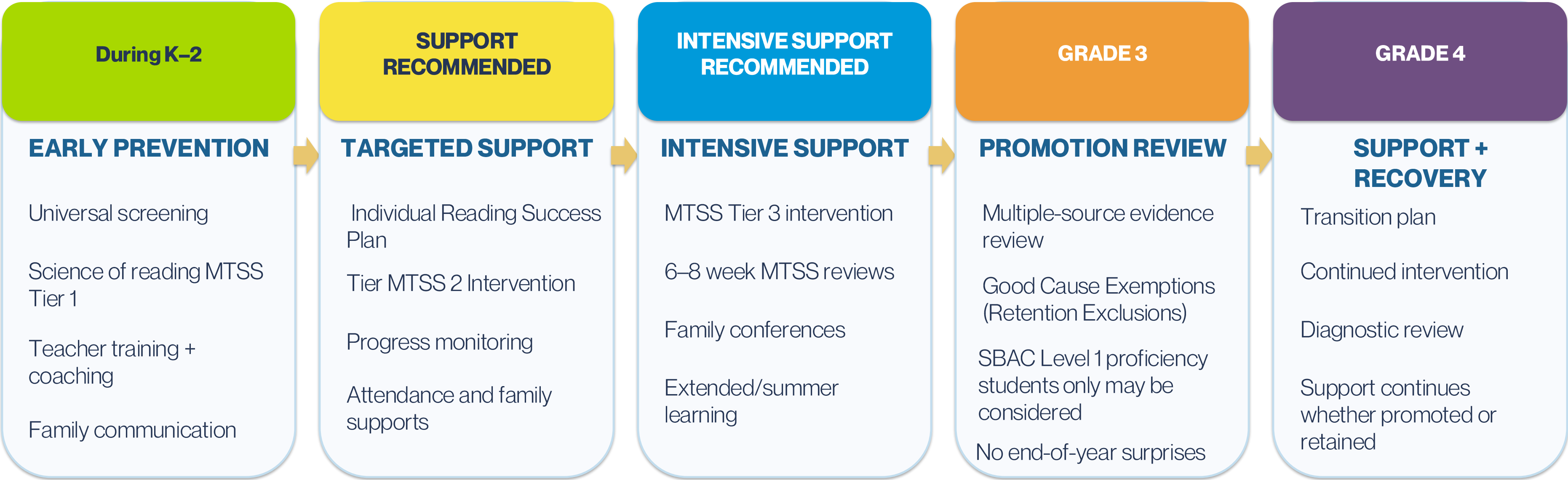
Intensify support before
retention is considered



Both frameworks act earlier, make adult and system responsibilities clear, and respond before poor outcomes become entrenched.

Prevention Before Retention

Retention is not the purpose of the K–3 framework. The goal is to ensure students receive the support they need long before retention is considered and continues past third grade.



Family partnership and progress monitoring run across the full continuum.

Grade 3 Retention Has Guardrails

A student may be considered for retention only when the student's ELA proficiency is Level 1 on the state assessment and the school can document the required instruction, intervention, monitoring, and outreach.

- ✓ **High-quality MTSS Tier 1 literacy instruction aligned to the science of reading**
- ✓ **Individual Reading Success Plan, when required**
- ✓ **Progress monitoring at required intervals**
- ✓ **Attendance barriers reviewed through MTSS**
- ✓ **Universal screening and appropriate diagnostic assessment**
- ✓ **Evidence-based interventions implemented with fidelity and adjusted to progress**
- ✓ **Timely family notification and documented good-faith outreach; family signature is not required**
- ✓ **Applicable Good Cause Exemptions considered**

SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY

If required supports cannot be documented, retention is not available.

MULTIPLE EVIDENCE

No single assessment result is the sole determinant.

PHASED IMPLEMENTATION

Promotion-review provisions begin with an incoming kindergarten cohort and are not retroactive.

Improvement Is a Shared Civic Project

Accountability is reciprocal. As expectations increase for schools, DDOE must also be clear about the support it will deliver and when.

DDOE

- **Sets statewide expectations**
- **Delivers guidance, support, and technical assistance**
- **Aligns teams and resources**
- **Monitors & reports**
- **Meets published service standards**

DISTRICTS / CHARTERS + BOARDS

- **Lead school improvement**
- **Align staffing and resources**
- **Monitor leadership**
- **Ensure required systems are implemented**
- **Partner with DDOE on review and response**

SCHOOLS + EDUCATORS

- **Deliver strong Tier 1 instruction**
- **Use data to identify need**
- **Implement MTSS and interventions**
- **Monitor progress and adjust practice**
- **Partner with families**

FAMILIES + COMMUNITIES

- **Receive clear, timely information**
- **Participate in planning and feedback**
- **Support attendance and learning**
- **Help identify barriers and opportunities**
- **Reinforce learning beyond the school day**

Shared responsibility does not mean blurred responsibility. The framework should make clear who owns each action, by when, and what happens if it is not delivered.

Implementation Must Be Ready Before Launch

Some elements require legislation or regulation. DDOE will implement each component only after the necessary authority, resources, and operating conditions are in place.

LEGAL AUTHORITY

Statutory and regulatory authority mapped and resolved

FUNDING

Resources aligned to the responsibilities in each tier

DDOE CAPACITY

Clear ownership, staffing, and cross-office coordination

DATA + REPORTING

Reliable indicators, dashboards, and review processes

SUPPORT CAPACITY

Coaching, intervention, leadership, and turnaround support ready

PARTNERS + PROCUREMENT

Contracts and external expertise available when needed

FAMILY-FACING SUPPORTS

Plain-language guidance, notices, tools, and communication

IMPLEMENTATION GUIDANCE

Service standards, timelines, roles, training, and monitoring defined

The implementation plan must be as strong as the policy design.

What Is Established and What We Need Help Shaping

DIRECTION THAT IS ESTABLISHED

- Five-tier continuum from universal expectations through receivership
- Strong Tier 1 instruction, leadership, and MTSS as the foundation
- Support and accountability rise together
- Multiple measures, not one test score
- State involvement increases when sustained improvement does not occur
- K–3 prevention first; retention is a last resort
- Receivership remains the final tier

WHAT WE NEED YOUR HELP SHAPING

- Tier entry, movement, duration, and exit criteria
- Supports and interventions at each tier
- School, district/charter, board, educator, and DDOE responsibilities and service standards
- Tier 5 authority, safeguards, receiver structure, and return to local control
- K–3 exemptions, student mobility, family communication, and decision process
- Implementation sequencing, capacity, and readiness

We are not starting from scratch. We are asking you to pressure-test the working draft and help us make it stronger.

This Is the Beginning of the Feedback Process

1

SEPTEMBER

First external feedback with DDOE staff, legislators, superintendents and charter leaders, State Board, and educators

2

OCTOBER

Family, community, advocacy, and partner engagement; refine the working draft around emerging themes

3

NOVEMBER

Synthesize feedback, resolve policy and implementation issues, and brief stakeholders on revisions

4

DECEMBER

Prepare legislative or regulatory recommendations and next-step implementation planning



Provide Feedback



de.gov/spsffeedback

DDOE will document feedback, identify themes, and report what changed, what did not, and why.

Questions? Email school.performance@doe.k12.de.us

APPENDIX

Technical Detail and Frequently Asked Questions

Supporting detail for stakeholder discussion



TODAY

DSSF identifies school performance concerns.

Supports may come through separate programs and processes.

Monitoring often emphasizes outcomes and compliance.

Roles and next steps vary across improvement processes.

State intervention is less clearly sequenced.

WORKING DRAFT

DSSF remains. The framework defines the response after identification.

Support is coordinated through tiered continuum tied to identified need.

Implementation, leading indicators, opportunity, and outcomes are reviewed together.

Responsibilities, review cycles, movement, and public reporting are defined more clearly.

State involvement increases predictably when sustained support does not produce improvement.

Tier Summary

TIER	FOCUS	EXAMPLES OF SUPPORT / ACTION
1	Universal expectations	Strong Tier 1 instruction, MTSS, leadership goals, statewide guidance, public reporting
2	Targeted support	Targeted coaching and technical assistance, subgroup review, 30-60-90 day cycles, quarterly monitoring
3	Comprehensive support	Assigned improvement lead, intensive coaching/specialists, needs and resource reviews, public improvement plan
4	Directed state intervention	Turnaround partner, state-directed instructional/operational actions, leadership/staffing redesign, monthly reviews
5	Receivership	State Receiver or Recovery Leader, defined authority, Recovery Plan, intensive state oversight, capacity-based exit

Tier 2 aligns with A-TSI and other emerging risks; Tier 3 aligns with CSI; CSI-R schools receive professional review for possible Tier 4 placement.

Receivership is a governance and recovery tool, not a standalone turnaround strategy.

READINESS GATE

Activate only when legal authority, DDOE capacity, funding, and recovery supports are ready.

DEFINED AUTHORITY

Use a State Receivership Order that specifies which powers transfer and which remain local.

ENTRY DIAGNOSTIC

Review instruction, leadership, governance, staffing, operations, finances, and organizational capacity.

PUBLIC RECOVERY PLAN

Set student outcome goals, implementation benchmarks, leadership/staffing actions, resource alignment, community engagement, and exit conditions.

RECIPROCAL STATE COMMITMENTS

Make DDOE support, monitoring, staffing, and resource commitments explicit.

CAPACITY-BASED EXIT

Return authority in phases when results improve and local leadership/governance can sustain the work.

Peer-state lesson: broad authority alone does not produce academic improvement. Authority must be paired with a specific recovery strategy, strong implementation, and clear exit conditions.

K–3 Promotion Review: Additional Detail

Proposed Good Cause Exemptions

- Significant cognitive disability / alternate assessment
- English learner with fewer than two years of U.S. English-language development services
- IEP team determination that retention is not educationally appropriate
- Student previously retained once in K–3 with documented intensive intervention
- Alternative state-approved demonstration of grade-level reading proficiency
- Recent Delaware enrollment without the full sequence of required supports

COHORT + DECISION SAFEGUARDS

- Promotion-review provisions begin with an incoming kindergarten cohort and are not retroactive.
- If implementation begins in 2027–28, the first Grade 3 promotion reviews would occur at the end of 2030–31.
- Final decision authority, appeal/reconsideration process, and exemption approval procedures remain to be finalized through stakeholder input and legal review.
- Students promoted or retained continue to receive Grade 4 literacy support aligned to need.

Short 6–8 week review cycles are used to adjust support and review implementation. They are not deadlines for achieving grade-level proficiency.

Is this a state takeover?

No. Local responsibility remains the starting point. State involvement increases as needs increase and sustained support does not lead to sufficient improvement. Receivership is the final tier, not the starting point.

Are schools judged only by test scores?

No. State assessment results are important, but tier decisions consider multiple measures, sustained trends, implementation, leadership, and the conditions students need to succeed.

How will this framework affect schools' existing planning and reporting requirements?

The framework is intended to align DSSF, MTSS, federal improvement designations, and existing school improvement work so schools are not asked to maintain disconnected plans and review processes.

How does this impact local control?

Local responsibility remains the default. State involvement becomes stronger only when sustained local action and support do not produce sufficient improvement.

Frequently Asked Questions

Are schools already identified for improvement starting over?

No. The working draft is intended to build on existing school improvement designations and a school's improvement history, not erase them.

What about students who move schools or districts before Grade 3?

Student mobility is built into the working draft through a proposed recent-enrollment exemption and broader review of whether required instruction, intervention, monitoring, and family communication were provided.

What about existing promotion expectations in Grades 5 and 8?

The K–3 proposal is focused on Grade 3 reading. It does not assume existing Title 14 authority or expectations for Grades 5 and 8 are removed. DDOE will clarify how existing code and the new framework fit together.

How do we address equity concerns about retention?

The design puts prevention first and ties retention eligibility to strong instruction, intervention, family communication, exemptions, and school accountability. Funding reform, student supports, and accountability must operate together so students are not penalized for system failures.

Research and Peer-State Learning Informed the Design

The working draft combines Delaware experience, implementation research, and lessons from other states.

ACCOUNTABILITY + IMPROVEMENT

Identification alone is not enough. Accountability data should lead to aligned planning, evidence-based supports, monitoring, and sustained improvement.

IMPLEMENTATION

Monitoring whether the work is implemented well helps distinguish a weak strategy from weak execution.

LEADERSHIP

School and district leadership shape the conditions for strong instruction, adult learning, and continuous improvement.

RESOURCE ALIGNMENT

School improvement funding, staffing, professional learning, and technical assistance should follow demonstrated need and improvement priorities.

EARLY LITERACY

Strong Tier 1 instruction, early screening, evidence-based intervention, progress monitoring, and family partnership should precede retention consideration.

RECEIVERSHIP

Peer-state experience shows authority is not a turnaround strategy by itself. Receivership needs clear powers, a specific recovery plan, state capacity, transparency, and capacity-based exit.

Key sources include the 2026 CCSSO “Bridging Accountability and School Improvement” road map, peer-reviewed school improvement and early literacy research, and Massachusetts receivership design lessons.