

School Three-Year Planning Guide

2026-27 to 2028-29

Planning Guide | May 2026

TN Department of Education

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Table of Contents

Department of Education 1

Introduction 4

Planning Cycle, Purpose, and Timeline 5

Planning Components 7

Cover Page 7

Prepare and Reflect to Plan 7

Identify Priorities and Root Causes 8

Individual Goals 11

Strategies for Each Goal 12

Benchmark Indicators for Each Strategy 13

Funding Sources for Strategies 13

Assurances 14

Additional School Planning Areas 14

Schoolwide Plan 14

Targeted Assistance Plan 14

TSI, ATSI Supports 14

Priority/CSI Designation Only 15

Reviewing and Revising the School Plan 15

Reviewing the School Plan 15

Revising the School Plan 16

ePlan 16

User Access 16

Accessing the School Plan 17

School Plan Sections and Pages 17

Change Log 18

History Log 18

How to Print in ePlan 19
Troubleshooting..... 19
User Access Issues 19

Introduction

Pursuant to Tenn. Code Ann. § 49-1-613, district and school planning submission and approvals will transition from annually to once every three years. The transition of the district and school planning process to full approval every three years, pursuant to Public Chapter 1005 of the 113th General Assembly, provides a unique opportunity to strategically plan for the long-term improvement needed at the district and school level to reach high level outcomes for all students by the 2028-29SY. Periodic reflection during the 2026-27 through 2028-29 school years will be critical to ensuring forward momentum toward the intended implementation work and intended student performance outcomes.

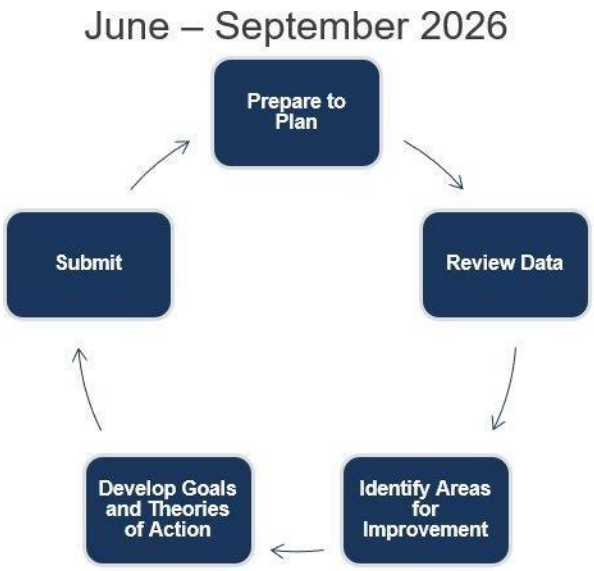
The school planning window will open June 1 and close on September 15, 2026. Schools will inherit the district goals and strategies and will revise the school plan to align with district expectations while also tailoring it to the school context.

The school's plan should clearly communicate:

- what student performance areas the school will work to improve,
- how the school intends to work to improve it, and
- how the school will measure improvement.

Planning Cycle, Purpose, and Timeline

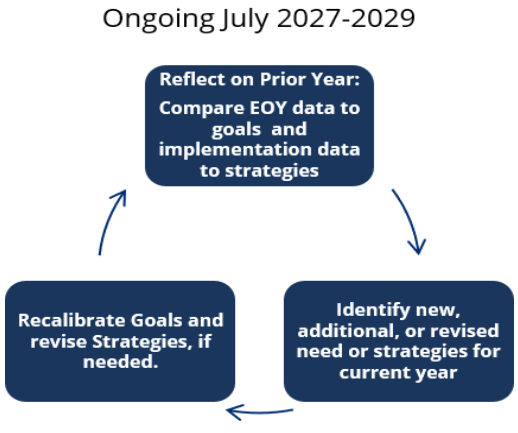
Development of Three-Year Plan



Reflection of Implementation

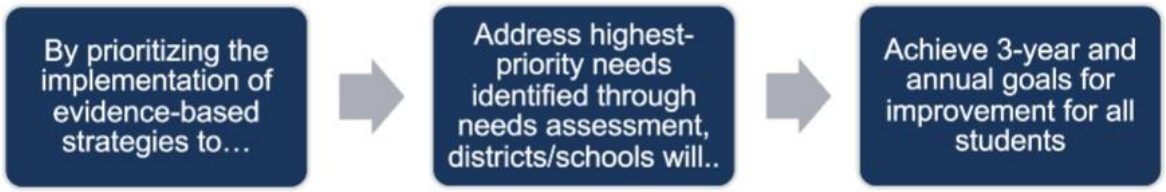


Reflection of Progress



Purpose of District and School Plan

Helps the district and school create, communicate, and implement a coherent theory of action for improving student performance for all its students over the **next 3 years**.



Answers the questions:

What student performance has the district identified for improvement and how is each school aligning and tailoring those student performance improvements to their context?

How does the district intend for schools to work toward that improvement and how are those improvement efforts being adjusted for school-level implementation?

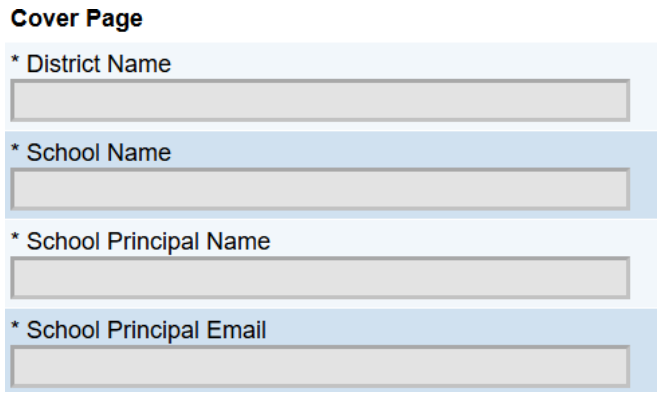
How will the district and school know it has improved?

School Planning Key Event	Date
School Plans Open	June 23, 2026
School Plans with Federal Designation Due to District	August 31, 2026
District Teams Must Approve All School Plans with a Federal Designation	September 30, 2026
School Plans without a Federal Designation Due to the District	September 30, 2026
District Teams Must Approve All School Plans without a Federal Designation	October 30, 2026
Progress Check Plan Based on Benchmark Indicators	January 2027

Planning Components

Cover Page

The Cover Page requires entry of general organization information: District Name, School Name, School Principal Name, School Principal Email.



Prepare and Reflect to Plan

The Prepare and Reflect Plan section was designed to help districts and schools show how federal requirements around stakeholder involvement and program-specific needs assessments are met. Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) funding is tied closely to this section.

The Prepare and Reflect to Plan section contains important information to be considered before the school plan is crafted to ensure that the needs of all students, educators, special populations, and families are considered and represented throughout the plan. Ensuring appropriate school staff and stakeholders are involved in completing the plan is imperative. Collaboration amongst those with insights into strengths, challenges, and needs of the covered areas will allow schools to develop meaningful and robust responses, resulting in a stronger and more comprehensive plan.

Questions and their associated ESEA funding included within the Prepare and Reflect to Plan include:

- Identify Team, Title I, Part A §1112(a)(1)(A)
- Stakeholder Involvement, Title I, Part A §1112(a)(5).

- Well-rounded Education, Title IV, Part A §4106(d)(1)(A)
- Disciplinary Practices, Title I, Part A §1112(b)(2
- Safe, Supportive, and Healthy Environments, Title IV, Part A §4106(d)(1)(B)
- Integration and Effective Use of Technology in the Classroom, Title IV, Part A §4106(d)(1)(C)
- Parent and Family Engagement, Title I, Part A §1112(b)(7)
- Professional Learning for Educators, Title II, Part A §2102(b)
- Educator Placement, Title I, Part A §1112(b)(2).

Identify Priorities and Root Causes

Using provided, local, and other available data, school planners must conduct a thorough needs assessment that includes the identification of strengths and challenges, articulation of clear priorities, and identification of prior strategies that supported improvements and root causes that may have limited the gains experienced in the priority area. Analysis of data to identify areas for improvement must include but is not limited to ELA, math, college career readiness and/or ACT/SAT, graduation rate, and student attendance.

Identified priorities will serve as the focus for goals for the three-year plan for the school. School planners should identify specific subgroups and other areas of need for use when tailoring the inherited goals and/or adding goals to address the school context.

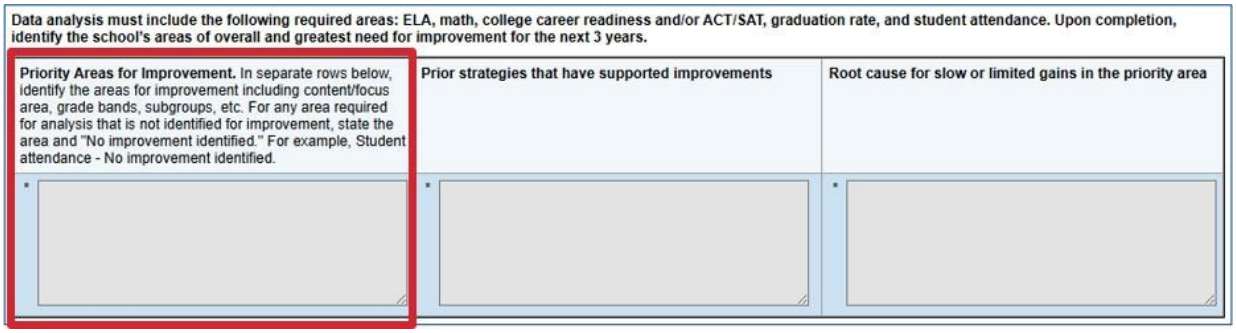
School-level data has been provided through TNShare (2025-26 Documents >District folder> Planning) for each district. District-level planners with access to the data should provide the data file to school planning teams.

To identify *Priority areas including content/focus areas, grade bands, subgroups, etc.,* school planners must:

1. Use a robust set of K-12 data that includes but is not limited to ELA, math, college career readiness and/or ACT/SAT, graduation rate, and student attendance to identify strengths and challenges.
2. Identify areas for improvement (i.e. all students K-12 math) that will be the school's focus for the next three years and very specific areas that may need additional attention (i.e. ED).
3. School planners will list these in the *Identify Priorities and Root*

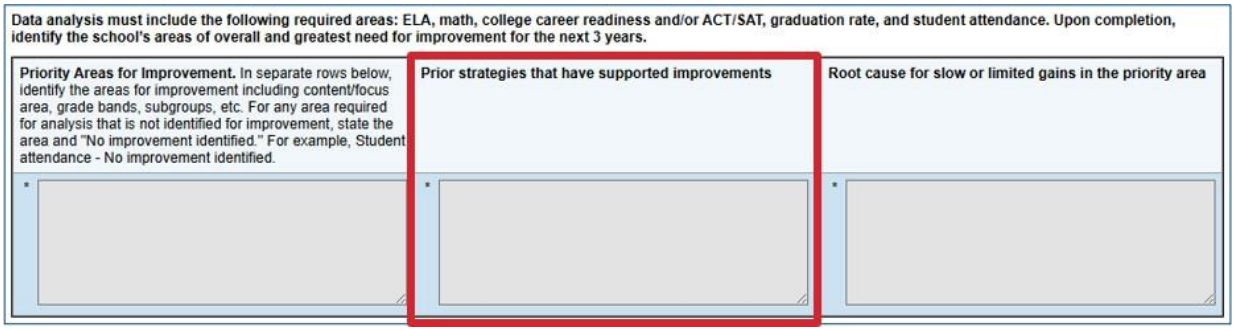
Causes section and use this information for writing goals.

4. Areas of required data review that are not identified for improvement must be clearly stated.



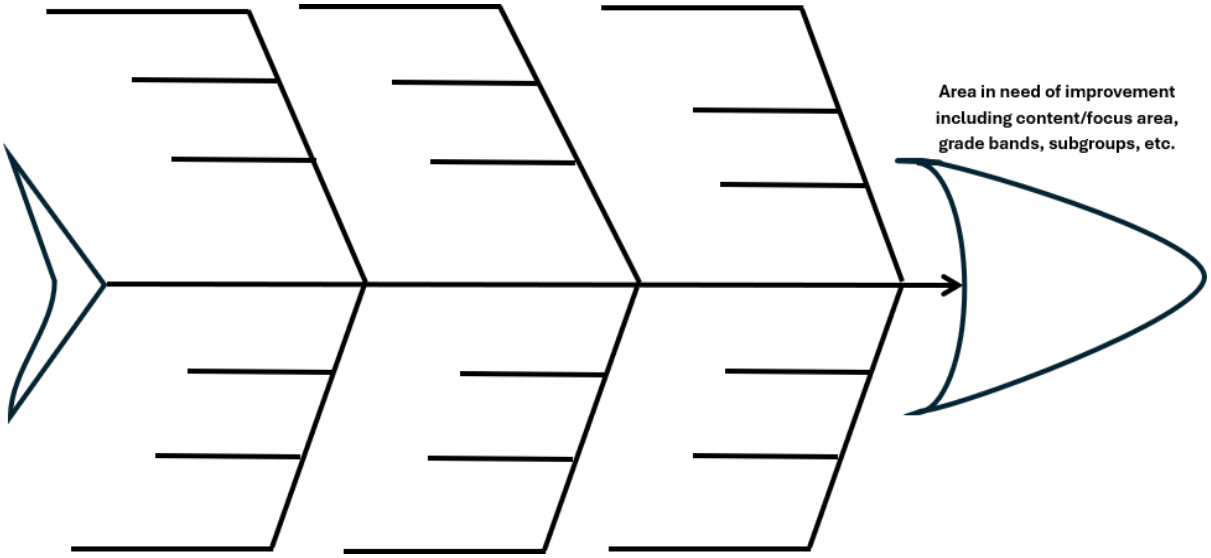
To identify *Priority strategies that have supported improvement,* school planners must reflect on the strengths that existed within each *Priority Areas for Improvement* and determine strategies that supported the improvements they experienced. Strategies should be grounded in qualitative or quantitative evidence.

Identified strategies should be included in the *Identify Priorities and Root Causes* section and referenced when revising or developing the school's theory of action for each goal.



Identification of *Root Cause(s) for slow or limited gains in the priority area* provides school planners an opportunity to address problems that exist for current strategies or the knowledge that new/additional strategies are needed to gain the momentum needed to reach the desired outcome(s). Though multiple methods exist for identifying root causes, the department suggests school planners engage in a Fishbone Diagram for each priority area for improvement.

To conduct a root cause analysis using a Fishbone Diagram:



Step 1: Drawing a fishbone diagram on chart paper.

Step 2: Insert the area of need, including the grade bands and subgroups, at the head of the fish (e.g., "Increase the K-12 ELA proficiency -All, SWD, EL, ED").

Step 3: Brainstorm possible causes or contributing factors for the area of need that are limiting or slowing progress. Write each on a sticky note. Make sure the causes you're posing are grounded in evidence from your knowledge of the system and how your stakeholders experience the system AND are within the school's control.

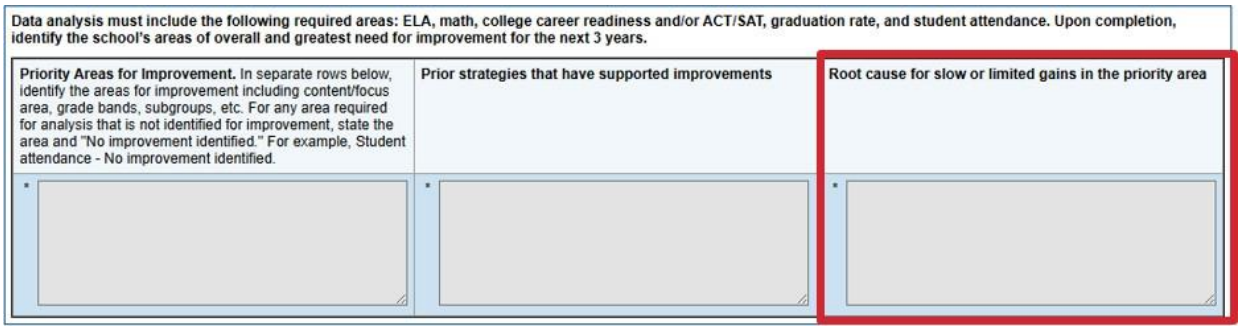
Step 4: Organize the causes into major categories of contributing factors. Label the end of each bone with the categories to create headers.

Step 5: List the brainstormed ideas from Step 2 under each appropriate header.

Step 6: Review the diagram to determine which are most likely impacting performance for the area of need. Highlight those to be addressed as part of the district's theory of action (strategy) work.

Identified root causes should be included in the *Identify Priorities and Root Causes* section and referenced when determining strategies that support the

school's theory of action for each goal.

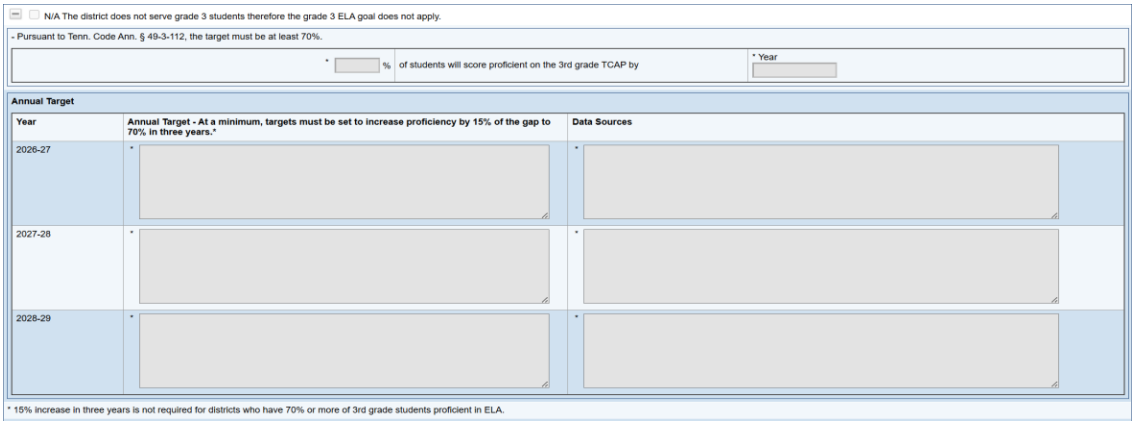


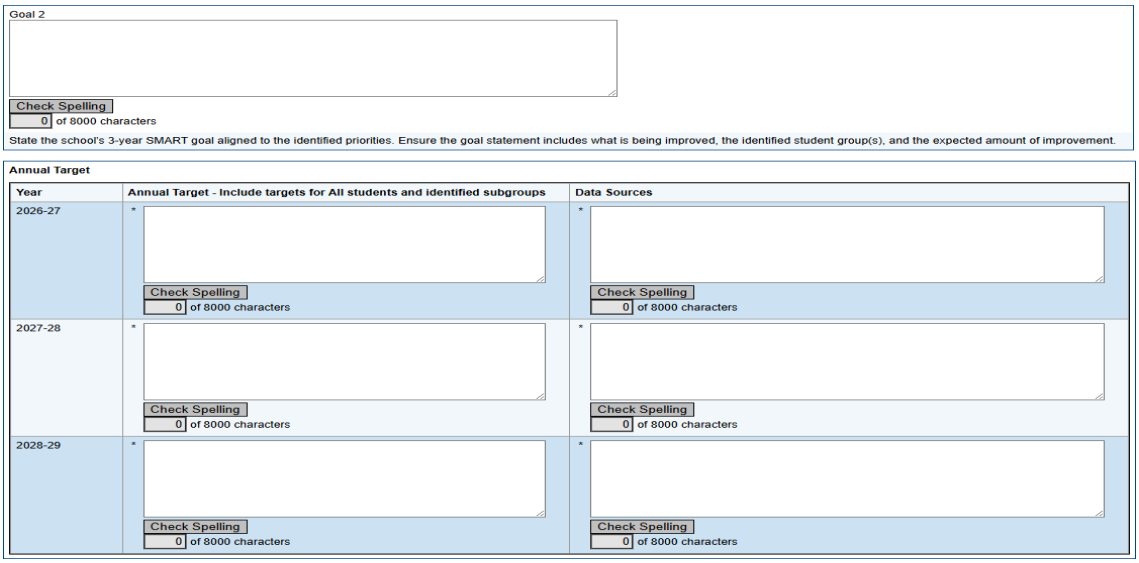
Individual Goals

Using the areas for improvement identified through the needs assessment schools will revise the goals received from their district and establish new goals, as needed, for the next three years to be met by 2028-29. The inheritance of the district's goals and strategies by its schools ensures alignment, however schools must tailor these to their specific context. Schools will notice the first goal of their plan is a minimum of 70% proficiency in grade 3 ELA, this is required of districts by the TISA Accountability Report. Schools serving grade 3 should work with their district leaders to determine the annual targets based on their most recent ELA outcome; all other schools should mark N/A. For each goal, school planners must establish a theory of action, the logically connected work for which the school has a strong degree of belief will ensure goal outcomes will be reached, and determine associated funding sources, if applicable.

A goal-setting tool to support school planners in thinking about goals and annual targets is available on the TN Department of Education Planning webpage under School Planning Resources for District Leaders.

For each goal, users will provide the three-year SMART goal that includes the student performance to be improved, how improvement will be measured (amount of improvement to be reached), and by when the goal will be met. Each goal will include Annual Targets to be reached that will lead to the 2028-29SY goal and the Data Source should include the data file, year, and cohort the school will use to verify if they did or did not meet the stated annual target(s).





Strategies for Each Goal

After identifying appropriate goals, school planners must develop the theory of action for reaching each goal. The theory of action is a set of logically connected work for which the school has a strong degree of confidence that if implemented well will ensure goal outcomes are reached.

> If the school implements <insert logically connected work in which the school has a strong degree of confidence>,
> then the school can meet its annual targets of <insert annual targets>
> so that it will achieve its long-range goal of <insert 2028-29 goal>.

Theories of action should include current strategies that will be sustained and new

strategies to be introduced in the coming year. School planners should ensure the identified root causes have been appropriately addressed so previously experienced growth limitations do not continue. Additionally, strategies identified as supporting improvements, as identified earlier in the process, should be considered for inclusion.

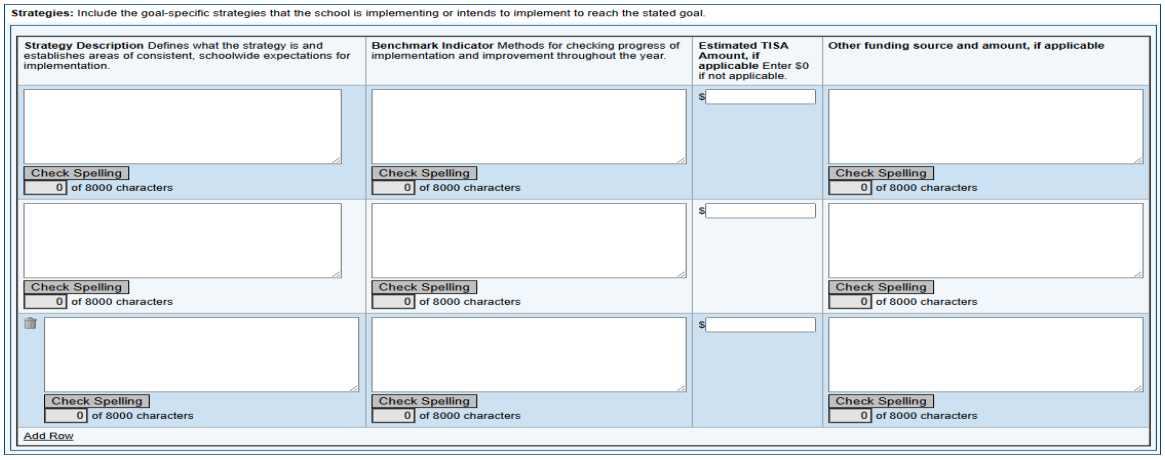
Strategy descriptions should clearly communicate what the strategy is, the work that is/will be happening to impact change and improvement and the areas of consistent, schoolwide expectations for implementation.
Please use the *Add Row* option to include as many strategies as needed to articulate the school's theory of action.

Benchmark Indicators for Each Strategy

Each strategy should include benchmark indicators that allow for frequent progress checks on the state of implementation across the school and monitoring whether the work is or is not leading to a desired and defined improvement. Benchmark indicators should be leading measures that can be captured frequently enough that they provide school leaders valuable insight that informs on-time, meaningful, and manageable decisions throughout the year.

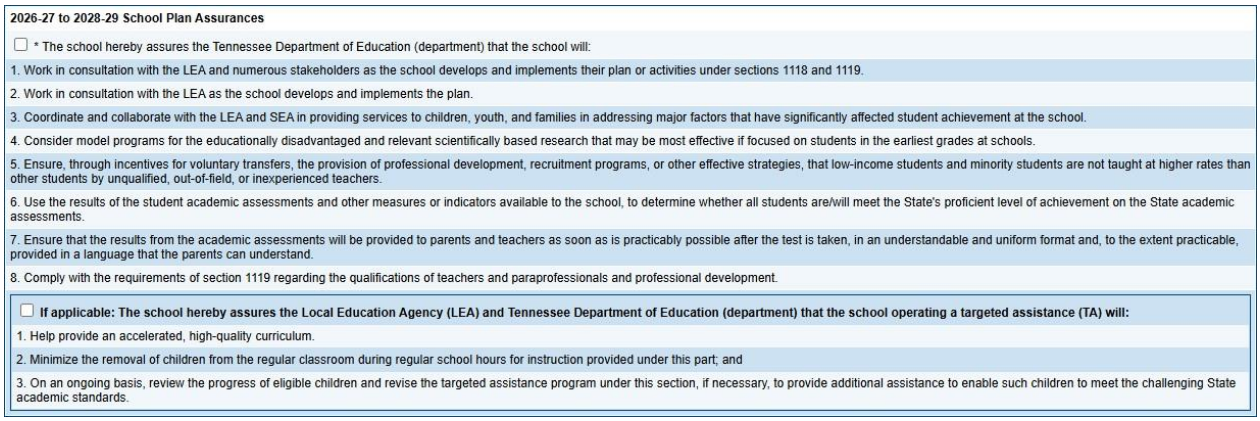
Funding Sources for Strategies

The inclusion of funding sources provides insight into the budgetary resources required to implement the strategy. The inclusion of funding sources and amounts is at the discretion of the school.



Assurances

Schools must read the assurances and check the box at the top. In addition, schools that are Targeted Assistance must attest to three additional statements. There is no need to upload a copy of signed assurances.



2026-27 to 2028-29 School Plan Assurances

☐ * The school hereby assures the Tennessee Department of Education (department) that the school will:

1. Work in consultation with the LEA and numerous stakeholders as the school develops and implements their plan or activities under sections 1118 and 1119.
2. Work in consultation with the LEA as the school develops and implements the plan.
3. Coordinate and collaborate with the LEA and SEA in providing services to children, youth, and families in addressing major factors that have significantly affected student achievement at the school.
4. Consider model programs for the educationally disadvantaged and relevant scientifically based research that may be most effective if focused on students in the earliest grades at schools.
5. Ensure, through incentives for voluntary transfers, the provision of professional development, recruitment programs, or other effective strategies, that low-income students and minority students are not taught at higher rates than other students by unqualified, out-of-field, or inexperienced teachers.
6. Use the results of the student academic assessments and other measures or indicators available to the school, to determine whether all students are/will meet the State's proficient level of achievement on the State academic assessments.
7. Ensure that the results from the academic assessments will be provided to parents and teachers as soon as is practicably possible after the test is taken, in an understandable and uniform format and, to the extent practicable, provided in a language that the parents can understand.
8. Comply with the requirements of section 1119 regarding the qualifications of teachers and paraprofessionals and professional development.

☐ **If applicable: The school hereby assures the Local Education Agency (LEA) and Tennessee Department of Education (department) that the school operating a targeted assistance (TA) will:**

1. Help provide an accelerated, high-quality curriculum.
2. Minimize the removal of children from the regular classroom during regular school hours for instruction provided under this part; and
3. On an ongoing basis, review the progress of eligible children and revise the targeted assistance program under this section, if necessary, to provide additional assistance to enable such children to meet the challenging State academic standards.

Additional School Planning Areas

Schoolwide Plan

Questions and their associated ESEA funding included within the *Additional School Planning Areas* for schools that are Title I Schoolwide, Title 1, Part A § 1114(b) are as follows:

- Opportunities for All Students
- Strengthening Academic and Quality Learning

Targeted Assistance Plan

Schools that are Title I Targeted Assistance will answer the following questions:

- Strengthening Academics for Title I Students, Title I, Part A § 1115(B),
- Regular Education Coordination, Title I, Part A § 1115(C)
- Professional Development, Title I, Part A § 1115(D)

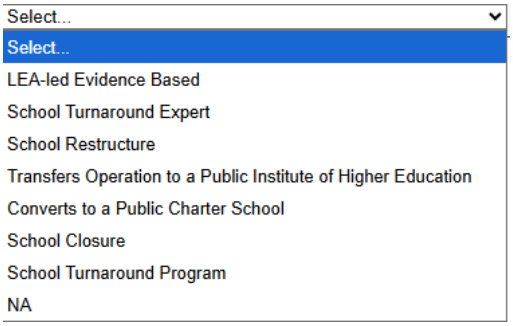
TSI, ATSI Supports

Schools that are designated as TSI or ATSI must complete the following question:

- What supports are in place to address the needs of the TSI and/or ATSI student subgroups?

Priority/CSI Designation Only

The Tiered Intervention System (TIS) is a progressive, three-tiered intervention system for Priority/CSI schools designed to provide varying levels of support based on the school's performance and needs. The selected intervention option must be implemented each year of the designation cycle unless the school meets the criteria to exit Priority or CSI status. Please indicate the TIS intervention option the Priority/CSI school will be implementing. Select NA if the school does not have a Priority/CSI designation.



Reviewing and Revising the School Plan

Reviewing the School Plan

Once school plans have been submitted to the district, it is the responsibility of district leaders to review, provide feedback, and, when expectations have been met, approve the plans. Each school plan should be reviewed to ensure it meets the minimum requirements outlined in the School Planning Rubric.

A *School Plan Review and Feedback Tool* has been provided to review each school plan. To use and share the *School Plan Review and Feedback Tool*:

- Use the *School Plan Review and Feedback Tool* to review each school plan. Enter each school's feedback on their individualized document.
- On the *Sections* page of the respective school, click 'Create Comment.' Upload the school's saved *School Plan Review and Feedback Tool*.

- School users can download and view their completed feedback document through the *History log*.
- Once the school has implemented the feedback and resubmitted the plan, the district users will use their *School Plan Review and Feedback Tool* to verify feedback has been implemented. If the plan meets expectations, click *LEA School Plan Reviewer Approved* or, if the plan requires department approval, click *LEA School Improvement Plan Reviewer Approved & Submitted to TDOE*.
- If additional feedback is needed, enter the additional feedback in the 'Second Review Notes' column of the feedback document, *Create Comment*, and upload the document.

Revising the School Plan

The district will review the School Plan to ensure it meets the minimum requirements for submission as noted in the School Planning Rubric. Feedback on the plan will be provided to the schools through the *School Plan Review and Feedback Tool* linked in the prior section.

If the uploaded *School Plan Review and Feedback Tool* contains feedback, the plan will be marked as not approved and returned to the school. The school must review the *School Plan Review and Feedback Tool* and make the necessary changes to those items. Only the checked items in the areas containing feedback require revision.

ePlan

User Access Issues

All users must have the correct ePlan user access role to access and complete the school plan. Users with existing access can verify current user access roles in the Address Book. To view existing access, visit ePlan.tn.gov, navigate to the Address Book and LEA Role.

LEA User Access Administrators can add and delete all school-level roles and most LEA-level roles for LEA ePlan users. Documentation must be maintained and uploaded to the LEA Document Library at least monthly.

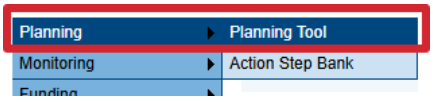
LEA User Access Administrators cannot add roles that finalize and approve funding applications or monitoring instruments; additional LEA User Access Administrators; or State-level roles. These additional LEA roles must be added by the Tennessee Department of Education's ePlan help team. Users can request these roles via the ePlan User Access Form for LEAs or the ePlan User Access Form for LEA User Access Administrators.

For more information about this change, please see the ePlan LEA User Access Administrator Manual.

Role	What can this role do?	Who usually has this role?	Who can add this role for a user?
LEA User Access Administrator	Manage the LEA's user access roles- including adding new roles	LEA users assigned the role	ePlan help team
LEA School Plan Reviewer	Edit school or LEA plans, and approve school plans	District administrator	LEA User Access Administrator
School Plan Data Entry	Edit school plan	Assistant Principal	LEA User Access Administrator
School Plan Reviewer	Edit and approve school plan	Principal	LEA User Access Administrator

Accessing the School Plan

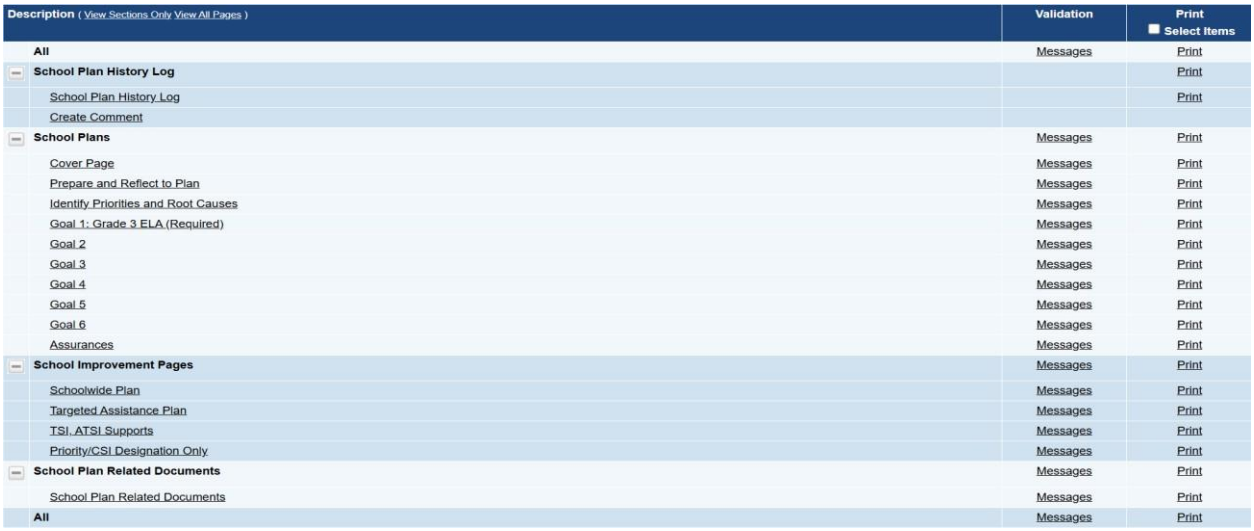
To navigate to the School Plan, click the Plans tab on the left menu bar.



School Plan Sections and Pages

The *Sections* page lists all of the available sections and pages within plan such as: *Change Log, History Log, Create Comment, Cover Page, Related Documents, and Checklist*. The *Sections* page is helpful in navigating to the specific sections and

pages which must be completed.



Description (View Sections Only View All Pages)	Validation	Print Select Items
All	Messages	Print
School Plan History Log		Print
School Plan History Log		Print
Create Comment		
School Plans	Messages	Print
Cover Page	Messages	Print
Prepare and Reflect to Plan	Messages	Print
Identify Priorities and Root Causes	Messages	Print
Goal 1: Grade 3 ELA (Required)	Messages	Print
Goal 2	Messages	Print
Goal 3	Messages	Print
Goal 4	Messages	Print
Goal 5	Messages	Print
Goal 6	Messages	Print
Assurances	Messages	Print
School Improvement Pages	Messages	Print
Schoolwide Plan	Messages	Print
Targeted Assistance Plan	Messages	Print
TSI, ATSI Supports	Messages	Print
Priority/CSI Designation Only	Messages	Print
School Plan Related Documents	Messages	Print
School Plan Related Documents	Messages	Print
All	Messages	Print

Change Log

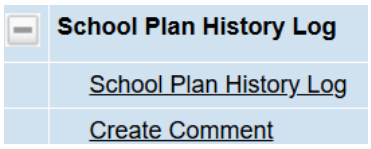
The *Change Log* may be accessed on the main sections page. It lists every chage or update since the previous status. This helps users identify changes that have been made to the plan since they last viewed it. More information about the *Change Log* is available in the ePlan User Manual.



History Log

The *History Log* contains a record of status changes and comments made in the school plan. ePlan users may want or need to comment in an ePlan school plan for one of the following reasons:

- To provide an explanation as a part of the school plan's history.
- To provide information that a user cannot add into the main school planning tool due to the school plan tool's current status (users can only edit plans that are in a *Draft Started* or *Revision Started* status.)





How to Print in ePlan

Users may print or download a PDF from the *Sections* page.

NOTE: Print requests do not include any uploaded related documents.



- To print certain pages of the report, check the *Print Select Items* box at the top of the print column. Select all checkboxes for the desired print request. Click the *Print Select Items* button that appears at the bottom of the screen. Users may rename their print job here. Click *Print*.
- The *Generating Document* screen appears. The system takes 20–30 seconds to generate small print documents. For larger files, expect an email from the ePlan system when the file is ready to download.
- After ePlan generates the print file, click *Return to Planning*.
- The PDF generated by ePlan appears at the top of the page under *TDOE Resources*. The PDF link remains in *TDOE Resources* for five (5) days. Users may use the *"Delete"* links to remove any print jobs.

Troubleshooting

The following are answers to common questions about ePlan application functionality.

User Access Issues

If an ePlan user is not able to work in a planning tool, it is usually due to one of these three reasons:

- The user is not using the Google Chrome browser. For best results: always use Google Chrome to access ePlan. ePlan does not have the same functionality in other browsers.

- The tool is not in the right work step or status. Users can only edit a plan tool when it is in Draft Started or Revision Started status.
- The user does not have the right role to work in the planning tool. When hovering the cursor over Change Status To options, a tooltip appears that indicates the roles with access to make the status change. This tooltip will list the names of individual users associated with each permitted role. Users can also access the address book to see which roles an ePlan user has.

ePlan's address book for each organization contains a list of every user that has an ePlan role.

- The LEA Role Contacts list all the roles. If the role is not listed in the address book, no one has been assigned to that role.
- LEA User Access Administrators can now add and delete all school-level roles and most LEA-level roles for LEA ePlan users. Documentation must be maintained and uploaded to the LEA Document Library at least monthly.
- User Access forms are in ePlan's TDOE Resources in the User Access Form folder.
- Users do not need an ePlan role to access TDOE Resources. See ePlan User Access for more information about the ePlan user roles.

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