Priorities and Investments for the School Budgeting Process

School type	Priority investment area	Example action steps with some additional details and considerations to invest with a sustainability lens

Elementary	Small Group Instruction	• Hire additional staff for small groups
		   o Hire interventionists, teaching assistants, or other roles to **reduce group size** during small group instruction
		   o Consider using **lower cost roles** and providing specific training for sustainability
		   o Keep equity in mind to explore **shifts to funding systems** that will increase staffing at higher-need schools. For example, reduce administrative staff to instead allocate interventionists based on students' needs

		• Shift schedules to create time for small group instruction o Build **partnerships with community organizations** who can provide programming while teachers lead small group instruction
		• Expand educator professional learning o Similarly, build **partnerships with community organizations** who can provide programming while teachers engage in professional learning
		• Increase educator collaboration time o Pilot ways to **embed more staff collaboration time** during the school day, including time dedicated to aligning on high-quality materials and preparing for coordinated instruction
		• Use high-quality, aligned materials o Create or acquire material (using increased collaboration time) that will **help students make advancements** faster
		• Create assessments & monitoring systems o Collect data to **target better instruction** and set up systems for **continuous improvement**

	Relationships and Social-Emotional Supports: Dedicated & Embedded	• Create dedicated, regular time for explicit SEL instruction
		   o Staff need time to plan explicit SEL instruction and integrate practices into their academic instruction
		   o In many cases, elementary schools **repurpose time from morning routines** because it is unlikely for there to be additional expenses related to this time

		• Develop SEL curriculum

	SEL Instruction	○ Curriculum can be developed using increased staff collaboration time described below in order to invest sustainably - Adopt core curricula that embeds SEL ○ Adopting core curricula with SEL helps make this a **true redesign investment with multiyear effects**, rather than a one-off change ○ Can also invest in **significant time** for qualified school or district-level staff to integrate SEL into current curriculum - Increase collaboration and professional development time ○ Pilot ways to **embed more staff collaboration time** during the school day, including time dedicated to planning SEL instruction, strengthening climate and culture, and identifying social-emotional supports for students - Maintain program management & coordination ○ Allocate school- or district-level staff to coordinate curriculum, training, and support of SEL instruction ○ Explore shifts to staffing formulas to **free up funds for needed positions** — for example, consider shifts away from administrative and reactive disciplinary positions in order to allocate staff to this investment ○ Keep equity in mind by exploring shifts to funding systems that will **increase staffing at higher-need schools**. For example, allocate counselors and family engagement staff based on metrics of student and family need, not flatly per-pupil
	Relationships and Social-Emotional Supports: Safe, Positive Environment	- Increase collaboration & professional learning around culture-building programs ○ Focus on practices that promote positive classroom culture, including drawing on culture systems like Responsive Classroom, restorative practices, or trauma-informed practices - Provide out-of-school time for enrichment opportunities ○ **Provide stipends to staff** and/or **partner with community organizations** to provide out of-school time for programming that is designed with explicit goals related to building relationships and students' sense of belonging - Increase during-school partnerships that support culture-building ○ For example, Playworks, program that **improves climate through play** during the school day, has shown strong evidence of impact on several SEL-related outcomes - Create dedicated, regular time for building classroom & school culture ○ Adopt welcoming activities and optimistic closures. In most cases, this time is repurposed and **does not involve additional investments**, but requires the training and support described above for staff

	Relationships and Social-Emotional Supports: Family Engagement	- Pilot home visits - Emerging research on family-teacher home visits indicates that at least one model is associated with improved attendance and family perception of school - Common models involve paying stipends for staff to conduct visits before the school year or during non-school hours in the fall - Training should be provided to ensure that visits are **effective and demonstrate cultural competences**
		- Add communication/translation services - A number of new digital communication tools can increase engagement by adding channels that are more convenient and often more comfortable for families, with some tools embedding translation services to **reach more families**
		- Invest in dedicated family engagement staff - Some districts/schools invest in dedicated family engagement/involvement facilitators, often part-time or shared across schools. The impact of such positions on engagement has not been studied in depth - To do this sustainably, set up **volunteer family councils** at school sites who can serve as liaisons and organize family engagement activities
		- Create community partnerships - Partnering with community organizations (for example, The Oakland REACH) can **strengthen family voice and agency**
	Relationships and Social-Emotional Supports: Counseling Supports	- Build liaisons to community mental health services - Build connections to community mental health providers and manage processes for referrals and support (like in Florence, AL) - Build **partnerships with community organizations** who can provide counseling - Depending on local context, invest in **improved systems for Medicaid reimbursements** that can subsidize some services
		- Add on-staff counseling and social work providers - Many districts are addressing chronically low counseling resources by adding counseling staff. Use of ESSER funds for this expansion means districts will need to consider **offsetting reductions** if they plan to sustain staff after stimulus ends - Explore **shifts to staffing formulas to free up funds** for needed positions — for example, consider shifts away from administrative and reactive disciplinary positions - Build **partnerships with community organizations** who can provide counseling
		Embed shared-student collaboration time

		o Counselors should be included in regular grade-level or shared-student collaboration time to participate in sharing information, identifying needs, and planning and monitoring supports

Secondary	Credit Recovery	• Hire instructional staff
		  o Hire additional staff to provide more support in credit recovery and/or create additional time for credit recovery, or allocate **existing staff** to this work
		  o Pilot using **lower cost roles** (such as teaching assistants and apprentice teachers) to provide credit recovery support

		• Maintain program management
		  o Stipend staff or hire as needed for program design, management, and oversight
		  o Pilot using **lower cost roles** (such as teaching assistants and apprentice teachers) to provide program management
		  o **Leverage academic counselors** to monitor students' progress toward course completion

		• Increase educator professional learning o Develop or outsource professional learning on effective credit recovery
		• Use high-quality, aligned materials o Purchase or develop high-quality, aligned credit recovery materials

		• Redesign infrastructure, structure, and technology
		  o Purchase any additional technology or facilities improvements
		  o **Shift calendars and schedules** to achieve shorter course cadence (such as trimesters or quarters) to avoid year-long credit recovery
		  o Create **districtwide virtual course opportunities** so students in credit recovery can receive consolidated support, regardless of their school
		  o Explore **shifts to instruction** (such as competency-based and self-paced approaches) to reduce the time some students spend in credit recovery

	Building Strong Relationships	• Create dedicated time for advisory
		  o Find dedicated time for advisory
		  o Explore **shifts in daily schedule** to create time for staff and students

- Improve professional learning
  - **Create or adapt and deliver trainings** consistent with the purposes of advisory at your school/district — so staff can, for example, deliver effective social-emotional support, and adapt trauma-informed and restorative justice practices
  - Consider providing coaching to the advisors themselves — like at University High School in San Francisco, where advisors have mentors to check in with to experience the value of an advising/mentoring relationship firsthand and feel supported in their work
  - Shift more resources to **roles focused on professional learning**. For example, reduce administrative staff to instead allocate for professional learning geared towards advisory roles

- Increase advisor collaboration/planning time
  - Invest in **regular collaborative planning time for staff who share students** (shared-student collaboration). This time can be used to plan advisory together, review student progress, discuss interventions, and connect with families. A key role of an advisor is tracking their advisees' progress across classes, so meeting in shared-student teams is crucial for sharing information and planning supports
  - Invest in **individual planning time** for staff to prepare for advisory, coordinate student supports, and connect with advisees and their families

- Use high-quality, aligned materials
  - Depending on the goals of the advisory program, districts could invest in different forms of curriculum development. Some examples include:
    - Sourcing advisory curriculum materials from third-party expert organizations (including programs studied by the Wallace Foundation)
    - Providing stipends for school-level staff members who have deep expertise to develop materials
    - Creating centralized advisory curriculum materials at the district level

- Maintain program development and management
  - Consider which **combination of roles** for managing advisory would be best at the district and school levels
  - Consider whether/how to…
    - **Invest in time for staff** to codesign advisory with students and families
    - Purchase and implement **climate assessments** — for example, regularly conducting surveys about student well-being
  - Use **existing roles as advisors and program design/support staff** instead of paying for additional roles

		• Lower Teacher Loads
		  o Lighter teacher loads give teachers more capacity to engage in relationship building with students
		  o Explore **block scheduling** vs. period scheduling
		  o Pilot ways of **offering specialized electives virtually or through dual-enrollmen**t to reduce number of small upper grades courses, offsetting class size decreases in prioritized grades
		  o **Increase class sizes in non-priority areas** in order to decrease class sizes in priority areas
		  o **Develop interdisciplinary courses** and train teachers to teach them. Interdisciplinary courses can significantly reduce teacher load and, when done well, engage students in deeper, more relevant work
		  o Create **small learning communities**/ "houses"
		  o **Consider looping** – when a class stays with a teacher for more than one year
		  o Examine **course-taking patterns and class size data** to identify ways to decrease underutilized offerings and/or increase class size in select areas, such as upper grades electives

	Targeted Academic Supports	• Create dedicated time for academic support o Build **partnerships with community organizations** who can provide enrichment programming while teachers lead small group intervention in order to create sufficient time for academic support while minimizing tradeoffs

		• Hire or allocate additional staff for academic support
		  o Pilot using **lower cost roles** such as teaching assistants and teacher residents as part of academic supports
		  o Keep equity in mind by exploring shifts to funding systems that will **increase staffing at higher-need schools**. For example, reduce administrative staff to instead allocate interventionists based on students' needs

		• Increase educator professional learning
		  o Educators need professional learning opportunities **to plan and implement effective academic supports**
		  o Stipend staff to meet after school and in additional professional learning days
		  o Use lower cost roles, as described above to generate savings for these stipends
		  o Or, shift daily schedules to find time for staff to engage in professional learning

		• Increase educator collaboration time o Pilot ways to **embed more staff collaboration time** during the school day in order for staff to engage with and develop academic support materials and facilitation models

		• Use high-quality, aligned materials o Acquire, adapt, or develop the material needed for academic support
		• Create assessments and monitoring systems o Collect data to **target better support** and set up systems for **continuous improvement**

	Early Warning Systems	• Find time for early warning system (EWS) team collaboration
		  o Create time for teams to meet through staffing release time or, if needed, stipends for time outside of contract time
		  o **Shift calendars, schedules, and teacher assignments** (for example, creating grade-level teaching teams) to embed EWS Team collaboration time during the school day and decrease additional collaboration stipends or additional staff for release time

		• Maintain early warning system (EWS) coordination
		  o Stipend staff or hire as needed for data management and program facilitation and oversight
		  o **Build capacity to manage EWS data collection, analysis, and progress monitoring in existing roles** and existing structures — reducing the need for maintaining dedicated positions. For instance, a special education lead's responsibilities may shift so that they now use advisory time to check in on specific students and monitor their intervention-related progress

		• Educator Professional Learning o Develop or outsource professional development on effective data analysis, root cause analysis, intervention implementation and continuous improvement
		• Integrated Early Warning System (EWS) Tool o Purchase or develop Early Warning System tool integrated with the SIS

Elementary and Secondary	High Dosage Tutoring	• Hire tutors
		  o Build **partnerships with community-based organizations** that can offer external tutoring programs, perhaps with district training and support to ensure quality and alignment
		  o Use **teacher residents or para to teacher pipeline** instead of fully licensed teachers where possible
		  o Keep equity in mind by exploring shifts to funding systems that will **increase staffing at higher-need schools**. For example, allocate tutors based on metrics of student and family need, not flatly per-pupil

		• Maintain program development and management
		  o **Allocate existing school- or district-level staff** to oversee implementation of program, rather than hiring new staff
		  o Explore shifts to staffing formulas to **free up funds for needed positions**

		• Create dedicated time for tutoring
		   o Build **partnerships with community organizations** who can provide enrichment programming while tutoring occurs for some students, in order to create sufficient time while minimizing tradeoffs
		   o Shift schedules and pilot ways to **embed more tutoring time** during the school day in order to avoid paying for after-school time

		• Use high-quality, aligned materials o Purchase or develop high-quality, aligned tutoring materials
		• Implement training, ongoing support, and collaboration o Pilot ways to **embed collaboration time between teachers and tutors into the school day** instead of using stipends for after school collaboration time – e.g. adjust master schedule

		• Create assessments and monitoring systems
		   o Collect data to **target better tutoring** and set up systems for **continuous improvement**
		   o Use **existing roles to engage in this work** instead of paying for additional roles

	Professional Learning & Collaboration	• Create content-expert roles
		   o Shift more resources to **roles focused on professional learning**. For example, reduce administrative staff to instead allocate teacher-leaders or instructional coaches based on students' needs
		   o **Restructure compensation systems** to pay for teacher-leader responsibilities instead of, for example, lanes
		   o Use **existing roles to drive professional learning and collaboration** instead of paying for additional roles

		• Create dedicated time for professional learning and collaboration
		   o Adjust master schedule/pilot other ways to **embed more staff collaboration time** into the school day to engage in professional learning
		   o Build **partnerships with community organizations** who can provide programming while teachers engage in professional learning and collaboration

		• Use high-quality, aligned materials o Acquire, adapt, or develop the material needed for professional learning and collaboration
		• Maintain program development and management o **Allocate existing school- or district-level staff** to oversee implementation and monitoring of program, rather than hiring new staff