

Core Practice Continuums Overview

Purpose

Educational practice and research in developmental science converge on a set of core practices that drive toward an equitable, whole-child approach for all students. These core practices are articulated in Turnaround for Children's Whole-Child Design Blueprint. Turnaround's Core Practice Continuums are a set of tools designed to prompt reflection and empower growth across roles in a school by providing rich descriptions of quality and categorically different images of practice across levels.

Audience

The Core Practice Continuums are intended for use by individual educators who engage with students in various ways in a school community, including: **teachers, student support staff, instructional support staff, school leaders and administrators**. See additional considerations for individual and schoolwide use below.

Structure and Function

Each continuum is intentionally framed to show a developmental progression of practice and pathways to improvement. While rubrics are a commonly used assessment tool in education spaces, the table below highlights key distinctions between the functions of rubrics and continuums.

A rubric ...	A continuum ...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Can be used for planning, implementing, reflecting and assessing ○ Serves as a summative measure of quality at a specific point in time ○ Is a linear tool specific to each cycle, used to assess achievement at a certain point in time, based on several specific criteria ○ Is an evaluation/summative tool primarily used to measure an expected outcome ○ Descriptors reflect a range of abilities from poor to proficient ○ Describes levels of achievement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Can be used for planning, implementing, reflecting and assessing ○ Is for self-assessment and reflection ○ Serves as an indicator of how educators can move forward in the practices, examining their existing actions and experiences ○ Has descriptors of quality; often uses categorical differences, rather than changes in frequency across levels ○ Descriptors are accompanied by ideas and pathways to help educators move forward and improve ○ Reflects a developmental view

When reading across each continuum, development of a practice is shown through **Emerging, Developing and Advanced** levels of quality:

- At the **Emerging** level, indicators articulate the implications of practice that is not consistent, not uniform, or not grounded in a shared commitment and understanding across the school. This level often showcases common challenges and pitfalls related to the practice, including those that occur even when adults are trying to make good faith efforts. Descriptors at this level can help educators interrogate bias, align to developmental research and consider the impact that the absence of structures or support can have on the practice.
- At the **Developing** level, indicators may describe how a practice may be inconsistent or partial in the sense that there is evidence of both Emerging and Advanced structures or practices. Often at this level, structures, adult skills, or student experiences are approaching high quality, but equity and inclusion are missing or execution of a practice at the Advanced level is not true for diverse groups of students. This level reflects developing, but not universal, adult buy-in about a particular practice and the framing offers ideas to develop the practice, pointing to how to get from "here to there."
- At the **Advanced** level, indicators paint a picture of what happens when high-quality practice is in place and all students experience that practice. At the Advanced level, there is schoolwide consensus around the practice and the structures that support development of the practice. For many practices, Advanced indicates that the school functions as a learning organization that engages in continuous reflection and growth.

Additional Considerations for Use

As educators engage with a Core Practice continuum in different contexts, consider the following:

- ✓ **Remember that the continuum categories are porous.** This means that elements of your practice may be in different levels of development for different areas. For example, an educator's practice may look "Advanced" for Activating Background Knowledge but still in "Emerging" for Reflecting on Language Learning.
- ✓ **Remember that the continuum is recursive;** it needs to be revisited and reconsidered as you adjust your practice and progress.

Applying the lens of an individual educator:

For several continuums, the Advanced level describes what the practice looks like when it happens schoolwide. An individual teacher may not feel they have a window into how this practice looks for all educators in the building. In this case, consider:

- ✓ Is there shared agreement across the school on what is meant by a specific practice and what it looks like?
- ✓ What opportunities are available for shared ownership and collective growth in the identified area (e.g., peer learning, observation, resource sharing)?
- ✓ What type of coaching or professional development is needed to advance your practice?

Applying the lens of a school leader:

Although the continuum is geared toward individual educator practice and reflection, some continuums explicitly signal the importance of an integrated schoolwide perspective and commitment. Leaders utilizing the continuums should consider the implications of all the layers that go into supporting quality practice across a school. They can do this by applying a lens of leadership in addition to reflecting on their own individual practice. Some ways to do this are:

- ✓ Consider how you, as a leader, embody and explicitly model the skills, mindsets and practices present in the continuums.
- ✓ At the "Advanced" level, look for indicators of the practice happening beyond any one individual's practice, such as: "*happens almost always,*" "*demonstrated by all adults,*" "*is the experience of all students.*" If there are large inconsistencies for a practice, consider whether you are proactively creating the context and conditions for *all* staff to be able to demonstrate that skill or engage in that practice.
- ✓ Consider what **Inclusive Leadership** looks like: Is there shared agreement across the school on what is meant by a specific practice and what it looks like?
- ✓ Consider the role of **Staff Relationships & Collaboration**: Is there a culture of collaborative learning for the staff connected to this practice? Do all staff feel empowered to identify common problems of practice and propose solutions that move the whole school toward improvement?
- ✓ Think about **Capacity Building**: Do you see the development of the skills, practices and mindsets captured in the continuum as an ongoing process and as one of your main leadership responsibilities? Have you worked collaboratively to build a strong, shared commitment to a point of view/expectations/understanding of these practices with staff? What opportunities do you see to provide coaching or professional development around a specific practice area?

Core Practice Continuum: Trust-Building Interactions

Bi-directional and responsive actions and experiences in which individuals experience care and support, share power and challenge growth, all in the context of cultural and identity inquiry and recognition.



Emerging	Developing	Advanced
<p>Quality of Interactions</p> <p>Interactions between adults and students may be unpredictable or inconsistent – students may experience some warm and positive interactions, but also escalating and negative interactions, often related to perceptions of noncompliance or disrespect (<i>e.g., adult yelling, sarcasm, shaming, excessive scolding</i>).</p> <p>Adult interactions with students are often one-directional and directive or transactional in nature (<i>e.g., directions, demands, statements</i>).</p> <p>A lack of schoolwide consensus on the prioritization of relationships results in limited time and opportunities to engage in relationship building, or to reflect on the state of relationships being built.</p>	<p>Adult interactions with most students are consistently characterized as warm, encouraging and authentic. However, there is also a predictable subset of students who frequently experience negative interactions with adults.</p> <p>Attempts are made to improve negative adult-student interactions, with limited success. This may be because the root cause of the poor relationship is not understood, the intervention is based on assimilation to white, patriarchal, or other dominant group norms, and/or student input is limited.</p> <p>Across the school, adults vary in their commitment to developing relationships, especially in times of difficulty and challenge.</p>	<p>All students predictably experience interactions with adults that are marked by interest, inquiry, support, affirmation and empathy. Adults are attuned and responsive to student needs, providing co-regulatory support both proactively and in moments of challenge.</p> <p>There is a reciprocal nature to adult-student interactions. Verbal and nonverbal communication signals attentiveness and regard for student feelings and experiences (<i>e.g., inquiring about and validating student emotions, demonstrating reflective expressions that mirror the speaker</i>). Students almost always demonstrate willingness and eagerness to engage with adults.</p> <p>Schoolwide prioritization of relationship building results in frequent reflection, collaboration and continuous improvement around the quality of adult-student interactions. Adults consider both their own and students' perceptions of relationships, interrogate root causes of challenges, and work toward successfully building and maintaining trust with all students.</p>

Personalized Understandings and Reflections

Adults engage most students in surface-level conversation, such as asking about their weekend or about their progress on an academic task.

Students are expected to focus solely on the academic tasks of school and “check other things at the door” (*e.g., they are prompted to put aside a difficult situation at home and focus on a classroom assignment*).

Broad assumptions about students or the school community may be present, as there are rarely opportunities for adults to identify and confront biases that they may hold about students, families, or the community.

Students have some opportunities to talk about their personal lives and interests during specified blocks of time during the day, particularly in “non-academic” time (*e.g., Class Meeting or snack time*). However, students rarely have opportunities to discuss or express ideas about complex topics, such as their identity, culture, or the impact of current social or political events on their lives.

Adults may create some additional ways to get to know students better (*e.g., through goal setting, a student spotlight, etc.*), but this knowledge is not consistently used to inform future interactions, classroom structures and norms, or instructional content.

Adults get to know all students as whole individuals by actively listening, asking questions, and providing opportunities for students to speak about their interests, experiences and beliefs. This is accomplished in a variety of manners and settings that are integrated throughout the day and allow space for nuanced and meaningful conversations in an emotionally- and identity-safe environment.

Adults recognize the culturally grounded experiences of each student as a foundation on which to build knowledge, and there is evidence of adults actively using this information to inform their interactions, classroom structures and norms and instructional content.

Adults engage in regular reflections to support deeper individualized understandings of each student and actively counter tendencies to make assumptions or generalizations about students, families and communities.

Choice and Voice

Students may be offered minimal or low-stakes choices that involve limited responsibility (*e.g., writing in pencil or pen, or the choice of an independent reading book*).

When choices are offered, they are highly constrained by the teacher.

Student voice is often limited to academic discussion, in settings and activities that are highly controlled by adults. Adult voice is dominant throughout classroom experiences.

Some meaningful choices are offered to students to increase agency and responsibility (*e.g., a choice of how to publish each writing piece, or the topic of a research project*). These choices may be limited by either not continuing to expand over time, or by being so open-ended and complex that students are not able to make a choice successfully. For example, a teacher might ask the class to make a group decision about a project,

Meaningful opportunities for student choice and voice are regularly and seamlessly integrated into classroom routines, structures and practices (*e.g., choice of how to practice a skill or demonstrate mastery, providing input on a classroom policy*). All students are given increasing levels of responsibility and autonomy as they grow, as adults support them through both successes and setbacks. All students receive support with the skills

without sufficient support for communication skills or guidance on an effective decision-making structure.

There are some opportunities for student voice in times of convenience (e.g., *when prompted by the teacher, when a lesson is going well*), but not always in times of student need (e.g., *when a peer conflict arises during a transition*).

and structures needed to make choices individually and in groups.

Student voice is a driving force in the classroom and the school. It is common to see students leading conversations and projects, giving feedback to adults, and co-constructing classroom and school culture in partnership with adults.

Supporting Growth

Adults work to support growth for the class as a whole, but they cater to the "average" student, rather than providing effective individualized supports. Adults may feel unprepared to meet the diverse and varying needs of individual students, and due to limited opportunities for introspection, they may respond differently to students based on biases and assumptions about their identities.

In an attempt to be supportive, adults may either significantly over- or under-pitch and scaffold tasks, limiting student growth. This might look like adults retaining too much control in their teaching and interactions with students, removing the increased challenge, complexity and autonomy in tasks necessary for independent mastery of skills. Alternatively, unrealistic demands, with too little support, result in student frustration, disengagement, or failure to complete given tasks.

Adults provide some tailored experiences for students to help maximize their growth (e.g., *some differentiated materials, utilizing small groups and personalized check-ins*). However, students typically only experience individualized supports after demonstrating an intense and persistent need, and these supports are provided by a specialized teacher (e.g., *a counselor, speech therapist*).

Adult expectations may still be somewhat low, especially regarding struggling students; this results in adults doing a lot of the "heavy lifting" and not always providing adequate challenge.

Adults provide personalized learning experiences for all students, with the right amount of support and challenge that maximizes their individual growth on their own unique pathway (e.g., *all students have a reading bookmark with a personal goal and strategy that is co-created with the teacher*). Adults support growth in a holistic set of student skills (e.g., *cognitive, social, emotional*) and regularly engage in processes to reflect on and counter implicit biases.

Adults consistently have access to capacity-building opportunities and support as they play the role of facilitator, collaborator and/or coach in the classroom. They provide authentic, engaging and increasingly complex tasks, fading supports as students master skills.

References

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