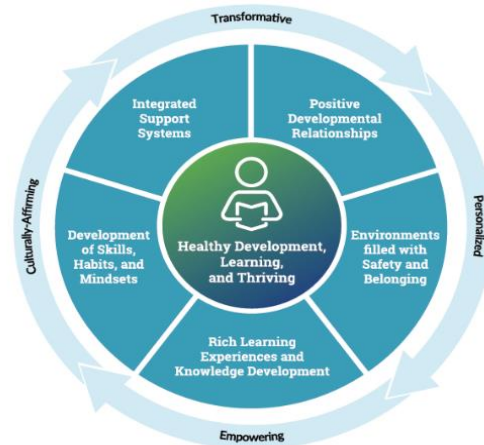


Essential Guiding Principles for Equitable Whole-Child Design

Building from the [science of learning and development](#), each of the five [Essential Guiding Principles for Equitable Whole Child Design](#) is grounded in a substantial body of research from diverse fields and, in many ways, are not controversial and will be familiar to and resonate with educators and practitioners. Taken together, they are the essential ingredients to healthy development, learning and thriving.



While K-12 education has long been considered the main setting accountable for learning, science findings tells us that learning *and development* can happen anywhere there are relationship-rich environments that offer a sense of safety and belonging, challenging content, intentional development of skills and mindsets, and the recognition that each and every young person has their own unique pathway toward thriving.¹ A robust learning ecosystem is comprised of the many learning and development settings (e.g., classrooms, cafeterias, homes, gyms, playgrounds, clubs, maker spaces, workplaces) throughout the range of community places (e.g., schools, non-profit community organizations, faith and civic organizations, libraries, recreation centers, businesses). Moving throughout those spaces and places are diverse groups of children and youth and a wide range of adults representing different perspectives and disciplines. Ecosystem approaches embrace the belief that learning happens everywhere and that each and every adult—from teachers to non-school personnel to community partners to family members—in each and every setting where a young person spends their time is responsible for helping youth thrive.²

The notion that learning happens everywhere broadens the definition of the places, spaces, and people that contribute to thriving and shines a spotlight on the role that community-based settings can and do play in supporting the whole child.

This tool is aimed at helping practitioners working in community-based settings reflect on, and be more intentional about, their practices to support healthy development, learning, and thriving.

¹ Cantor, P., Osher, D., Berg, J., Steyer, L., & Rose, T. (2018). Malleability, plasticity, and individuality: How children learn and develop in context. *Applied Developmental Science*, 23(4), 307–337; Darling-Hammond, L., Flook, L., Cook-Harvey, C., Barron, B. & Osher, D. (2019). Implications for educational practice of the science of learning and development. *Applied Developmental Science*, 24(2), 97-140; Osher, D., Cantor, P., Berg, J., Steyer, L., & Rose, T. (2018). Drivers of human development: How relationships and context shape learning and development. *Applied Developmental Science*, 24(1), 5-36.

² Osher, D., Pittman, K., Young, J., Smith, H., Moroney, D., & Irby, M. (2020). Thriving, robust equity, and transformative learning & development: A more powerful conceptualization of the contributors to youth success. Washington, DC: Forum for Youth Investment.

Design Principles and Practices for Community-based Settings

Instructions: The charts below list the design principles and practices associated with each of the five essentials of equitable whole-child design. Using the columns on the right of each chart, rate each of the below categories from 1 (low) to 5 (high) on how important you feel it is and how well it is currently being practiced in your community-based setting. (A “1” could mean that it is not relevant to your setting.)

| Principles and Practices | How Important? 1 (low) – 5 (high) | How well is it practiced? 1 (low) – 5 (high) |
|--|--------------------------------------|--|
| Positive Developmental Relationships | | |
| Form developmental relationships between adults and young people | | |
| Provide responsive support and caring | | |
| Share leadership control with young people | | |
| Use strategies to help young people discover their strengths, expand their possibilities, and challenge growth | | |
| Cultivate relationships with family members | | |
| See families through a strength-based lens | | |
| Provide opportunities for family engagement | | |
| Foster mutual learning and decision-making | | |
| Foster relationships among young people by providing opportunities to mentor and lead | | |
| Scaffold leadership opportunities over time | | |
| Provide support and explicit leadership training | | |
| Provide structures for young people to pursue a mentor or leader role | | |
| Environments filled with Safety and Belonging | | |
| Cultivate safety and consistency | | |
| Implement consistent routines and rituals that support risk-taking and young people feel physically and emotionally safe. | | |
| Help young people build personal connections and a sense of purpose for themselves, within and beyond the system or setting. | | |
| Use restorative practices to help young people to reflect on any mistake, solve conflicts, and get counseling when needed | | |
| Build Community | | |
| Use positive behavior management practices aimed at fostering a healthy, inclusive community | | |
| Foster strong peer to peer relationships | | |

| Principles and Practices | How Important? 1 (low) – 5 (high) | How well is it practiced? 1 (low) – 5 (high) |
|--|--------------------------------------|--|
| Co-develop program expectations with young people | | |
| Be culturally responsive and inclusive | | |
| Use affirmations that establish the value of every young persons' many identities & abilities and actively counter stereotypes & bias | | |
| Build on the diversity and cultural knowledge of young people and their families to make learning engaging | | |
| Develop young people's knowledge, skills, and agency to critically engage in civic affairs | | |
| Rich Learning Experiences and Knowledge Development | | |
| Use Scaffolding and differentiation techniques to support individual learning styles | | |
| Assess and adjust programming to fit the interests, strengths, and needs of young people | | |
| Provide asset based personalized supports to encourage all young people to persevere and improve | | |
| Manage groupwork to support cooperative learning | | |
| Facilitate an Inquiry-based approaches to learning to help youth be active learners | | |
| Facilitate active learning by encouraging young people to deepen and apply their learning | | |
| Provide regular and thoughtful feedback to support young people's learning | | |
| Create opportunities for young people to reflect and revise | | |
| Adopt a Culturally responsive approach to learning | | |
| Explicitly connect students' diverse experiences and cultural assets with program content | | |
| Promote racial-ethnic identity development, voice, and agency | | |
| Facilitate critical conversations around equity and social and justice to promote agency | | |
| Development of Skills, Mindsets, and Habits | | |
| Integrate SEL in a culturally responsive context | | |
| Foster awareness and understanding of young peoples' emotions and support meta-cognitive thinking processes | | |
| Promote young peoples' self-regulation by actively providing them with strategies that supports them to both express and manage emotions | | |
| Ensure cultural sensitivity and responsiveness | | |
| Develop productive mindsets and habits | | |

| Principles and Practices | How Important? 1 (low) – 5 (high) | How well is it practiced? 1 (low) – 5 (high) |
|---|--------------------------------------|--|
| Nurture young people’s growth mindset by using growth-oriented language and practices | | |
| Provide opportunities for planning and goal setting | | |
| Support interpersonal skills like empathy, collaboration and problem solving | | |
| Incorporate healing-centered practices | | |
| Employ responsive strategies that is based on the principles of safety, trust, collaboration, choice, and empowerment | | |
| Promote physical and mental wellbeing through mindfulness strategies, breathing exercises, and other stress | | |
| Integrated Support Systems | | |
| Connect youth to supplemental learning opportunities | | |
| Partner with schools to provide seamless and aligned supports for youth | | |
| Monitor youth's academic progress and growth | | |
| Add adult capacity to the school day to support learning | | |
| Promote access to other supports and opportunities that foster health and well-being | | |
| Ensure mechanisms and partnerships are in place to connect families and youth to basic needs such as food, health, and mental health in addition to academic supports | | |
| Participate in whole-child comprehensive community partnership models | | |