

# **ALIGNs: Aligning Levels of Instruction with Goals and the Needs of Students**

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**Motivation:** There is a wide gap between what students know and can do, and what they are taught in school.



**Student's  
learning levels**  
(what they  
know and can  
do right now)

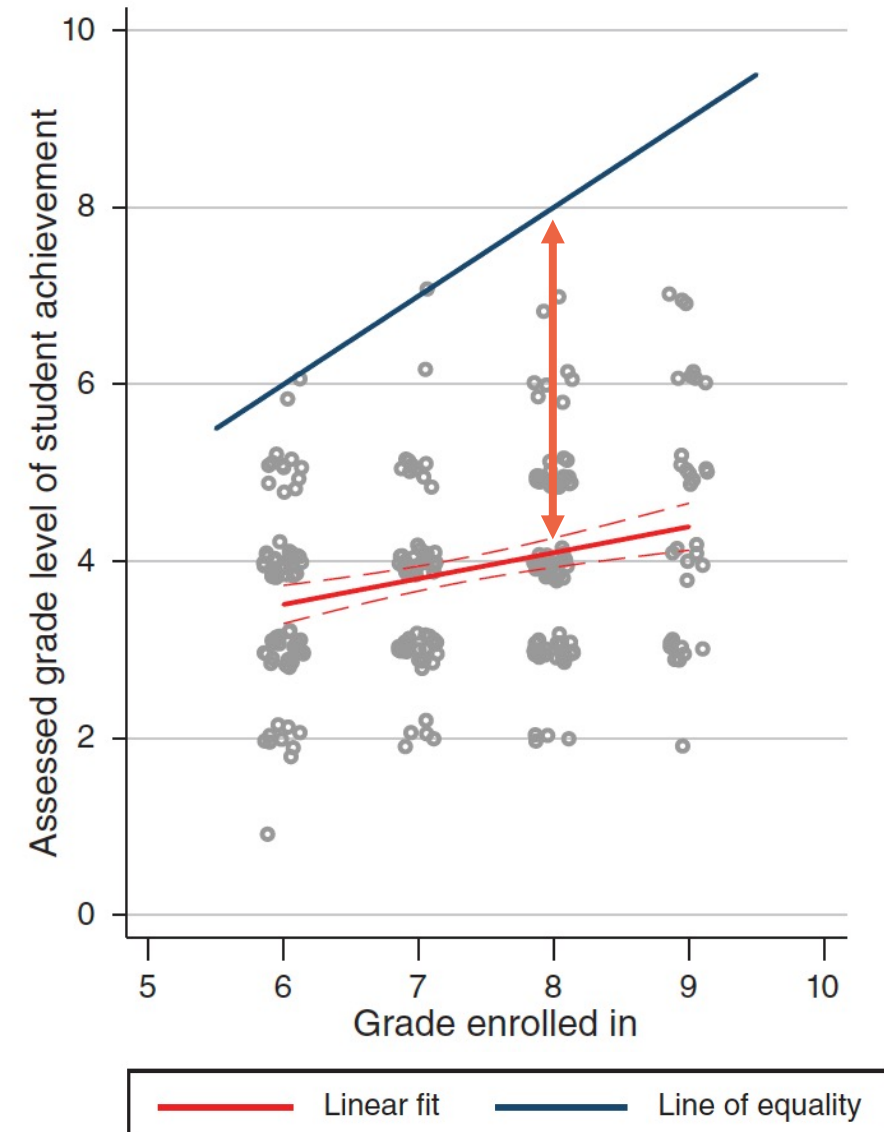
**Classroom  
instruction**  
(what students  
are being  
asked to do)

# **Motivation:** Empirical literature on "overambitious curricula" (Pritchett and Beatty, 2012) showing the gap exists

Mindspark baseline (Muralidharan et al, 2019)

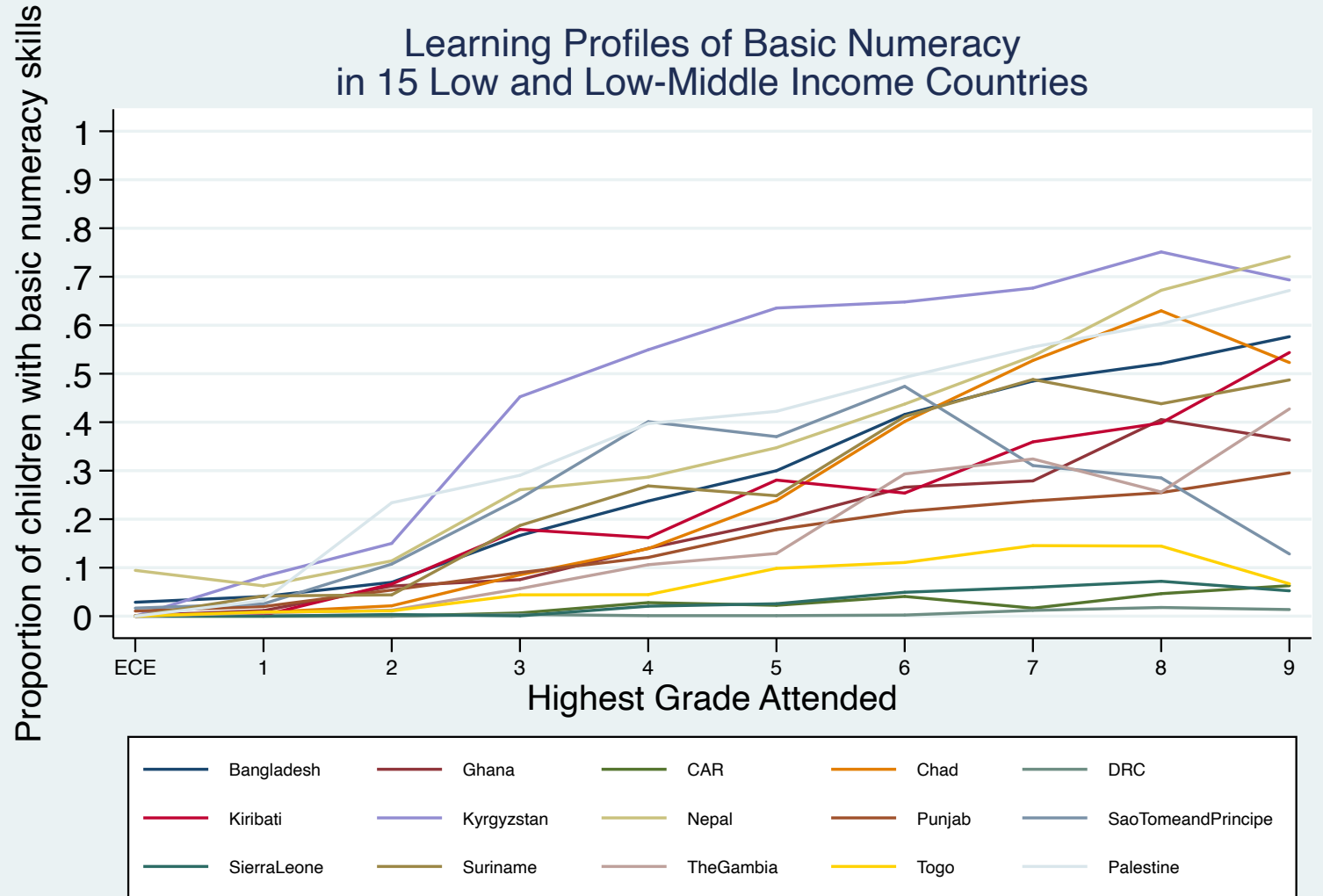
- By grade 8, children are 4 years behind the curriculum, on average
- By grade 8/9, there is massive variation in skills spanning about 5-6 grade levels

Panel A. Math



# Motivation: Large empirical literature demonstrating this gap's negative consequences on learning

- *Learning is cumulative:* learning profiles are flat, and once you fall behind you often stay behind (i.e. Belafi et al., 2020; Beatty et al., 2018; Kaffenberger & Pritchett, 2020)
- *Cognitive psychology:* Learning requires a foundation of long-term memory (current learning levels) and focusing working memory on new knowledge (targeted learning progress) (Abadzi, 2020)



Source: Authors' calculations using MICS-6

# **Motivation:** Gap can be closed, and in a systematic way

## **Can be closed**

- Programme evaluations of our 3 case studies: national curriculum reform in Tanzania (3Rs); national literacy programme in Kenya (Tusome); remedial learning programme operating in many countries (Teaching at the Right Level).

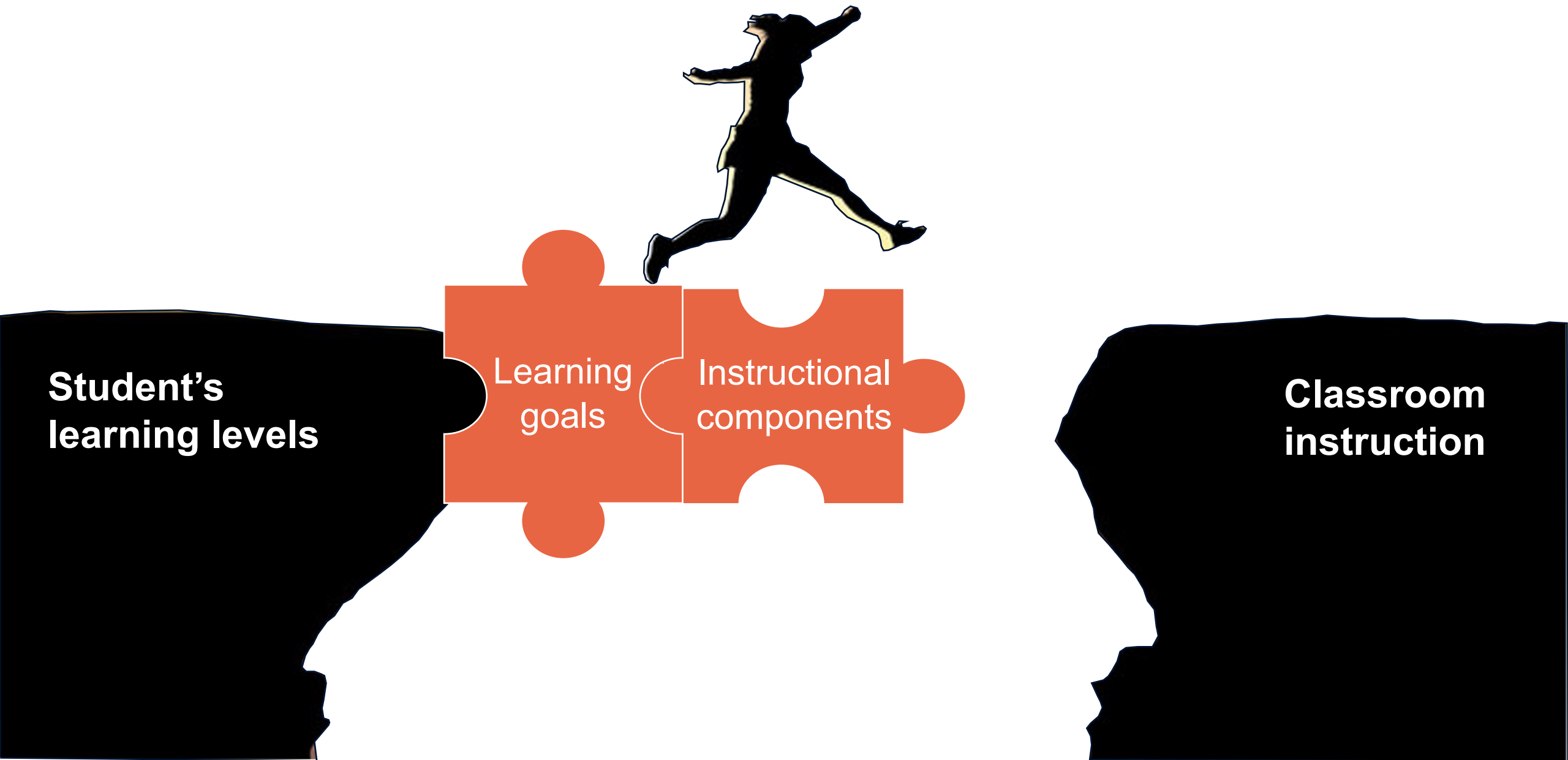
## **In a systematic way**

- There are many successful programs that address the gap between students' learning level and instruction.
- ALIGNS zooms out from individual programs, and proposes 4 underlying principles that explain their success.

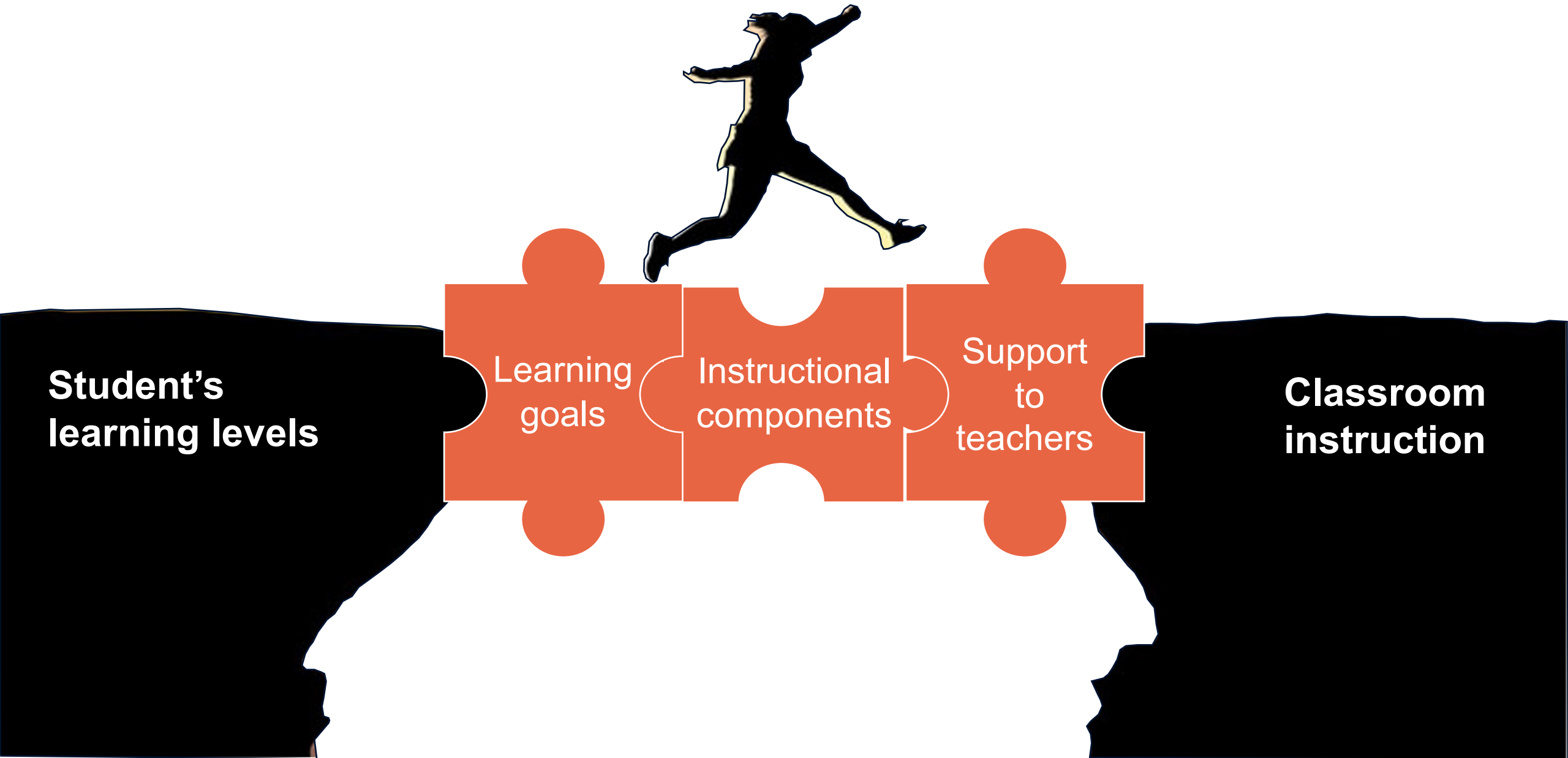
# **Principle 1:** Set learning goals based on current learning levels.



**Principle 2:** Align instruction to be coherent with both current learning levels and targeted learning progress.

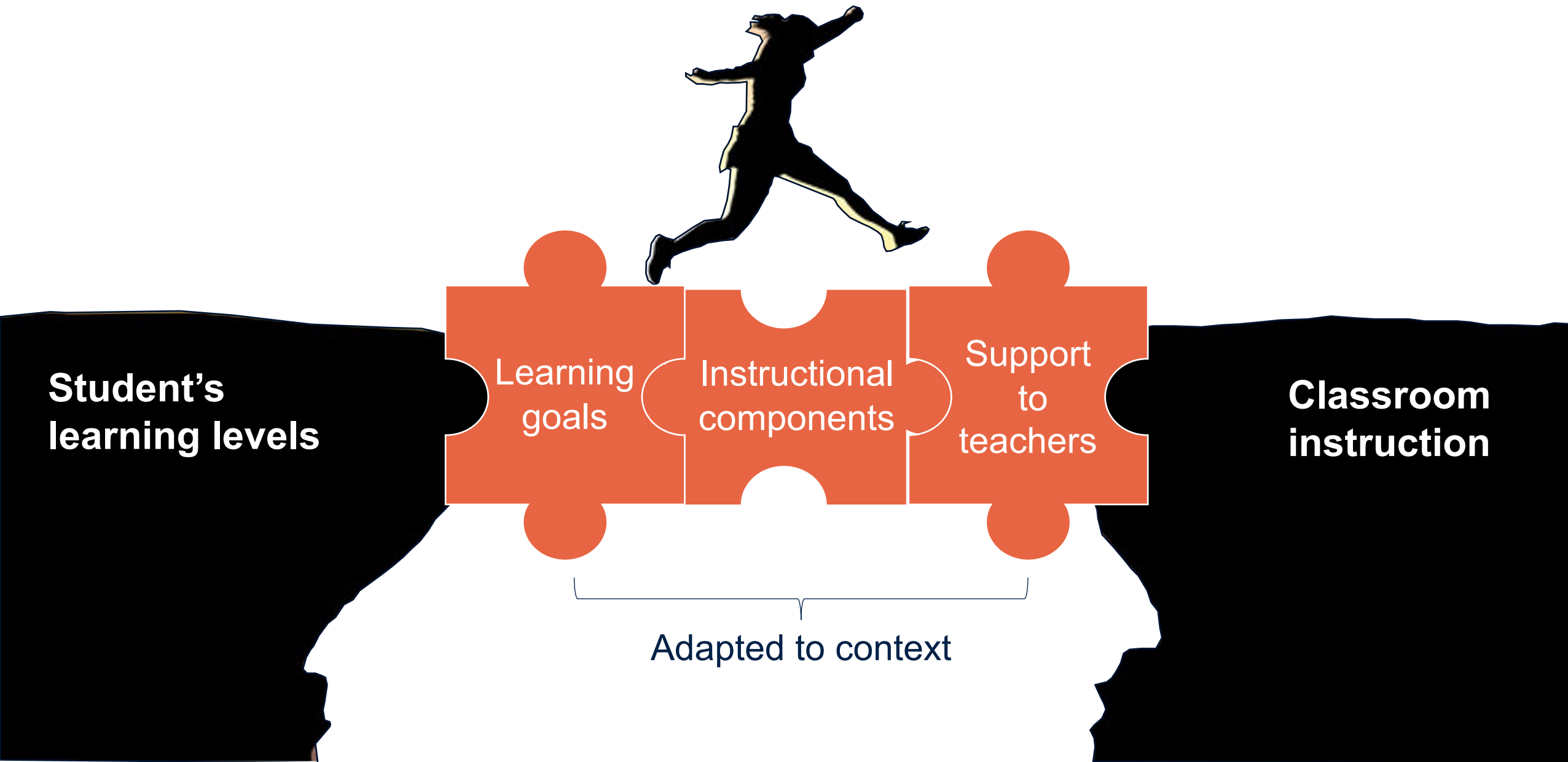


## Principle 3: Support teachers to implement changes to instruction





**Principle 4:** Adapt implementation to the opportunities and constraints of the context.



# Case Study 1: Tanzania's 3Rs Curriculum Reform

<b>Principle 1:</b> Set learning goals based on current learning levels	National KPIs focused on reading, writing, and arithmetic (3Rs) in the early grades, including an annual 3Rs assessment in Grade 2
<b>Principle 2:</b> Align instruction to be coherent with current learning levels and targeted learning progress	Streamlined overburdened curriculum standards to focus 80 percent of instructional time on foundational 3Rs.
<b>Principle 3:</b> Support teachers to implement changes to instruction	Schools where at least one teacher received training in the new curriculum experienced student test score gains that were nearly twice as large.

## Case Study 2: Kenya's Tusome Literacy Programme

<b>Principle 1:</b> Set learning goals based on current learning levels	Following low learning levels in Uwezo and EGRA tests, Tusome specified foundational reading fluency benchmarks for Grades 1-3.
<b>Principle 2:</b> Align instruction to be coherent with current learning levels and targeted learning progress	Comprehensive changes to the prescribed scope, level, and sequence of classroom lessons; new teacher guides and student books; regular student assessment
<b>Principle 3:</b> Support teachers to implement changes to instruction	High-frequency classroom observations and coaching by local government officials to support adoption of new instructional practice.

## Case Study 3: Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL)

<b>Principle 1:</b> Set learning goals based on current learning levels	Clear goals for student mastery of foundational reading and maths skills based on what each individual child can currently do.
<b>Principle 2:</b> Align instruction to be coherent with current learning levels and targeted learning progress	Instructional groupings based on diagnostic assessments; level-appropriate books and activities; and frequent formative assessment to enable rapid advancement to the next level.
<b>Principle 3:</b> Support teachers to implement changes to instruction	Coaches acquire practical experience leading TaRL classes, and then conduct regular observations and give feedback focused on TaRL pedagogy.

## All case studies are adapted to their particular context (Principle 4)

Case Study	Country	Content	Students	Scheduling	Technology	Instructors	Coaches
<b>3Rs</b>	Tanzania	Whole curriculum	Grades 1–2	During normal lessons	Low tech	Govt teachers	No formal coaching in schools
<b>Tusome</b>	Kenya	Foundational literacy (in Kiswahili and English)	Grades 1–3	During normal 30-minute Kiswahili and English lessons	Hybrid. Inexpensive TLMs, but tablets for coaches	Govt teachers	Government officials responsible for around 20 schools
<b>TaRL govt partnerships</b>	Indian states and 5 countries in SSA	Foundational literacy and numeracy	Groups by level for Grades 3–5	1 dedicated hour per day during the school day	Low tech	Govt teachers	Government officials, 12–15 schools each
<b>TaRL learning camps</b>	Indian states and 4 countries in SSA	Foundational literacy and numeracy	Groups by level for Grades 3–5	50 days total instruction, split into 10-day ‘bursts’	Low tech	Local volunteers	Implementing NGO staff

**ALIGNs:** 4 principles that underly successful approaches to closing the gap between students learning levels, and what they are being taught.

# RISE

RESEARCH ON IMPROVING  
SYSTEMS OF EDUCATION

## Thank you very much!

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