

# Curriculum Purchasers *Comprehensive Journey Map*



# Overview of Curriculum Adoption Journey Map

From the outside, school district purchasing for core curriculum can seem like a mystery. This research focused on uncovering the steps in the purchasing process to increase understanding around how decisions with significant consequences for students are made. This resource focuses on identifying an exhaustive process of the steps a district may go through in identifying, evaluating and choosing a core curriculum. This is not meant to describe any particular district's process but instead increase understanding of the processes districts may engage in.

## Read this to:

- Understand the processes districts may engage in when choosing a core curriculum.
- Learn about barriers and drivers to evidence use in decision making.

## SAMPLE & METHOD

01

Over 300 core curriculum purchasers at the district level were interviewed and surveyed.

02

Mapping of the steps in the core curriculum adoption process.

### TIME TO READ

10 minutes

### MAIN AUDIENCE

CC



# Reading guide: Evidence-exhaustive journey map

The journey map outlines **key touchpoints** and **substeps** of **decision-making** in the core curriculum purchasing process, from recognizing a market or district signal, all the way to purchase and implementation. The map captures an exhaustive list of **all consulted sources of evidence** at a given substep.

A deep dive into the barriers and drivers per substep is conducted.

## Decision Points

### Touchpoint

A key step that edtech purchasers would experience along the journey of bringing a product to the district.

### Substep

Specific decisions made or actions taken by the purchaser that are associated with a given touchpoint.

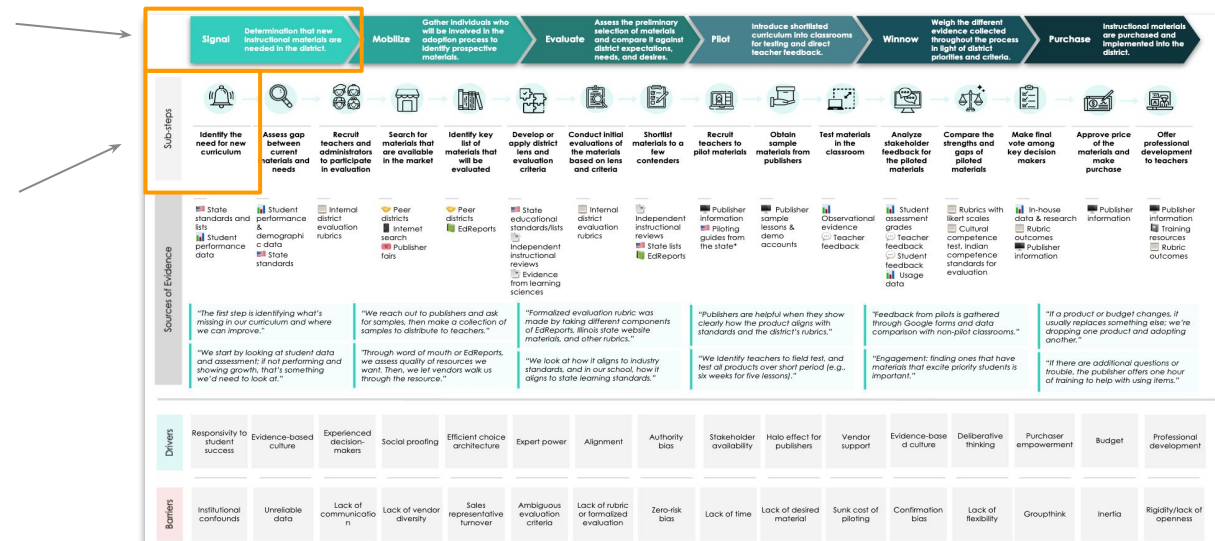
### Sources of evidence

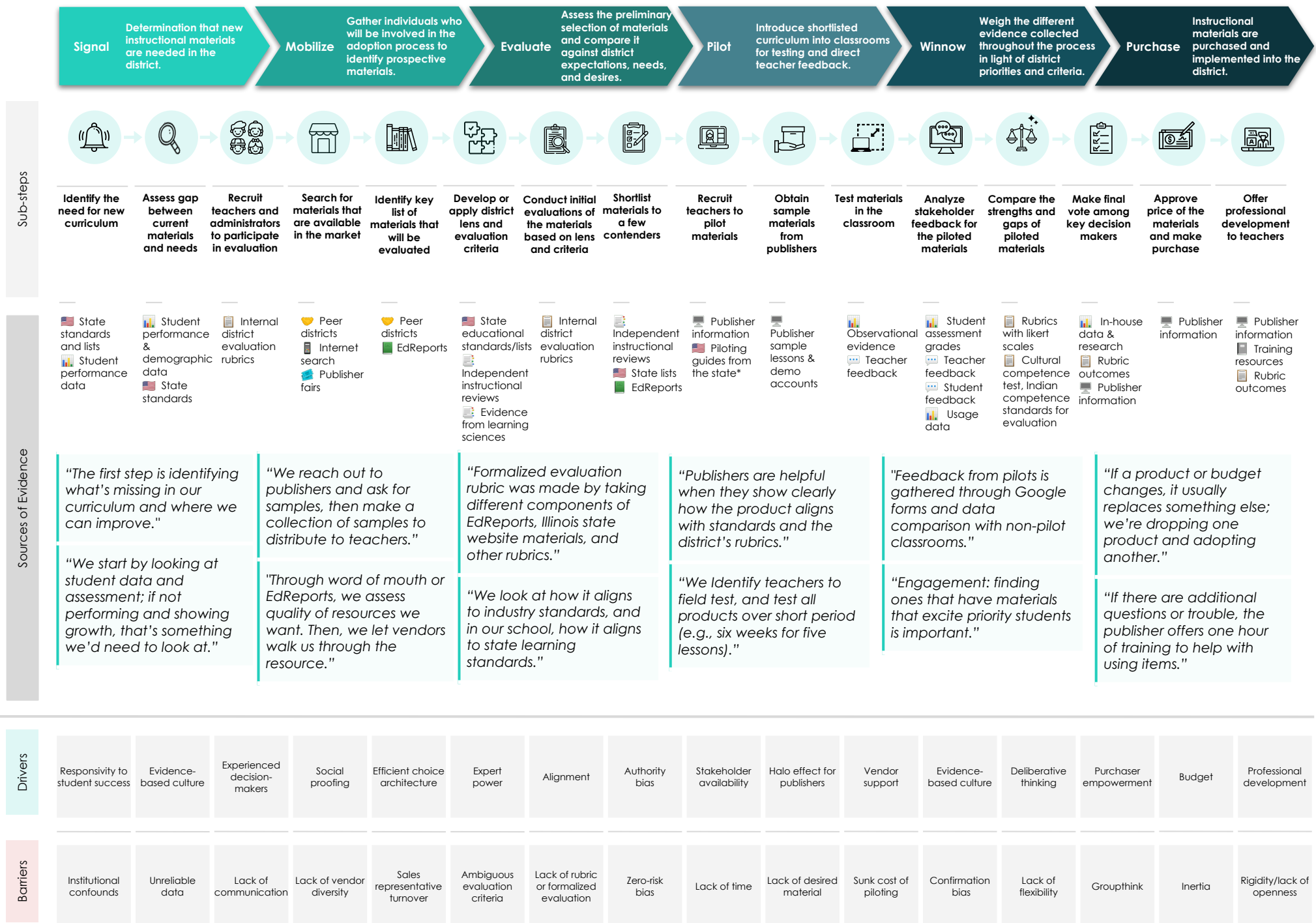
Evidence that is engaged at a substep touchpoint, denoted by an icon.

## Substep Elements

### Barriers & drivers

Structural and psychological determinants that influence a particular substep.





# Signal

Mobilize

Evaluate

Pilot

Winnow

Purchase



## Identify the need for new curriculum

## Assess gap between current materials and needs

DRIVERS

**Responsiveness to student success indicators** sparks decision to adopt new materials to close achievement gaps

**Evidence-based district cultures** that understand the problem or need to be addressed through relying on data can help to facilitate the process of honing in on need identification in a more accurate manner

"We use data: annual data, trimester data, math test three times a year. Have now adopted a screening system to screen their student to see if they're on grade level, and if not, what to do."

"To identify needs, we do it internally, through formative assessment, formative or summative data."  
"Data is a big thing in our district; we believe it's more accurate than just what another district or website says."

BARRIERS

**Institutional confounds**, such as small adoption committees or renewals based on cyclical mandates, can impact adoption by taking precedence over renewals that are based on responsiveness to student needs

**Unreliable data** due to external forces that might confound key sources of evidence, like achievement scores, makes gap assessment challenging to accurately pinpoint

"Every 5-6 years, should identify if curriculum is meeting student needs."

**67%** of respondents reported that new curriculum adoptions are driven by cycles.

"Our great results don't come from our schools; because kids come from middle to higher class families with better support systems - tutors and things like that - it muddles the data."

STAKEHOLDERS

Adoption committee  
Students Teachers

Adoption committee Curriculum student advisory committee



Signal

**Mobilize**

Evaluate

Pilot

Winnow

Purchase



**Recruit teachers and administrators to participate in the evaluation process**

**Search for materials that are available in the market**

**Identify key list of materials that will be evaluated**

DRIVERS

**Experienced** teachers and administrators who are familiar with a district's process help to make the procurement procedure more efficient as they have a better grasp of what curriculum elements to critically consider to address the gap

*"To facilitate standards alignment among everyone, familiarity and experience with the product helps with winnowing."*

**Social proofing**, the act of looking to similar districts to understand what works and what doesn't, can help support curriculum choices that are better tailored to the district

*"The most useful evidence is talking to other schools to see their experiences."*

**80%** of core curricula respondents agree that districts should consider peer recommendations in adoption.

**Efficient choice architecture** such as filtering selections for technical specifications, compatibility with existing infrastructure, among other features, can help with narrowing in on materials more efficiently

*"Starts with EdReports; has to be all green to meet minimum expectation."*

*"EdReports helps us narrow our focus, instead of looking at whatever curriculum we can simply find."*

BARRIERS

**Lack of communication** between EdTech and curriculum teams can result in a poorer understanding of each others' needs, which can inhibit the search for curriculum that aligns with teams' needs

*"Communicating [with teachers] is difficult - people don't read the emails we send them."*

**Lack of vendor diversity** results in large publishers, often those with a higher market share (e.g., MacMillan, Pearson) eclipsing alternative options available to curriculum purchasers; such alternatives may unknowingly be a stronger fit for a district's gap

*"Real big publishers seem like that they have the majority of the market share and I wonder if that's good or bad."*

**Sales representative turnover** can make it difficult to easily request for product information, suitable to a district's context, due to the lack of prior district relationships with sales representatives

*"Used to talking to one person and then work with somebody else another year, transition isn't easy."*

*"Developing a relationship is important so they understand who we are and what our needs are."*

STAKEHOLDERS

Teachers

Administration

Adoption committee

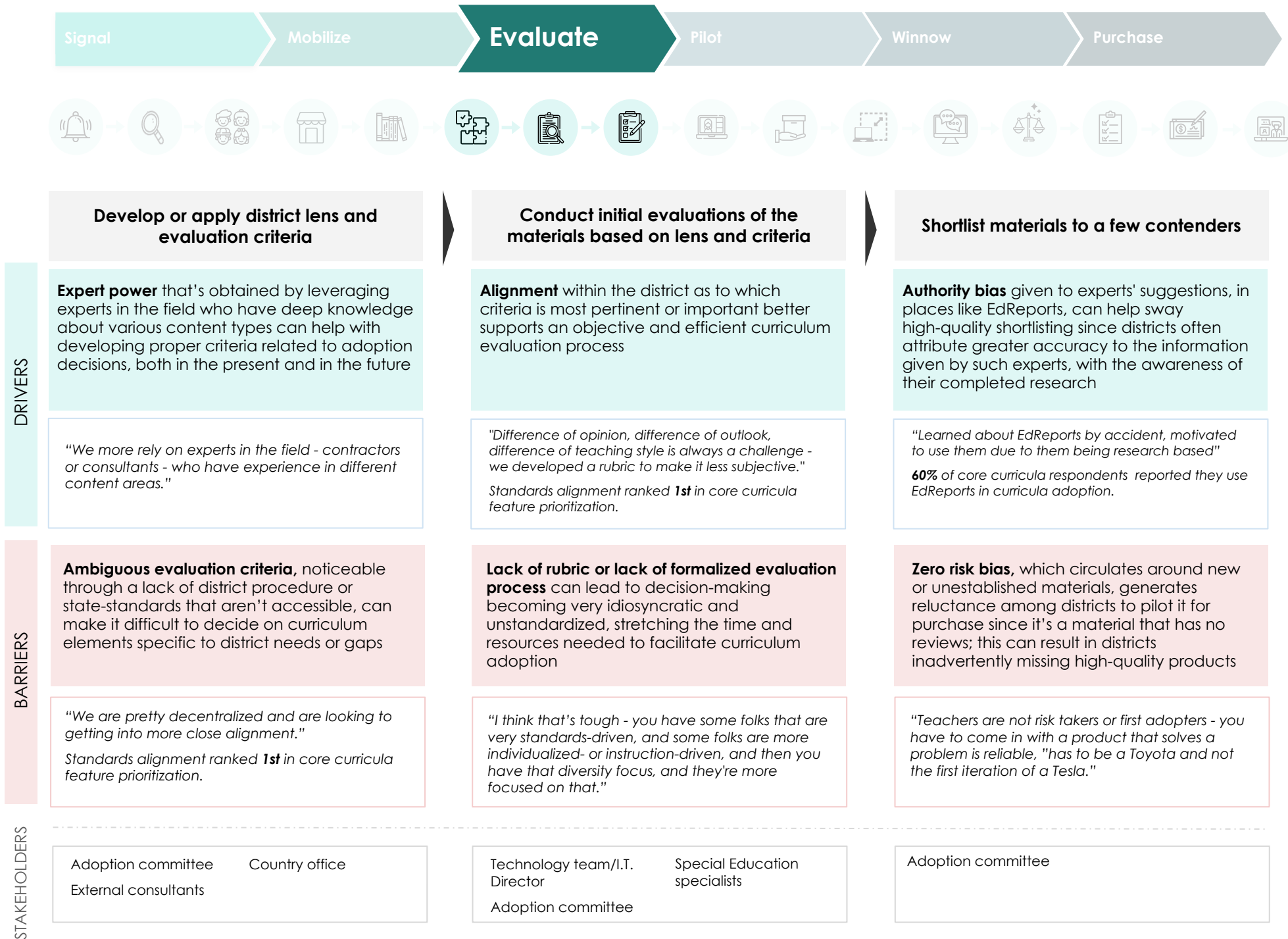
External decision makers

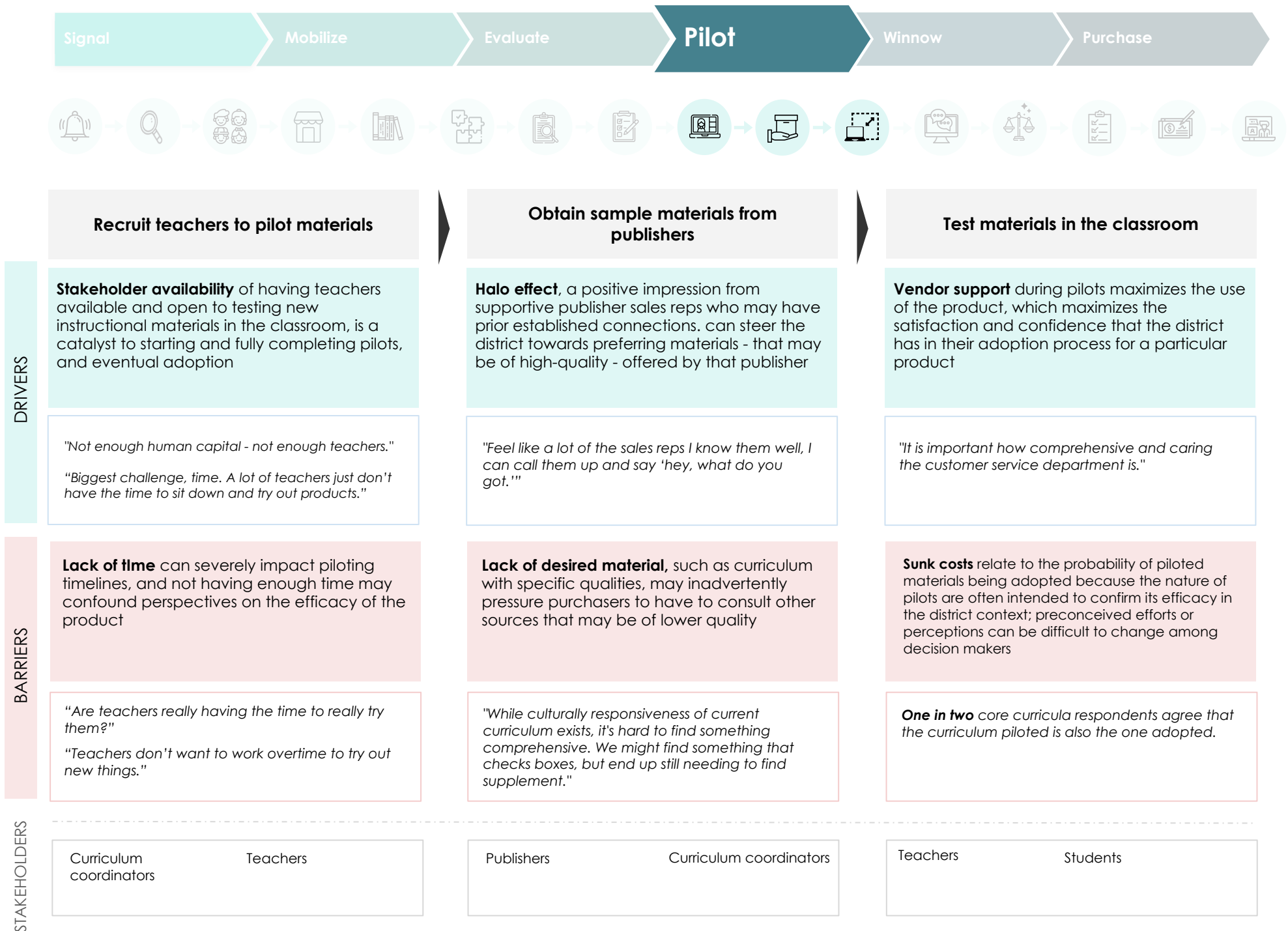
External consultants

Adoption committee



THE DECISION LAB









	Analyze stakeholder feedback for the piloted materials	Compare the strengths and gaps of piloted materials	Make final vote among key decision makers
DRIVERS	<p><b>Evidence-based district cultures</b> are more likely to have the appropriate tools or procedures to correctly calibrate measures of instructional material efficacy and gather feedback on experiences with the materials</p> <p><i>96% of core curricula respondents agree that their district should consult data or evidence to inform core curriculum decision.</i></p>	<p><b>Deliberative thinking</b> that's scaffolded through formalized procedures helps districts make the purchase with confidence and under clear terms, arriving at a balanced and objective determination</p> <p><i>"The curriculum advisory teams pilots at least two sources and ranks them using a likert scale."</i></p> <p><i>"The rubric is reviewed to ensure the curriculum meets all of their requirements, and the teams further narrow on options."</i></p>	<p><b>Purchaser empowerment</b>, especially among senior, final decision-makers, can help to reinforce confidence in opinions, evaluations, and the subsequent purchasing decision</p> <p><i>"Could go to business office of superintendent when budget is to be adjusted but it's always my recommendation that comes up the chain."</i></p>
BARRIERS	<p><b>Confirmation bias</b>, the selective examination of information that validates opinions, can incorrectly skew adoptions to products that may not be best suited to resolve the district gap or need</p> <p><i>"We don't necessarily use formalized data - more so perception data."</i></p>	<p><b>Lack of customization flexibility</b> for instructional materials limits the district's vision to have content that suits their unique needs and challenges, within their context, limiting the scope of materials that they can consider for adoption</p> <p><i>"Customization is important - don't need to keep reinventing the wheel to get something incremental out of it."</i></p>	<p><b>Groupthink</b> can arise when individuals don't have space to develop their own opinions on materials, resulting in similar preferences because their judgment is informed by proximity with others; this leads to a lack of diverse perspectives contributing to adoption</p> <p><i>"Final decision is by consensus - team works together so much that they often have similar opinions."</i></p>
STAKEHOLDERS	Adoption committee	Adoption committee	Principals Superintendent Assistant superintendents School board



	Approve price of the materials and make purchase	Professional development offered to teachers
DRIVERS	<p><b>Budget</b> provides districts with the financial freedom to approve adoptions, with a lesser concern on contents that might need to be cut; this provides a luxury of faster adoptions, especially when there are critical gaps</p> <p><i>"Paying for access is an issue. I don't really find orgs or big organizations that often, that really understand what we're trying to do and are just looking to make money as much as they can and are not as responsive as they need to be."</i></p>	<p><b>Professional development</b> for core and supplemental materials, especially those delivered via technology, helps increase teacher confidence as related to implementation</p> <p><i>"Professional development is the biggest thing; before, many of them just did not take the time to learn it, but through the pandemic they HAD to learn it and learn it fast - this gave better confidence to use technology."</i></p>
BARRIERS	<p><b>Inertia</b>, the subjective switching costs perceived by individuals when considering new adoptions, may result in the inclination to stick to the status quo which may delay adoption and subsequent scaling</p> <p><i>"Teachers do not like change - as much as they want to be flexible, they still push back against learning something new."</i></p>	<p><b>Rigidity or lack of openness</b> to novel materials are to be anticipated because teachers are used to teaching from certain materials; this may inhibit curriculum scaling across the district</p> <p><i>"It does not matter if a product is ten times better, you always have a small group that does not want to change."</i></p> <p><i>"There's incredible resistance within schools and cultures around improvement."</i></p>
STAKEHOLDERS	<div>Superintendents</div> <div>School board</div>	<div>Instructional coach</div> <div>Publishers sales representative</div>