

## What Matters Most: Key Practices Guide

### KEY PRACTICE 2: FOCUS YOUR GOALS

*When asked to describe the new initiatives undertaken in the last year or two, most teachers and administrators would list a litany of initiatives, often disconnected. If asked, "What are the district or school improvement initiatives?" most teachers and administrators often cannot articulate them. Reeves (2006) referred to this problem as "initiative fatigue," while Fullan (2008) calls this "repetitive change syndrome." If teachers, schools, and districts are to make improvement then they must be allowed and encouraged to focus on a few critical things well. As Patterson, et al. (2008) notes, "a few behaviors can drive a lot of change... Enormous influence comes from focusing on just a few vital behaviors." Leithwood and Jantzi (2008) recommend focusing the goals on student learning through the use of specific forms of instruction. They also recommend that the strategies be targeted on specific areas of low performance and phased in over time. Robinson (2008) identifies goal setting as one of the most critical school leadership responsibilities.*

ROLE	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>CONSIDERATIONS</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>For Increasing the Performance of Students with Disabilities as Part of District-wide Improvement</i></p>
<p>DISTRICTS &amp; THEIR SCHOOLS</p>	<p><b><i>To what degree do districts and their schools:</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Use a data-driven needs assessment to develop a limited number of focused goals, and measureable strategies and actions, directly related to addressing the district's greatest needs related to instruction and achievement?</li> <li>▪ Reflect in district goals that the core work and priority of the district is to improve teaching and learning?</li> <li>▪ Ensure that all schools in the district align their work with district-established goals and strategies?</li> <li>▪ Identify goal setting as an important leadership responsibility?</li> <li>▪ Develop a single coherent district plan to reach district goals and require that each school develops a building plan aligned to district goals?</li> <li>▪ Make intentional decisions to align resources (fiscal, material, personnel) across the district to meet district-wide goals?</li> <li>▪ Screen, interview, select, and provide ongoing support to staff based on district-wide goals?</li> <li>▪ Engage the larger community, including board members, in establishing and sustaining a focus on district-wide goals for improving instruction and student learning?</li> </ul>