



# Shifting “To-Do” Lists into Buckets of Outcomes (with Whys)

*Distributing Ownership While Keeping Focused on Progress*



**Overwhelmed by your “to do” list?** Finding it hard to follow through with your instructional leadership priorities each week? Instead of managing an endless list of tasks, shift your focus to **big-picture outcomes** and empower your team to take ownership of the “how.” By organizing tasks into **buckets of outcomes**, you’ll free yourself to **lead strategically**, ensure **follow-through**, and build **shared accountability** across your school.



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## Steps to Shift Your To-Do List into Buckets of Outcomes (with Whys)

1. **Start with the Big Picture**
  - Identify key students/staff/community needs goals and initiatives.
  - Consider: What are the major **outcomes** we need to achieve?
2. **Define Your Buckets**
  - Group tasks into **broad, meaningful categories** that align with your school’s priorities (e.g., **Student Growth, Teacher Collaboration, Data-Driven Instruction**).
  - Ensure each bucket represents an **ongoing effort, not a one-time task**.
3. **Ask ‘Why Does This Matter?’**
  - For each bucket, articulate the **purpose** and **long-term impact**.
  - Generate the WHY with your team to create buy-in and urgency.
  - Use the why as a shared refrain with the team.
4. **Sort Your CURRENT To-Do List by Outcome**
  - Assign each task to a **bucket** based on its expected impact.
  - If a task doesn’t fit, ask: **Does this move us toward an important outcome?** If not, reconsider its priority.
5. **Engage Your Leadership Team**
  - Present the **buckets and outcomes** to your team (APs, coaches, teacher leaders).
  - Ask: **“How do we achieve this?”** instead of prescribing solutions.
  - Let them **design their own action steps** and timelines.
6. **Empower Teams to Own the Process**
  - Encourage teacher leaders to **track progress** and **adjust plans as needed**.
  - Set up **weekly check-ins** to review progress on each bucket.
  - Empower teams to think through the “weekly” to do’s for their “bucket.” **“What the ONE THING this week?”**
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7. **Monitor, Don’t Micro-Manage**
  - Instead of micromanaging tasks, check in on **bucket progress** at the start and end of each week.
  - Ask: **What’s moving forward? What’s stuck? Where do we need to adjust?**
  - Keep the focus on **outcomes, not just completed tasks**.
8. **Communicate & Celebrate**
  - Highlight wins related to each bucket—**team efforts, breakthroughs, and student impact**.
  - Reinforce the **Why** behind each bucket to keep motivation high.





### The Principal's Role in the Following Process:

- Start of the Week: Check in on the status of these "buckets" with Avis, Matt, and team leaders.
- End of the Week: Reflect on progress—What's moving? Where are the roadblocks? What supports are needed?

Bucket of Outcomes 	This Week's Outcomes  <i>(Hot Topics aligned with this bucket)</i>	Why This Matters  <i>(The "Refrain")</i>	How?  <i>(Team Leaders Determine Process)</i>	Instructional Leader <i>(How do we know?)</i>
Students Owning Their Learning	Teachers Actively Engaged in i-Ready Goal-Setting	When students set and track their own goals, motivation and ownership increase, leading to better academic outcomes.	- Team leaders define how to embed student goal-setting.	- Are student goal-setting conversations happening? - How are Avis, Matt, and teachers guiding and reinforcing this? - How do we know?
Focusing i-Ready Data on Teaching & Student Conversations	Igniting Teacher Curiosity in Using i-Ready Data	Data-driven instruction ensures that interventions are timely, targeted, and effective.	- Team leaders decide how best to use PD time to review i-Ready data and create targeted interventions.	- Are teachers regularly reviewing i-Ready data? - Are they using it to shape instruction and student conversations? - How do we know?
Using i-Ready to Inspire Professional Curiosity	Building a Sustainable Process for Reviewing & Acting on Data in PLCs	Regular reflection and strategy-sharing within PLCs creates a culture of continuous improvement.	- PLC teams choose how to structure their i-Ready discussions.	- Are PLCs analyzing student progress and adjusting instruction? - What strategies are surfacing? - How do we know?
Inspiring Aligned Teacher Voice & Choice	Leadership Team Aligning on a Vision for Achievement & Engagement	A shared vision ensures coherence in efforts, empowering leaders to drive meaningful change.	- Leadership team collaborates to define priorities and a plan for engaging families and students.	- Is there clarity among leaders on academic priorities? - Are concrete steps emerging for family and student engagement?





## Why this works:

### 1. Distributed Leadership Enhances Student Outcomes

Shared leadership among principals, teachers, and staff improves student performance by leveraging collective expertise.

- **Reference:** Harris, A. (2004). *Distributed Leadership and School Improvement: Leading or Misleading?*
- **URL:** <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/1741143204039297>

### 2. Teacher Autonomy Boosts Job Satisfaction and Instructional Quality

When teachers have more autonomy, job satisfaction increases, motivation improves, and instruction is more effective.

- **Reference:** Pearson, L. C., & Moomaw, W. (2005). *The Relationship Between Teacher Autonomy and Stress, Work Satisfaction, and Professionalism.*
- **URL:** <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ718115>

### 3. Collaborative Leadership Fosters Professional Growth

Distributed leadership promotes continuous professional development, ownership, and accountability among educators.

- **Reference:** Spillane, J. P., Halverson, R., & Diamond, J. B. (2001). *Investigating School Leadership Practice: A Distributed Perspective.*
- **URL:** <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.3102/0013189X030003023>

