

# Decision Mapping Tool

## *Clarifying How Decisions Are Structured in Practice*

For teachers, instructional leaders, and district teams examining how decisions are made within an instructional cycle.

### **Core Question**

Where and how are key decisions structured in routine practice?

### **Purpose**

Priorities and initiatives are enacted through decisions.

In many settings, where decisions occur is evident.

What is less specified is how those decisions are structured—what informs them, how information is interpreted, and what follows.

This tool is designed to make those elements visible, so that decisions can be enacted more consistently across contexts.

This build on a consistent finding across implementation and decision-making research: Variation in outcomes is often linked to variation in how decisions are made—not only what is decided.

### **5-Step Decision Mapping**

#### **Step 1. Identify a recurring decision point**

Select one moment in routine practice, such as:

- planning instruction
- reviewing student work
- discussing data
- determining next steps

*What decision is being made at this point?*

#### **Step 2. Specify what informs the decision**

Identify what is brought into the decision at this point, such as:

- student work, data, or observations
- prior decisions or expectations
- tools, resources, or system-generated outputs

*What information informs this decision—and what may be missing?*

#### **Step 3. Clarify how information is interpreted**

*Describe how the available information is understood in this context, such as:*

- *what is prioritized*
- *how patterns or features are understood*
- *how different sources of information are weighed*

*How is this information interpreted to inform the decision?*

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## Decision Mapping (continued)

### Step 4. Specify what is expected in response

Identify what follows from the decision at this point, such as:

- instructional adjustments
- feedback or supports
- grouping, pacing, or next steps

*What action is expected as a result of this decision?*

Note: Consider whether the available information is sufficient to support this response. For decisions that are more consequential, multiple sources of information may be needed to support a well-grounded response.

### Step 5. Clarify responsibility and follow-up

Identify how the decision is carried forward over time, such as:

- who is involved in making the decision
- who is responsible for acting on it
- how outcomes are revisited or monitored

*How is this decision enacted and followed up in practice?*

## Key Consideration

A decision is more likely to be enacted consistently when these elements are specified:

- what informs the decision
- how it is interpreted
- what response is expected
- how responsibility and follow-up are specified

When these are not evident, decision-making is more likely to vary across contexts—even when priorities are shared.

## Reading Across Your Map

As you complete the map, examine:

- Where are expectations clearly specified?
- Where are assumptions present or left implicit?
- Where might interpretation differ across individuals or teams?
- Where might variation in response occur?

## How to Use

Use this tool during planning for an instructional cycle, in team or leadership meetings, or when examining variation across classrooms or contexts.

Start with one decision point. Clarity at a single point can extend across the system.

This tool is part of a broader set of *edblogcast* resources focused on supporting thoughtful, evidence-informed decision-making in education.