TK-12 EDITION

Strengthening Coherence Across Initiatives:

A Whole-Child Lens

Center for Whole-Child Education

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The Center for Whole-Child Education

The Center for Whole-Child Education, built on the work of Turnaround for Children, is a part of Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College, Arizona State University. The Center advances key insights from educator practice, scientific research, and student experience so that together we can create equitable learning environments.

Learn more at WholeChildASU.org.

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About This Report

This publication is a project of the Center for Whole-Child Education, part of the Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College, Arizona State University. The Center advances key insights from educator practice, scientific research, and student experience so that together we can create equitable learning environments where young people's full potential is unlocked.

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This publication would not have been possible without the many organizations who offered their perspectives, experience and brilliance on whole-child practices within California state initiatives. They include: Anaheim Union High School District, California Afterschool Network, Community Schools Learning Exchange, Orange County Department of Education, Butte County Office of Education, Morongo Unified School District, Placer County Office of Education, Rocklin Unified School District, Sacramento City Unified School District, Sacramento County Office of Education, and Santa Ana Unified School District. Please see the appendix for a list of the individuals who contributed.

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This report was co-authored by Katie Brackenridge, Gretchen Livesey, Laura Sikes, and Jeremy Koren.

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Introduction

The number of initiatives across California seems to be multiplying. Teachers are asked to implement many different, but similar, projects and programs. School leaders are struggling to get their staff excited about these new requests, while districts weigh the costs and benefits of making one more ask for one more initiative.

> ***"We're doing bits and pieces of the same work. We're calling them different things. And we create these arbitrary structures defining what we do – this is SEL, PBIS, MTSS, etc.... We get locked into language that we unfortunately, as an educational system, have put in place. And now, because we've created those structures, we're trying to erase some of those boundaries, and it's getting hard."***
> - Mai Xi Lee, SEL Director, Sacramento County Office of Education

If that seems like a problem, this paper brings good news. The whole-child lens is about how to create a greater sense of coherence between all these "bits and pieces" by:

- Recognizing how the strategies you already implement are essentially the same across "different" initiatives,
- Seeing specifically how those strategies are aligned to a whole-child purpose and practices,
- Discovering what your peers in the field are doing to strengthen coherence, and
- Focusing on how you communicate, implement and collaborate around your whole-child purpose.

Ultimately, the goal for all the initiatives is to create positive, equitable learning experiences in which each and every young person can learn and grow. Through this report, we hope you'll see that there are multiple ways to get there and multiple starting points. The essential work is helping educators understand the connections across their work so that they can focus on creating opportunities and supports for all students to thrive.

Project Purpose

As a result of this project, we hope that:

1. **Educators** will feel and be more aligned with and less overwhelmed by the multiple initiatives they are asked to implement.
2. **Education leaders** will prioritize and unite people around aligned initiatives.
3. **State leaders** will communicate more clearly and consistently about the whole-child connections across initiatives.

This project **is not** about...

- Putting one framework at the top.
- Just a technical crosswalk.
- Evaluating initiatives against one other.

This project **is** about...

- Noticing the common threads of whole-child practice through your work.
- Aligning your efforts around a whole-child purpose so that initiatives are mutually reinforcing, instead of disjointed and in competition with each other.
- Building on the excellent work that is already happening.

How to Use This Resource

Throughout this resource, look for the icons below.

This icon prompts thinking through a **whole-child lens**. The full infographic can be found on p. 9.

This icon indicates a tip for **taking action**. For more information on each tip, see the Key Actions for Coherence section on p. 36.

What Does "Whole-Child" Mean?

While practitioners are feeling overwhelmed by the large number of siloed state initiatives, it's striking that all of them are framed as "whole-child" approaches or strategies to "meet the needs of the whole child." These concepts are embraced at the highest level of the California education system - including the State Board of Education. The problem is that there is not yet enough specificity about what "whole-child" education means in practice, so that educators can make concrete connections across their work.

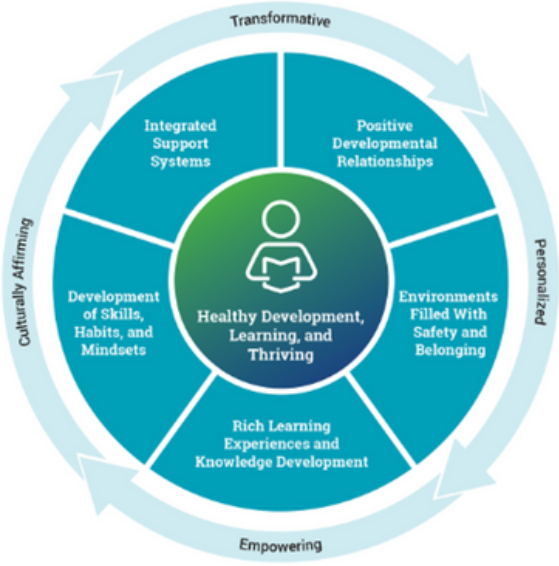
To start that journey, let's discuss what we exactly mean when we say "whole child." First, whole-child education is not one singular framework, program, initiative or curricula. Grounded in the science of learning and development, whole-child education creates learning conditions in which all young people build essential cognitive, social and emotional skills and mindsets, develop their identities and self-worth, and overcome barriers to healthy development, learning and thriving. A whole-child approach requires that we move towards transformation of our current system of education, the foundation of which was built on racist, sexist, classist, and ableist ideas about who was capable and deserving of high-quality education, and who was not.

For the purpose of this work, we've chosen to use the Guiding Principles for Equitable Whole-Child Design to describe the foundational components and practices of whole-child education.

These principles – along with specific examples of practices - are described below. We chose these principles because they were collaboratively created, are widely known, and have played a role in the development of initiatives in California.

Simply put, using a whole-child lens means looking at our initiatives, systems, structures, and practices with a set of guiding questions, pushing us to think about how we are supporting students' holistic development and learning through our work.

Guiding Principles for Equitable Whole-Child Design
(Learning Policy Institute & Turnaround for Children, 2021)



- **Whole-Child Purpose:** In what ways is this work focused on students' healthy development, learning and thriving?
- **Relationships:** In what ways is this work fostering trust, connection and belonging?
- **Environments:** In what ways is this work creating environments that are physically, emotionally and identity safe, supportive, and inclusive?
- **Learning Experiences:** In what ways is this work providing meaningful, engaging, and challenging learning experiences?
- **Skills, Habits, and Mindsets:** In what ways is this work developing students' social, emotional, and cognitive skills, habits and mindsets?
- **Integrated Supports:** In what ways is this work using school and community resources to address students' strengths and needs?

[See the following page for the full Whole-Child Lens infographic.]

A Whole-Child Lens

Use these guiding questions to reflect on initiatives, systems, structures and practices in your work.

How do they address the needs of the whole learner?

Whole-Child Purpose

In what ways is this work focused on students' healthy development, learning and thriving?

Relationships

In what ways is this work fostering trust, connection and belonging?

Environments

In what ways is this work creating spaces that are physically, emotionally and identity safe, supportive and inclusive?

Learning Experiences

In what ways is this work providing meaningful, engaging and challenging learning experiences?

Skills, Habits, and Mindsets

In what ways is this work developing students' social, emotional and cognitive skills, habits and mindsets?

Integrated Supports

In what ways is this work integrating school and community resources to address students' strengths and needs?

Center for Whole-Child Education

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Initiatives Through A Whole-Child Lens

For this project, we chose to focus on five California initiatives that are prevalent in districts across the state and supported by statewide systems. We spoke with organizations that are involved in leading those initiatives across California, in order to identify the embedded whole-child practices.

Initiative:	Organization:
Community Schools	Community Schools Learning Exchange (+ input from Orange County Department of Education)
Expanded Learning Opportunities (ELO)	California Afterschool Network
California's Multi-tiered System of Support (CA MTSS)	Orange County Department of Education Butte County Office of Education
Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS)	Placer County Office of Education
Social Emotional Learning (SEL)	Sacramento County Office of Education

Through the example of the five initiatives, we hope to illustrate that any initiative could be looked at through a whole-child lens. In an hour or less, one could use the SoLD Design Principles for Schools Self-Assessment Tool to consider how any initiative or strategy aligns with whole-child practices. An adapted version of this tool was completed by initiative partners for this project.

Whole-Child Purpose

In what ways is this work focused on students' healthy development, learning and thriving?

A whole-child purpose moves away from the factory model of education – one that focuses on delivering content to students along a pre-determined path of skills and knowledge – to a more flexible and dynamic approach that responds to students in their context and provides opportunities to build the knowledge, skills and mindsets that are relevant to them and valued in their broader community.

This approach strives to dismantle traditionally inequitable systems and practices that too often ignore, fail to serve, or harm students based on their culture, race, language, ability, gender identity, sexual orientation, etc. Instead, a whole-child purpose embraces a holistic understanding of young people as unique individuals within a social, political and physical context in order to support each and every student's healthy development, learning and thriving.

When asked how their initiatives support the whole child, each organization described a set of strategies, structures and systems intentionally designed to promote students' holistic healthy development, learning and thriving. These statements of whole-child purpose highlight how the initiatives are complementary, consistent and coherent efforts.

Community Schools

Community Schools Learning Exchange (CSLX): "A community school is a place, a set of relationships, and an underlying structure that organizes community resources and voices around student success, recognizing that school is only one part of learning. By keeping students at the center, the community school strategy transforms what we often think of as traditional 'school' into a more welcoming and supportive place where educators, community members, families and students work in partnership to strengthen conditions for student learning and healthy development."

Expanded Learning

California Afterschool Network: "The Quality Standards for Expanded Learning describe high-quality Expanded Learning environments as safe, supportive, equitable, and accessible while facilitating skill-building, healthy choices, and

behaviors through active and engaged learning experiences rich with youth voice and leadership. High-quality Expanded Learning programs are consistent with research-supported conditions for thriving while addressing the critical needs of students and families (such as nutrition). Because one of the Quality Standards is Collaborative Partnerships, Expanded Learning programs create a robust platform for partnership and coherence across initiatives and sectors."

Multi-Tiered System of Support (CA MTSS)

Orange County Department of Education: "CA MTSS is a comprehensive framework that aligns academic, behavioral, social-emotional learning, and mental health support into a fully integrated system of support for the benefit of all students. CA MTSS is designed to meet the needs of each and every student in inclusive and equitable learning environments."

Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS)

Placer County Office of Education (PCOE): "PBIS provides clear systems for organizing supports for students through a multi-tiered framework that has been extensively implemented and researched. Additionally, PBIS provides excellent guidance and resources for developing communication, leadership, and teaming structures to support whole-child work."

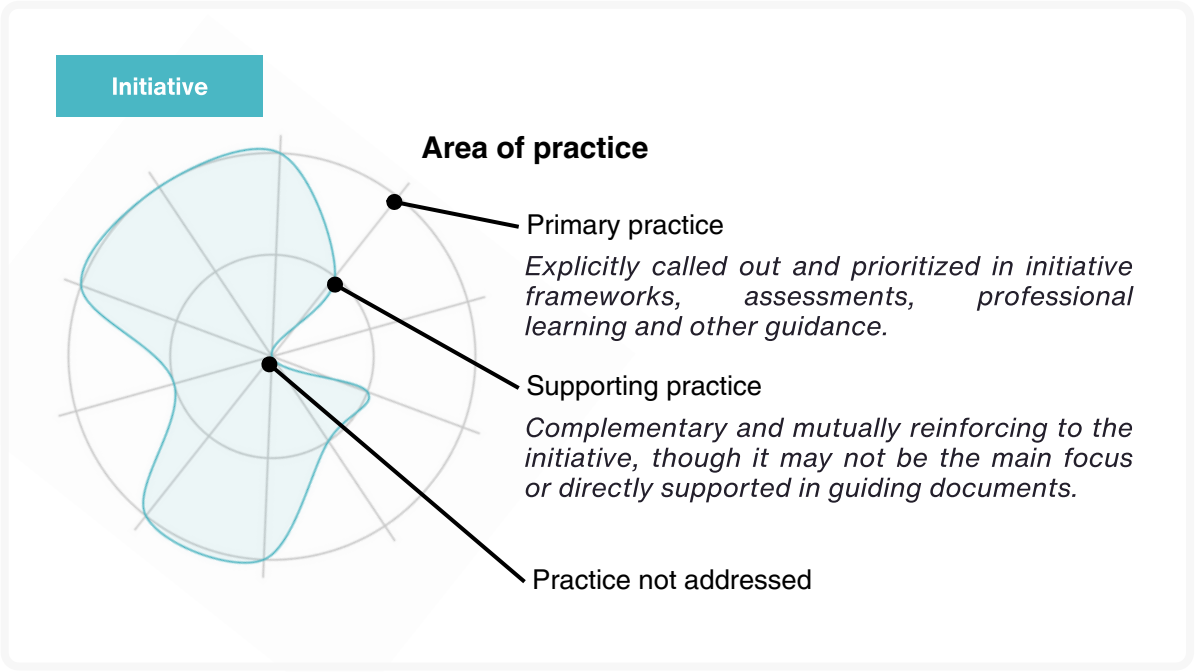
Social and Emotional Learning (SEL)

Sacramento County Office of Education (SCOE): "Social emotional learning is a critical part of whole-child education, as it supports the development of social-emotional skills and conditions that are necessary for all students to access equitable, high quality academic engagement and success."

Cohesive, Mutually Reinforcing Practices

In this section, we provide examples of specific whole-child practices and how they show up in California education initiatives. Staff from the organizations that lead CA initiatives filled out an adapted version of the SoLD Design Principles for Schools Self-Assessment Tool, identifying which whole-child practices are **primary**, **supporting** or **not addressed** by their initiative, based on evidence in their guiding documents. You can find a list of organizations and individuals who completed the assessment and the guiding documents they referenced in the Appendix.

The following data visualizations represent the degree to which whole-child practices show up in each initiative, as either a “primary” or “supporting” practice.



In looking across the data, it is immediately clear that there is so much mutually-reinforcing work happening across initiatives. Far from implementing siloed strategies, the five initiatives are supporting the same whole-child practices across their districts, schools and classrooms. A whole-child lens makes this consistency visible and concrete so that educators at multiple levels of the system can see the connections and make sense of their work as part of a common purpose.

[The following descriptions of each principle are adapted from the Design Principles for Schools playbook and the Center for Whole-Child Education’s Toolbox.]

Positive Developmental Relationships

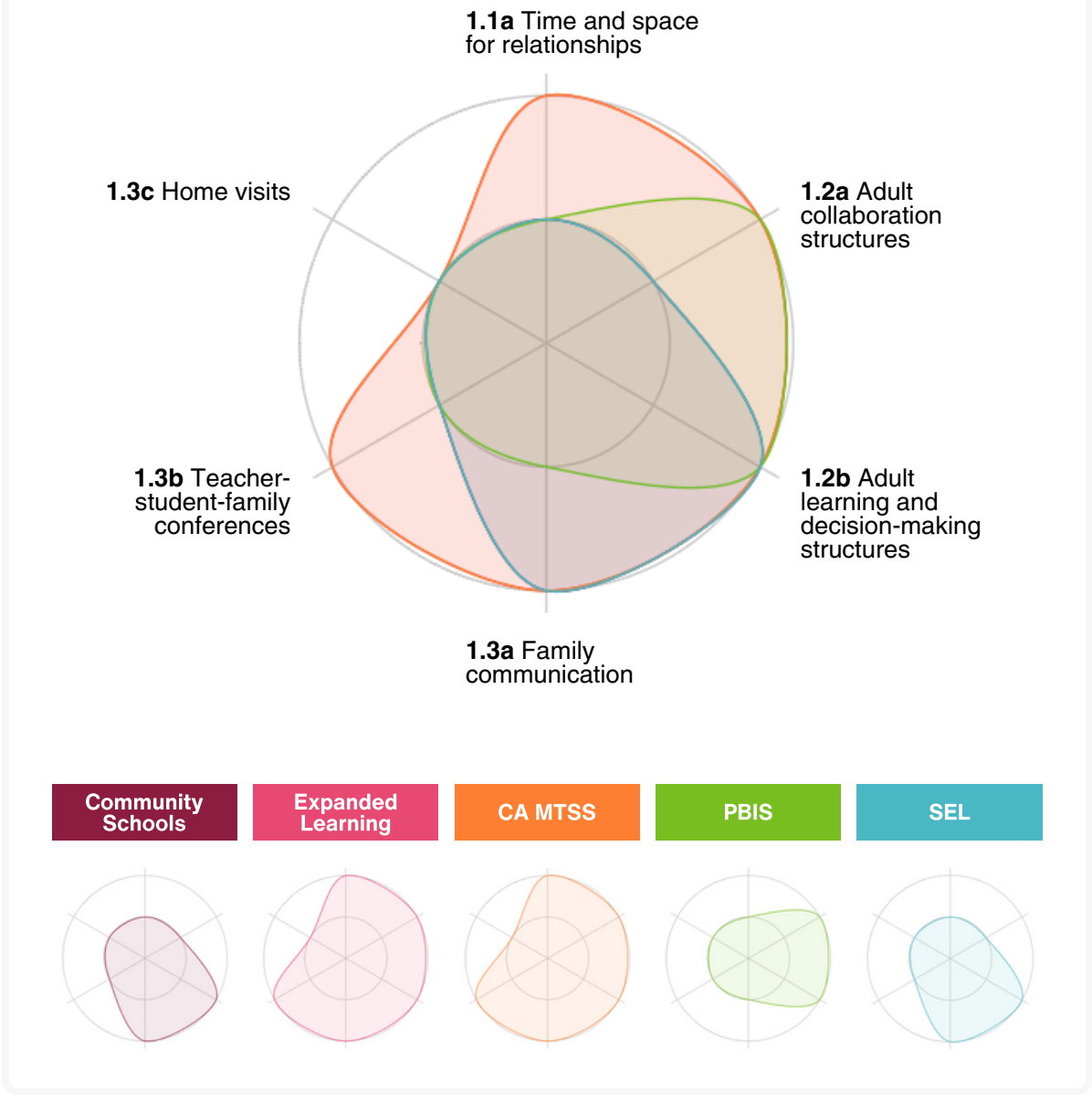
In what ways is this work fostering trust, connection and belonging?

Common across initiatives is a focus on positive developmental relationships for students and adults. This focus is grounded in the science of learning and development, which describes how relationships build strong brain architecture, providing critical avenues to learning and growth. Beyond "being nice," intentional developmental relationships can fundamentally change the way a child develops, directly facilitating social, emotional and cognitive growth and empowering students as active agents, rather than passive recipients, in the learning process. Trusting relationships also buffer the negative impact of chronic stress through the release of the hormone oxytocin. Oxytocin protects children, at the cellular level, from the damaging effects of the stress hormone, cortisol.

A school setting that centers relationships intentionally prioritizes not only relationships between educators and students, but also with families and caregivers, community members and among students. Historically, the design of school systems has perpetuated deep structural racism, depersonalized settings, implicit bias and uneven power dynamics, which continue to marginalize people of color, English language learners, neurodivergent students and others from historically resilient communities. Meaningfully engaging all interest-holders in the school community, valuing their assets and expertise and seeking understanding across lines of difference can support schools in redesigning for equity.

How do you create a relationship-centered school? Through the whole-child self-assessment, initiative leads identified the following examples of specific structures, strategies and practices that create opportunities for strong relationships with and between students, educators, and families.

Relationships Across Initiatives:



Environments Filled With Safety and Belonging

In what ways is this work creating spaces that are physically, emotionally and identity safe, supportive and inclusive?

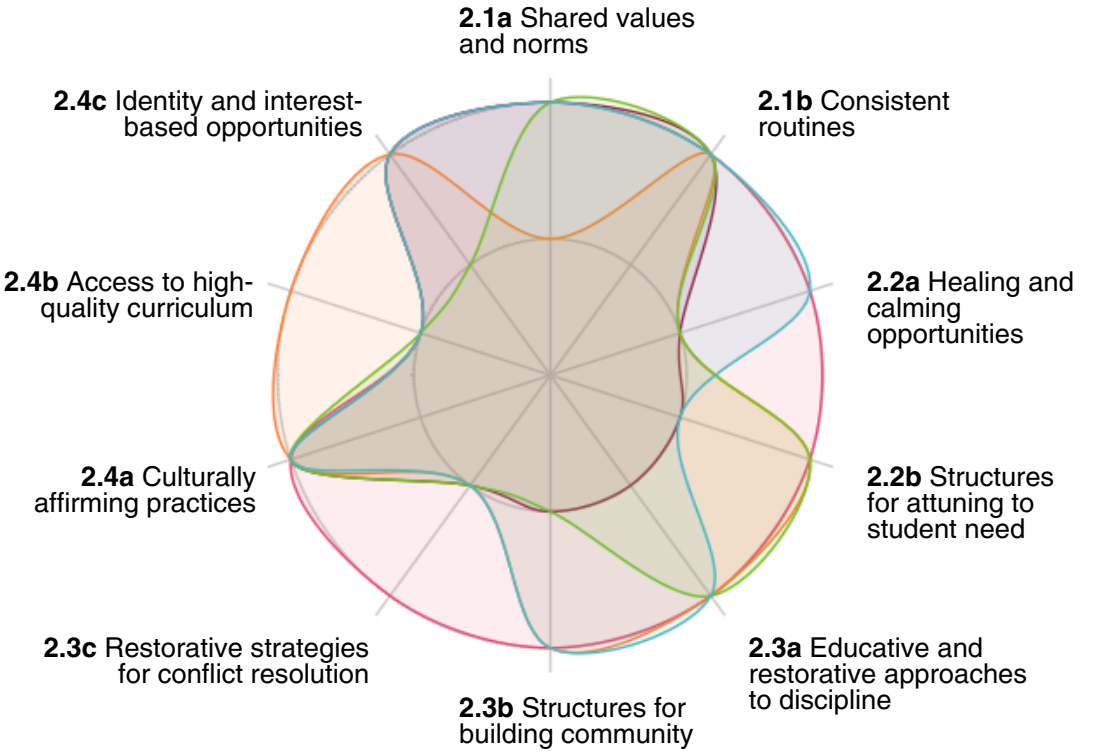
A supportive school environment is physically, emotionally, and identity safe, while creating a strong sense of belonging. A true sense of safety and belonging requires a shared, authentic commitment to giving power and voice to all community members – students, staff, caregivers, etc. – practicing inclusion even when it is difficult.

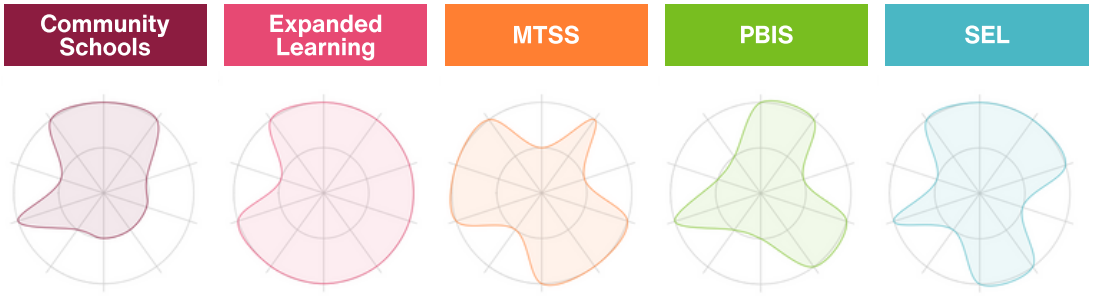
This means designing together the school culture (e.g., co-creating classroom norms), as well as prioritizing mechanisms of support and repairing relationships, instead of only discipline, when challenges inevitably arise (e.g., using co-regulatory and restorative practices). As all voices are invited into the conversation, it is especially important that those with power are aware of how their identities and relative institutional positions affect their role in creating a supportive school environment.

Supportive environments are especially important for students who are already on "high alert" for danger, due to chronic stress or trauma. The predictability and consistency of a supportive school environment allows a hyperactive stress response system to categorize the pattern of experiences as non-threatening, thus allowing the nervous system to stay out of "fight, flight, or freeze" mode and in an open, engaging, and learning mode.

Creating an environment filled with safety and belonging requires intentional structures and strategies that the five California initiatives identified as primary or supporting practices.

Environments Across Initiatives:





Rich Learning Experiences and Knowledge Development

In what ways is this work providing meaningful, engaging and challenging learning experiences?

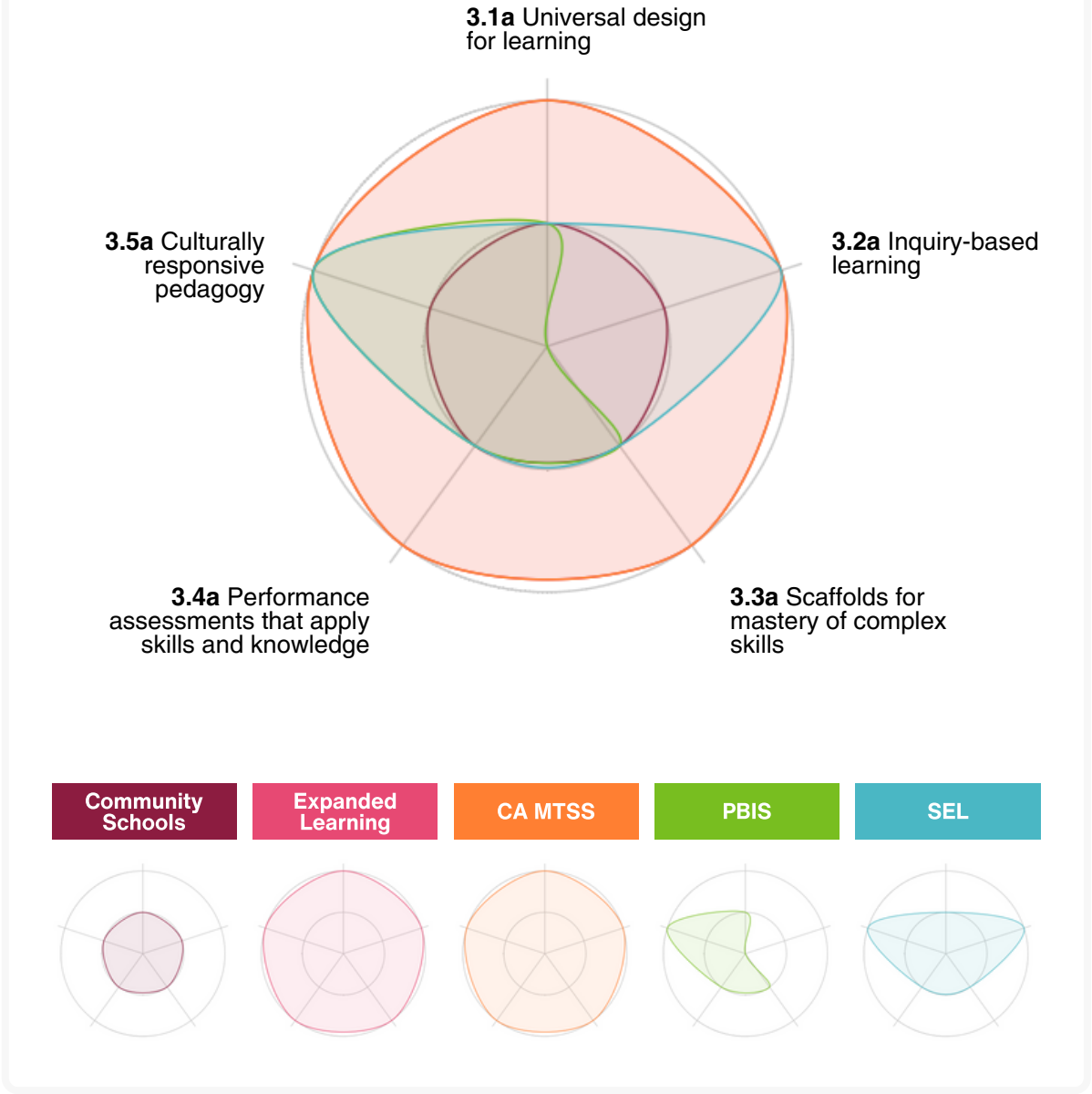
The five initiatives also specifically identified how their approaches support rich learning experiences. The science of learning and development demonstrates that children are motivated when tasks are relevant to their lives, pique their curiosity, and are well scaffolded so that success is possible.

Schools should provide meaningful, culturally connected work within and across core disciplines (including the arts, music, and physical education) that builds on students' prior knowledge and experience and helps students discover what they are capable of. Learning that is applied to authentic tasks and collaborative projects engages higher-order skills of analysis, synthesis, critical thinking, and problem-solving and allows knowledge to be remembered and used in new situations.

Students' expectations for success influence their willingness to engage in learning. These expectations depend on whether they perceive the task as doable and adequately supported as well as whether they have confidence in their abilities and hold a growth mindset.

Initiative leads identified the types of practices that they support so that students are experiencing rich learning environments.

Learning Experiences Across Initiatives:



Development of Skills, Habits, and Mindsets

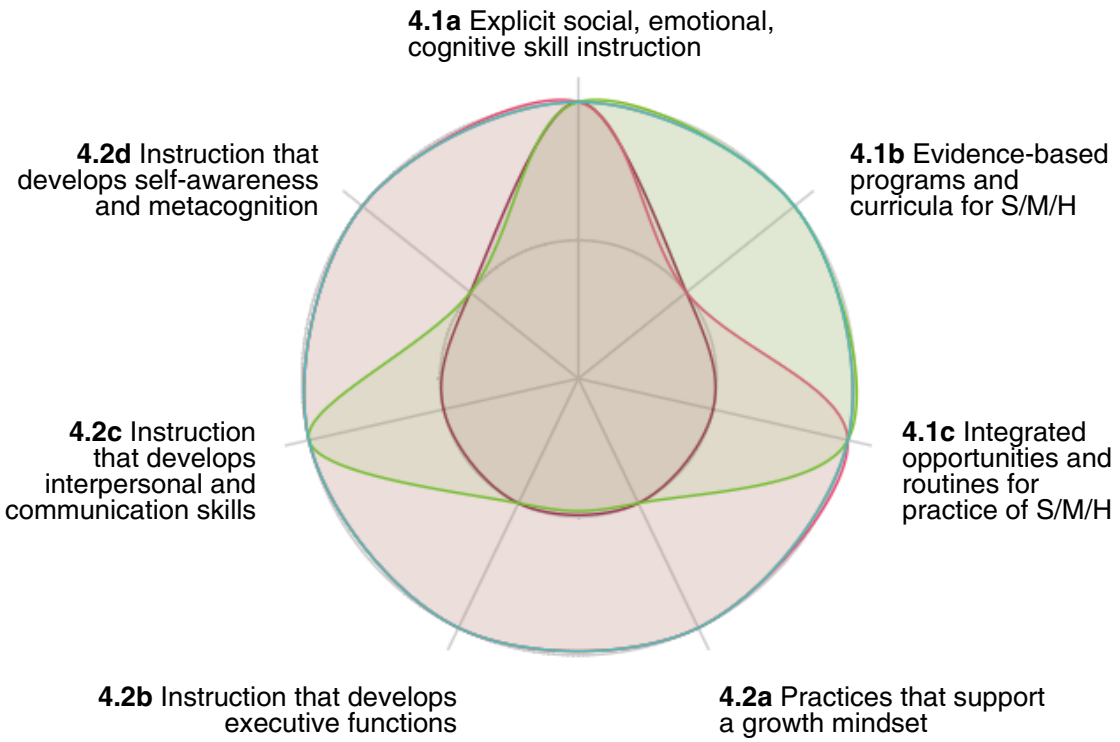
In what ways is this work developing students' social, emotional, and cognitive skills, habits and mindsets?

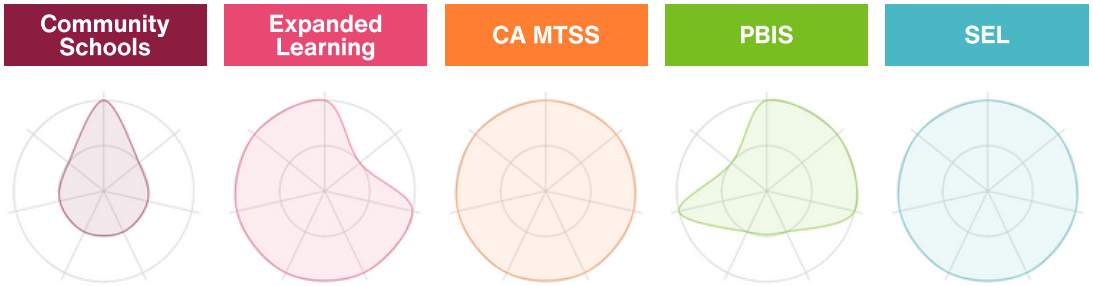
In the brain, students are building anatomically cross-wired and functionally interconnected neural networks that facilitate skills like self-regulation, while also helping them think, learn and remember content knowledge. For example, as a student works to regulate their emotions, remember new information and organize their thinking, they are using interconnected processes in the amygdala, hippocampus and prefrontal cortex. In classrooms, this means that academic instruction and student supports are most effective when they are driven by a holistic picture of the learner with unique skills, habits, mindsets, interests, relationships, experiences, knowledge and goals.

The skills and mindsets that adults in children's contexts demonstrate form the model through which students acquire their own skills and mindsets. For example, a group of educators who consistently embody a growth mindset, demonstrate strong stress management, and take a productive approach to conflict facilitate the development of such skills and mindsets in students.

California's initiatives intentionally support the development of skills, habits and mindsets through the following examples of practices.

Skills, Habits and Mindsets Across Initiatives:





Integrated Support Systems

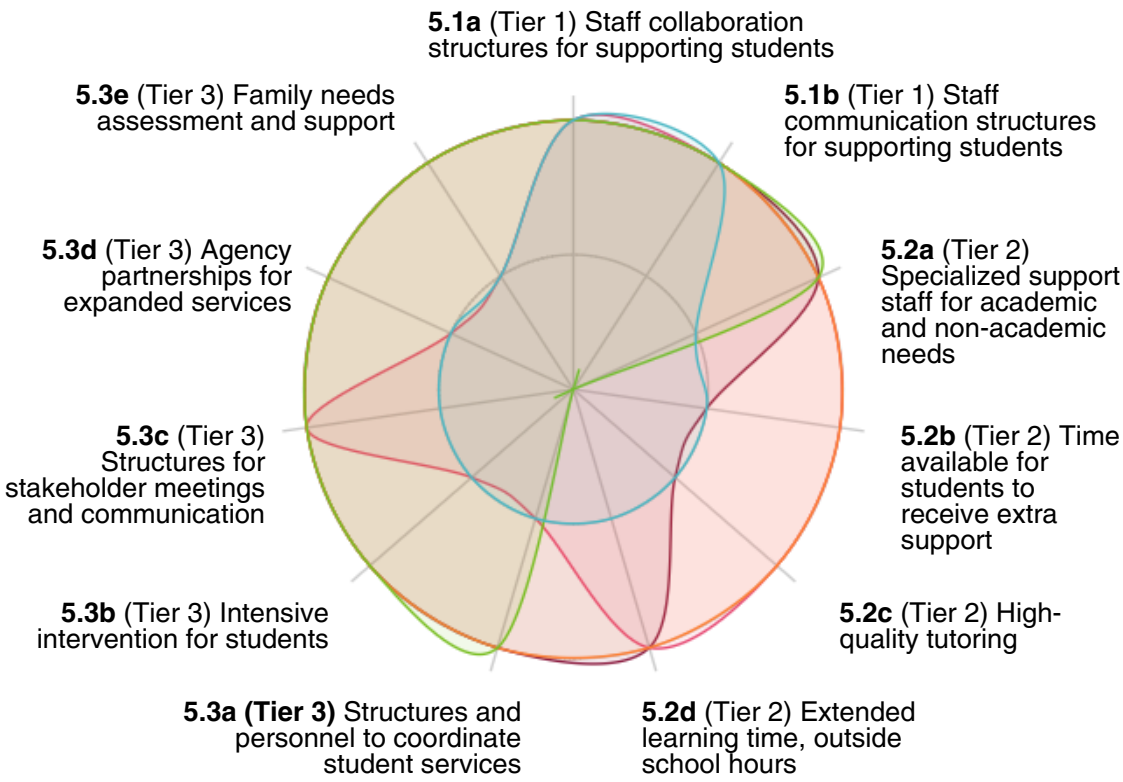
In what ways is this work using school and community resources to address students' strengths and needs?

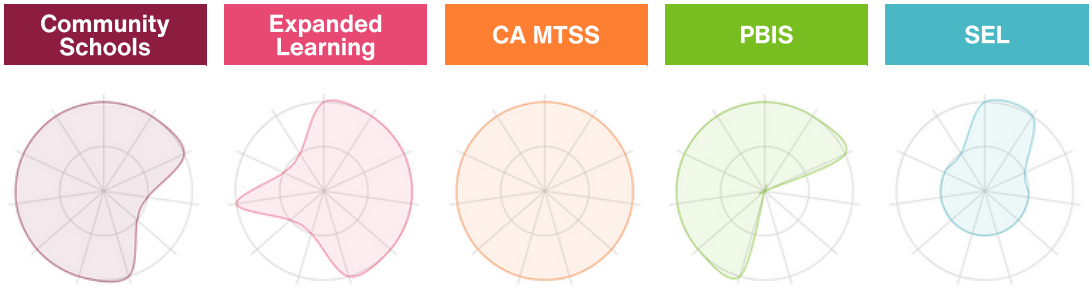
The science of learning and development tells us that each student is on their own unique developmental pathway. Students reach their full potential when they have access to intervention and enrichment that matches their unique learning profiles and collectively supports their social, emotional and academic growth. When students face challenges, which they all will, those challenges need to be addressed without stigma or shame in order to successfully support their learning and growth.

To achieve this personalized approach, well-designed systems weave together school and community resources for physical and mental health, social services, and expanded learning time, integrating these practices into day-to-day schooling so that students' needs are readily identified and met holistically, without bureaucratic delays. They also ensure that practitioners have a shared developmental approach to thinking about students with an asset-based lens.

The five initiatives provide integrated supports to address the unique developmental profiles of students through the following types of structures and systems.

Integrated Supports Across Initiatives:





Perspectives From the Field

To deepen our understanding of how whole-child practices actually show up in the field, we talked to practitioners about their experiences. These practitioners were recommended by the organizations that completed the self-assessments because of their experience and expertise in implementing specific initiatives. We heard amazing examples of whole-child work in action in all of these districts.

We also discovered how these experienced practitioners are blending initiatives together in pursuit of a strong, shared vision, and employing a variety of strategies to help staff connect their work around that vision.

The following profiles describe specifically how that is happening in these forward-thinking school districts:

- Anaheim Union High School District
- Santa Ana Unified School District
- Morongo Unified School District
- Rocklin Unified School District
- Sacramento City Unified School District

Anaheim Union High School District

This interview was conducted with Dr. Jaron Fried, Ed Service Assistant Superintendent; Robert Saldivar, Executive Director of Education Services; Diana Fujimoto, Coordinator of Professional Learning; and Carlos Hernandez, Director of Community Schools, Family and Community Engagement. The intended focus of this interview was around Community Schools.

The Anaheim Union High School District is located in Orange County, California. It has 8 junior high schools, 8 comprehensive high schools, one 7-12 academy and 3 alternative education schools, serving 28,404 students.

How is Community Schools whole-child work?

Anaheim puts thriving students at the center of its Community School work with a firmly assets-based approach that is based on trust and collaboration with all interest-holders. The district is always thinking about sustainability, leveraging the Community Schools framework to unite other initiatives and using grant funds to build staff capacity through professional learning.

Anaheim is focusing on strengthening classroom-level interactions between teachers and students because “this is where students spend the majority of their time.” Learning is made relevant through student voice, not just about what’s happening in the classroom but also about what’s happening beyond the school walls, encouraging students to bring in issues from their community and training teachers to be flexible and responsive to students’ interests. Anaheim is also intentional about building what they call “21st Century Skills – the 5 C’s of Critical Thinking, Creativity, Communication, Collaboration, and Character/Compassion,” which directly ties to the Guiding Principles’ whole-child component of developing skills, habits and mindsets.

Anaheim teachers approach academics by providing rich learning experiences and supporting knowledge development. To do this, Anaheim allows space for teachers to be creative and take risks – “to break away from the test mantra.” They also encourage relationship-building, asking teachers to “know students’ names, know their assets, know their needs, know their story.” They encourage staff to be “teachers of students, not teachers of stuff.” Anaheim further expands community connections through career technical pathways and dual enrollment opportunities that combine technical skills with “soft” skills, youth voice and purpose that are critical to student engagement.

Anaheim is intentional about taking a systemic approach that is not dependent on one or a few people. Scaling and sustainability come through structures like reflective learning walks for both teachers and parents/guardians, capstone projects, professional learning and community-wide meetings that are built into the fabric of the district - "the way we do business."

"If it's not connecting to our goals, then why are we doing it?"
- Leaders at Anaheim Union High School District

Through these and other structures, the Anaheim community consistently comes back to its purpose.

How do you create coherence among initiatives?

Revisit your school/district vision statement with your interest-holders.
(See Key Actions for Coherence, p. 36)

With 15 years of experience building their current system, Anaheim staff had some clear words of advice:

Make the focus the focus. Anaheim has a strong shared vision, mission and values that are integrated into all aspects of the district's work. District leadership is deeply intentional and highly inclusive about who is involved in creating the vision, mission and values with processes that engage students, parents, teachers, other staff and community partners in envisioning the profile of a successful learner and the environments that lead to that profile. The vision, mission, values show up at every meeting in order to ensure that they are focused on why they are doing the things they are doing.

Create clear structures and strategies. Anaheim staff backwards maps from the vision, mission and values to the structures and strategies that will help them get there. This includes frameworks that are well known to everyone in the school community – like the 5 C's - which create common language across school sites and initiatives so that people are able to connect the dots for themselves.

Be intentional, even if it feels like you are going slowly. Anaheim has been working on its whole-child approach for 15 years and acknowledges that it still has work to do. Staff have taken the time to include the broader community in decision-making

and planning. Together, they have paused to identify what's working and what's not working in order to steadily improve.

In Anaheim, it's not about which initiative is doing what. It's about the shared pursuit of a whole-child purpose through all of the efforts all together.

Santa Ana Unified School District

This interview was conducted with Jennifer Cisneros, Director of Expanded Learning. The intended focus of this interview was around Expanded Learning.

The Santa Ana Unified School District, in Orange County, California, has 34 elementary schools, 6 intermediate schools, 10 high schools, and 1 charter school serving 41,504 students.

How is Expanded Learning whole-child work?

Apply a whole-child lens to other initiatives.
(See Key Actions for Coherence, p. 36)

In Santa Ana Unified, Jennifer Cisneros recognizes youth development and whole-child practices as essentially the same. The Quality Standards for Expanded Learning in California can easily be cross-walked to the whole-child components of the Guiding Principles for Whole-Child Design – including the same focus on developmental relationships, active and engaged learning, safe and supportive environments, skill building, and youth voice. Expanded Learning programs are measuring themselves against these quality standards every year, actively pursuing greater alignment.

Santa Ana staff have recognized the need to improve the integrated support systems within the Expanded Learning space. To that end, they have brought more social workers, nurses and other student support staff into after-school. Initially, the district didn't include Expanded Learning in its expansion of support systems post-pandemic. Once the district recognized the needs of after-school participants, it was able to use Expanded Learning Opportunity Program funds to make support staff available.

How do you create coherence among initiatives?

Invest in relationships and supportive environments for adults in the system.
(See Key Actions for Coherence, p. 36)

In Cisneros' experience, Expanded Learning has always worked to align itself to the other initiatives. Fortunately, senior leadership in the district has recognized the importance of Expanded Learning and has made sure that Expanded Learning has a seat at the table, including at the Educational Services Cabinet level. At school sites, Expanded Learning staff are part of the Coordination of Services Team (COST) process. Through these relationships, Expanded Learning is able to make sure staff working during the school day understand the value of before-school, after-school and summer programs. Cisneros sees these relationships and this alignment as critical for Expanded Learning to do its job well.

In the same way that Santa Ana has been thoughtful about integrating its Expanded Learning programs, the district is approaching Community Schools as an opportunity to make connections across all the initiatives. This work is aligned around a Graduate Profile that was defined through a community process and reinforced through the Single Plan for Student Achievement (SPSA).

"We've done a lot of collaborative work to define our Graduate Profile, but it's not just that. It's the connection of the Graduate Profile to the SPSA at each site. There's been a lot of alignment around priorities. Instead of the SPSA being a plan that sits on a shelf, there's a through line of priorities and expectations that impacts influential levers within our system, for example, the Site Administrators' evaluation. These connections bring a lot more focus and accountability around the priorities we're trying to accomplish."
- Jennifer Cisneros, Santa Ana Unified School District

The next phase is to rewrite the vision, mission and core values as the North Star for all the initiatives to work toward.

Morongo Unified School District

This interview was conducted with Dr. Claudette Onumah, Principal at the Palm Vista Elementary School; Dr. Daniele Snider, Director of Elementary Curriculum, at the Morongo Unified School District. The intended focus of this interview was around their Multi-Tiered System of Support (CA MTSS).

The Morongo Unified School District is located in the Southern California Mojave Desert of San Bernardino County. It serves 7,580 students in 11 elementary schools, 2 middle schools, 2 high schools and an alternative high school.

How is CA MTSS whole-child work?

Dr. Daniele Snider shared that the district has emphasized building positive relationships and supporting pro-social behaviors, which feeds into a culture of safety and belonging. Since Covid, they have focused on students who are experiencing trauma and helping them build skills for a healthy mindset, while respecting their cultural assets. Now, a few years after Covid, they are working on strengthening Tier 1 strategies with research-based approaches like the Science of Reading, which has been expanded into the after-school program. Morongo is finding success with staff professional learning through summer training and school-day collaboration time that allows staff to use data effectively.

At Palm Vista Elementary School, the principal, Dr. Claudette Onumah, has focused on social-emotional learning over the past three years, given the large number of students who lost caregivers due to the pandemic, are being raised by grandparents or are new to the school. As a rural, military community, there is a lot of turnover in students and staff. Staff work to build relationships and make sure the whole family is connected to the school along with the students. A facility that had been used for in-school suspension has recently been converted to a wellness center which houses CA MTSS and counseling staff. It provides a healing space for students and adults. On the academic side, Dr. Onumah has an array of technology-related programs that she believes give students a leg up, including a STEM lab and robotics club in partnership with the middle school. Many staff have been trained in CA MTSS, and have benefited from the opportunity to consider their own social-emotional well-being.

How do you create coherence among initiatives?

Communicate coherence.
(See Key Actions for Coherence, p. 36)

The district and school are weaving together the initiatives as they identify and deliver on the supports that students and families need.

"We have one mission and many parts that support it. We're providing the skill sets, the routines and the practices to educate our children. It's not PBIS, MTSS, after-school and summer. It's all one thing."
- Dr. Daniele Snider, Morongo Unified School District

Dr. Snider explained that, "We always go back to our mission so that we provide spaces that are coherent, safe and predictable for the students with all the supports they need so that they can be successful and have the life they choose to have."

Rocklin Unified School District

This interview was conducted with Hannah Andersen, Director of Innovation, School Programs, and Accountability. The intended focus was around Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS).

Rocklin Unified School District is located in the Sacramento area and includes twelve elementary schools, two middle schools and two high schools serving 11,407 students.

How is PBIS whole-child work?

Hannah Andersen sees PBIS as addressing most of the Guiding Principles for Whole-Child Design. The integration of SEL into PBIS efforts has helped strengthen the whole-child aspects of PBIS. At Tier 1, Rocklin schools are focusing on supportive environments across the school community by setting clear expectations, norms and routines. *"How am I a Wildcat in the hallway? How am I a Shark in the cafeteria?"* At Tier 2, staff are getting a real sense of where students are struggling and doing intentional skill- and relationship-building to support those students. "We want to ensure that students have the skills they need to remain in a learning environment."

Positive developmental relationships and rich learning environments may not be explicitly called out by PBIS, but they are part of the good instructional practice that Rocklin educators are doing as part of a strong PBIS implementation. PBIS is particularly helpful for staff who are doing large group supervision - yard duty, cafeteria - because it gives them a structure and practices for calling out positive behavior and becoming allies for students.

How do you create coherence among initiatives?

Unify your LCAP around your whole-child vision and the initiatives that support it.
(See Key Actions for Coherence, p. 36)

Rocklin creates coherence through strong district and site-based leadership teams that consistently communicate. The minute staff take the eye off of this collaboration the wheels start to fall off. "Someone sets up a training session without talking to the other person and we're on parallel tracks." Every effort is

made during trainings to draw connections between different initiatives and to reference the district's larger goals.

> ***"Having integration between initiatives requires a lot of strong collaboration amongst district leaders. There are structures for district leadership that ensure that we are communicating with each other frequently and with our leaders and staff on school sites."***
> - Hannah Andersen, Rocklin Unified School District

Coherence and communication are written into the LCAP (Local Control and Accountability Plan). This allows the district to use a compliance tool to build the best system for students. A few times across the year, Rocklin staff intentionally build alignment - making sure to communicate across the district using the same language and messaging. They go back to the essence by focusing on the district goals.

Sacramento City Unified School District

This interview was conducted with Daniel Hernandez, Principal, Ethel Phillips Elementary School. The intended focus of this interview was around Social and Emotional Learning (SEL).

The Sacramento City Unified School District serves 38,045 students. The district has 47 elementary schools, 9 middle schools, 13 high schools and 15 charter schools.

How is SEL whole-child work?

At Ethel Phillips Elementary School, staff focus first on strong instruction and on relationships with students and families.

> ***"It's not just reading, writing and math, but how do you behave, how do you treat other people?"***
> - Daniel Hernandez, Sacramento City Unified School District

As principal, Daniel Hernandez really emphasizes the importance of knowing students and families well and then figuring out how best to support them. He tells the story of a child who was identified as an English Language Learner, who in fact, spoke English perfectly well. No one had spoken to him to discover that he was just quiet. Hernandez finds that having a support center on site has been helpful, giving staff a better sense of who needs what services.

How do you create coherence among initiatives?

Engage interest-holders in talking about each existing and new initiative.
(See Key Actions for Coherence, p. 36)

With 17 years of school leader experience, Hernandez strongly advises gathering information about what is already happening before introducing something new.

"I really try to avoid adding things that sound like more or another thing. If I were to come in and say that we're going to do MTSS, and we're going to do SEL and we're going to do PBIS, it sounds like more and more. Rather than recreate and pretend that we didn't have existing things on campus, we took what we had and made sure that we understood how specifically it was an example of one of the initiatives. The biggest thing is having that common language and that conversation."

- Daniel Hernandez, Sacramento City Unified School District

He found that people were already doing work that was SEL and whole-child practice – for example, building relationships and supporting social skills. He also saw that he could use existing COST Teams as CA MTSS Teams, thereby eliminating the need to add another meeting to teachers' schedules. Originally, he was having outside people come in to train on different initiatives but he discovered that this approach was just creating silos. He now leads the trainings so that he can help staff make connections to their existing approaches.

We started these interviews asking the LEAs to describe their approach to a focused initiative, but in every case, they couldn't talk about that one initiative apart from their work overall. These successful LEAs do not see the initiatives in silos, but instead blend them together as one set of coherent practices in pursuit of their shared vision, purpose or "North Star."

Key Actions for Coherence

The process of gathering this information has yielded some critical discoveries about what works in developing and sustaining a coherent approach. This advice comes largely from successful strategies being implemented in county offices, districts and schools across the state.

Much of what we heard is about clear communication, thoughtful implementation and inclusive collaboration focused on a shared whole-child purpose.

Key Actions for Coherence

What works in developing and sustaining a coherent approach? This advice comes largely from successful strategies being implemented in county offices, districts and schools across the state.

DO: Revisit your school/district vision statement with your interest-holders.
DON'T: Assume everyone knows your vision statement if they haven't engaged with it.

DO: Communicate coherence.
DON'T: Bury your vision statement in a binder.

DO: Engage interest-holders in talking about each existing and new initiative.
DON'T: Impose a new initiative on your district/school community without letting people explore how it fits with their existing work and experience.

DO: Invest in relationships and supportive environments for adults in the system.
DON'T: Expect adults to change their mindset and actions without changes to the expectations and their environment.

DO: Unify your LCAP around your whole-child vision and the initiatives that support it.
DON'T: Write a long list of disconnected strategies and steps that are not clearly aligned to a larger purpose.

DO: Apply a whole-child lens to other initiatives.
DON'T: Ask people to take on new initiatives that aren't explicitly connected to your whole-child purpose.

DO: Pursue Continuous Improvement.
DON'T: Forget to ask people what they think, feel and know.

Center for Whole-Child Education
ASU Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College
Arizona State University

DO: Revisit your school/district vision statement with your interest-holders.

As described above by our field partners, the heart of whole-child work is having a clearly articulated “North Star” that the school community can refer to as it makes decisions, sets priorities and takes action. How explicit is your school or district vision about your whole-child purpose?

Consider bringing together a group of interest-holders to discuss:

- In what ways is our vision consistent with our whole-child purpose?
- What would make this commitment more clear or explicit?
- What steps should we take to update our vision? Who should be involved?
- How do we actively use our vision statement in our broader school community?

DON’T: Assume everyone knows your vision statement if they haven’t engaged with it.

DO: Communicate coherence.

As you think about what you’re communicating, it helps to focus on some basic messages that are repeated and reinforced in every outreach. Here are some basic messages your interest-holders need to hear:

- The district or school has a clear whole-child vision.
- Your district or school community is pursuing practices that lead you towards that vision.
- These practices are embedded in all of the initiatives the district/school is implementing.
- These initiatives complement and strengthen each other, all towards ensuring students are learning, growing and thriving.

DON’T: Bury your vision statement in a binder!

DO: Engage interest-holders in talking about each existing and new initiative.

The purpose of these conversations is for people to move beyond feeling overwhelmed by initiatives, and instead, to see how they work together and complement each other toward your whole-child vision. A whole-child lens can be used as a grounding for discussion with staff, parents and community interest-holders. An important part of these conversations is helping people make connections to their own experiences and work.

DON'T: Impose a new initiative on your district/school community without letting people explore how it fits with their existing work and experience.

DO: Invest in relationships and supportive environments for adults in the system.

This shift will create the conditions for collaboration and creativity, moving people from a mindset of fear and compliance to one of inspiration and innovation. The way adults work with each other and understand their role in the system is at the heart of transformation.

DON'T: Expect adults to change their mindset and actions without changes to the expectations and their environment.

DO: Unify your LCAP around your whole-child vision and the initiatives that support it.

A whole-child lens defines how your initiatives are supporting each other and your whole-child purpose through specific practices. Including language from the Guiding Principles for Whole-Child Design in your LCAP activity descriptions will reinforce your vision and create more cohesion across your plan. This coherence will make the LCAP easier to understand and use as a guiding document and communication tool to your broader community.

DON'T: Write a long list of disconnected strategies and steps that are not clearly aligned to a larger purpose.

DO: Apply the whole-child lens to other initiatives.

The five initiatives that we examined are just examples of initiatives that your school/district may be implementing. A whole-child lens could be applied to any of those other initiatives. Use the Guiding Principles for Whole-Child Design and the specific practices in this tool to define and communicate how other initiatives - for example, Universal Pre-K, Universal Design for Learning, Restorative Practices and many others - are part of your coherent and consistent drive toward your whole-child vision.

DON'T: Ask people to take on new initiatives that aren't explicitly connected to your whole-child purpose.

DO: Pursue Continuous Improvement.

Work with staff and families to understand what's working and what needs to be improved in the initiatives. The most experienced districts and schools that we talked with are humble about their progress, recognizing that mistakes are opportunities to learn and that finding success is an on-going journey. While it takes time, the process of assessing the quality and progress of your work has multiple benefits, including stakeholder engagement and professional learning along with improved services and supports for students and staff.

DON'T: Forget to ask people what they think, feel and know.

Conclusions

Looking through a whole-child lens reveals that whole-child practices are embedded across California's education initiatives. It magnifies the ways in which the initiatives are complementary and mutually reinforcing. In fact, all the initiatives we collaborated with on this project demonstrated supporting almost all of the whole-child elements we looked at, either as primary or supporting practices. There were also a number of whole-child practices that every single initiative supported, including adult learning and decision-making structures, shared values and norms, culturally affirming practices, explicit social, emotional and cognitive skill instruction, and staff collaboration structures.

With this information, educators can see that doing any of these whole-child practices is simultaneously supportive of many or all of the initiatives' goals, and visa versa. They can also know that if they want support in strengthening these practices, they can go to any of the initiatives to look for resources, guidance and tools. In this way, the initiatives are reinforcing each other, not adding "one more thing to the plate." As you read in the field perspectives, this integrated approach is already in place or in process in many districts and schools.

From both initiative leads and practitioners in the field, the message was clear: More important than allegiance to one initiative or the other is recognizing that the initiatives can work together toward a whole-child purpose, and making decisions that leverage them flexibly based on the strengths and needs of a particular school community.

Educators and education leaders can use a whole-child lens to point out shared purpose, vision, and goals, to understand the consistency across initiatives, to make decisions based on existing assets and community needs, and to collaborate on the implementation of a coherent set of supports, all leading toward positive learning conditions for students, families and staff.

Appendix

43 | List of Initiative Partners and Resources

46 | References

Link | Design Principles for Schools Playbook

Link | SoLD Design Principles for Schools Self-Assesment Tool

Link | Center for Whole-Child Education's Toolbox of resources

List of Initiative Partners and Resources

The following organizations and individuals completed an adapted version of the SoLD Design Principles for Schools Self-Assessment Tool on behalf of the initiative that they are involved in managing at a statewide level. This chart also lists the resources they referenced in making their determination of whether a practice was primary, supporting or not addressed by the initiative.

Initiative Partners	Resources Referenced
Community Schools	
Community Schools Learning Exchange Hayin Kimner, *Managing Director* Deanna Niehbur, *Director of Policy* Lara Kain, *Administrator, Community Schools, OCDE*	• Framework for Community Schools - Community Schools Forward • CA Community Schools Framework • Community Schools Playbook - CA Partnership for the Future for Learning
Expanded Learning Opportunities (ELO)	
California Afterschool Network Jeff Davis, *Executive Director*	• Statement of Strategic Direction Toward Whole Child Health and Wellness • Quality Standards for Expanded Learning in California • CAN's Suite of Quality Tools • California's Golden Opportunity • Paving the Way: Developing Pathways from Expanded Learning into Teaching

Initiative Partners	Resources Referenced
Multi-Tiered System of Support (CA MTSS)	
Orange County Department of Education Jami Parsons, Ed.D., *Director of Systemic Leadership and Continuous Improvement, OCDE* Charo Darwin, *Administrator, CA MTSS, OCDE* Rindy DeVoll, *Director, CA MTSS, BCOE*	• CA MTSS Framework • CA MTSS Continuum of Support • CA MTSS website • Fidelity Integrity Assessment v.3.0 • Schoolwide Implementation Tool v.1.0 • LEA Self-Assessment • Tiered Intervention Matrix • Resource Inventory • Data Snapshots • Universal Design for Learning • Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) • CA PBIS • International Institute of Restorative Practices
Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS)	
Placer County Office of Education Luke Anderson, Executive *Director, Prevention Supports and Services* Kirsten Thomas-Acke, *Director, Integrated Support Programs*	• Current Published PBIS Tiered Fidelity Inventory • PBIS Academic Seminar • Unpublished Updated PBIS Tiered Fidelity Inventory (TFI 3.0) • Advancing Education Effectiveness: Interconnecting School Mental Health and School-Wide PBIS, Volume 23 • PBIS Cultural Responsiveness Field Guide v2 • PBIS Blueprint Documents • Teaching Social Emotional Skills in PBIS • A 5-Point Intervention Approach for Enhancing Equity in School Discipline • Enhancing Family-School Collaboration with Diverse Families • PBIS District Systems Fidelity Inventory (DSFI) • PBIS Positive Greetings at the Door • PBIS and Trauma Informed Practices • https://www.pbis.org/topics/students-with-disabilities • California Integrated Supports Project Informational Slide Deck • Aligning and Integrating Family Engagement in Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS): Concepts and Strategies for Families and Schools in Key Contexts

Initiative Partners	Resources Referenced
Social Emotional Learning (SEL)	
Sacramento County Office of Education Mai Xi Lee, *Social-Emotional Director*	• CASEL Framework • CASEL School Guide • CalHOPESEL.org • CDE T-SEL Competencies and Conditions • SEL Guiding Principles • SEL embedded Core documents • BELE Network

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Learning Policy Institute & Turnaround for Children. (2021). *Design principles for schools: Putting the science of learning and development into action.* https://k12.designprinciples.org

Osher, D., Cantor, P., Berg, J., Steyer, L., & Rose, T. (2020) Drivers of human development: How relationships and context shape learning and development. Applied Developmental Science, 24(1), 6-36. https://doi.org/10.1080/10888691.2017.1398650