

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 ○ Has descriptors that 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 ○ Has descriptors that 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 "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?

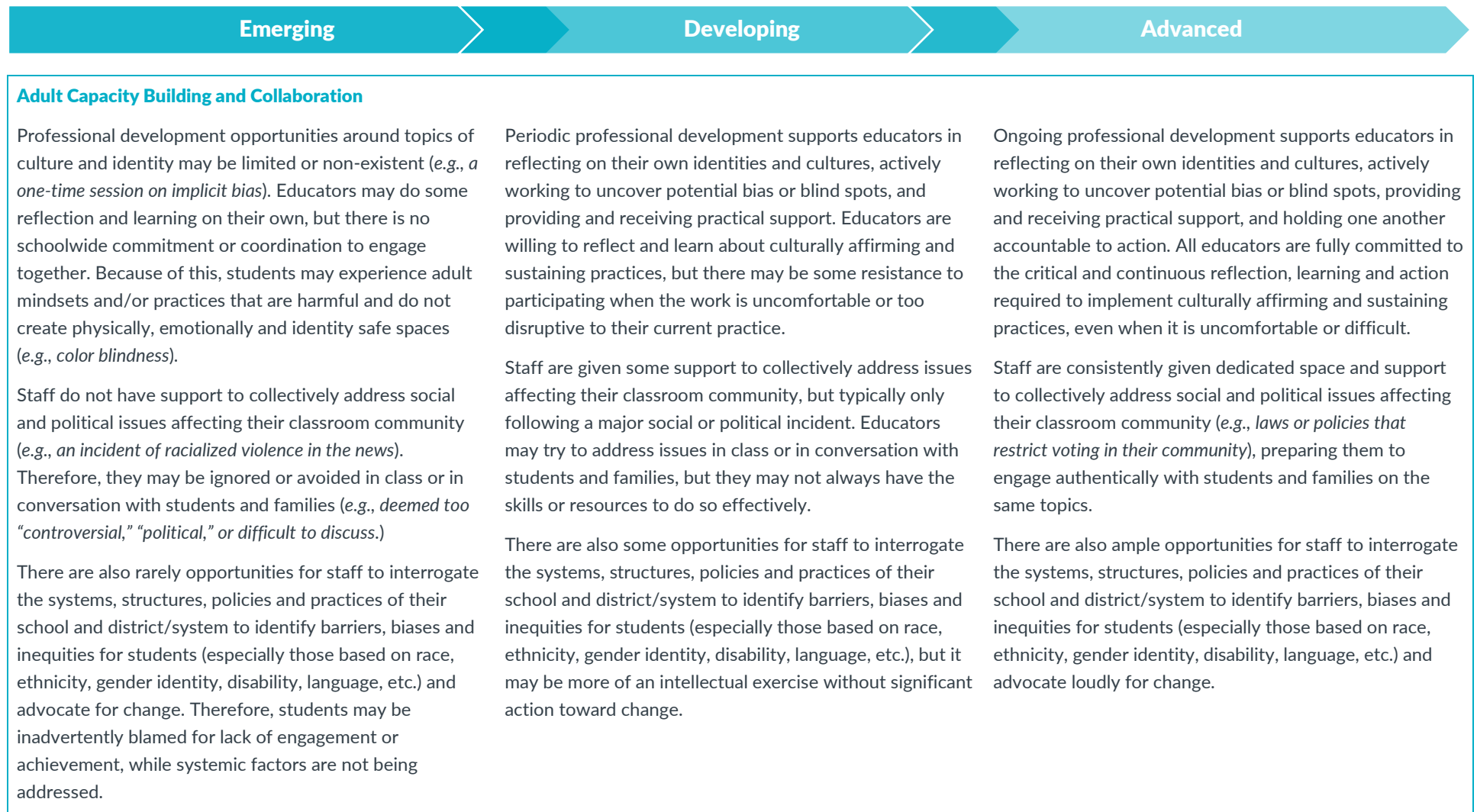
Applying the lens of a school leader:

Although the continuums are 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 include:

- ✓ 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: Culturally Affirming and Sustaining Practices

Practices that challenge inequity by building awareness of, embracing, and promoting the identities and cultures of all school community members, particularly those historically silenced and oppressed.



Curricular Design, Materials and Assessments

Educators use curricular designs, materials and assessments that rarely create opportunities for students to capitalize on and demonstrate their own cultural knowledge and ways of being. They represent limited identities, cultures and experiences, which may or may not include their actual students and school community.

These curricular designs, materials, and assessments might focus primarily on the histories, works and perspectives of dominant groups (e.g., *white supremacy, patriarchy*) as the standard, with few exceptions (e.g., *during Black or Women's History month*). These resources may therefore represent incomplete, inaccurate or stereotype-driven narratives (e.g., *an oversimplified story of Thanksgiving*). Conversely, curricular materials might use surface-level multiculturalism or multilingualism to engage students (e.g., *a lesson that uses hip-hop*), while at the same time reinforcing institutional oppressive power dynamics (e.g., *misogyny, homophobia and racist stereotypes*).

Classrooms as Critical Spaces

Educators maintain top-down power dynamics in the classroom, their primary roles being giving information and directions, evaluating performance, and monitoring behavior. Students' roles are to listen, follow directions, learn basic academic skills and receive knowledge. There are few, if any, opportunities for students to give input or feedback on what or how they learn. They are also expected to respect rules, power structures and authority figures as they are.

Educators sometimes (or for some subjects) create, select, edit and/or supplement curricular designs, materials and assessments to create opportunities for students to capitalize on and demonstrate their own cultural knowledge and ways of being, and to engage with representations of their own and others' identities, cultures and experiences.

These curricular designs, materials and assessments represent the histories, works and perspectives of many cultural groups, but may sometimes oversimplify them. For example, they may only partially illustrate traditional and contemporary aspects of cultures, may depict largely monolingual/monocultural and single-dimensional perspectives, or may tend to highlight certain groups through the lens of their oppressor/the "other" (e.g., *an isolated discussion of Japanese-Americans only during the study of WWII*).

Educators work to empower students in their classrooms where they can, their primary roles being building community and facilitating effective learning experiences. Students' roles are to be curious, critical thinkers and problem-solvers, to gain knowledge and understanding, and to build academic and some SEL skills. There are some opportunities for students to give input into what or how they learn. They are also able to give some feedback on rules or to authority figures, but only when invited.

Educators consistently (and across all subjects) create, select, edit and/or supplement curricular designs, materials and assessments to create ample opportunities for students to capitalize on and demonstrate their own cultural knowledge and ways of being, and to engage with representations of their own and others' identities, cultures and experiences.

These curricular designs, materials and assessments represent the histories, works and perspectives of many cultural groups, while showing how individuals are multidimensional (e.g., *can embody more than one ethnicity or language, have intersecting aspects of identity that affect their experiences*). They depict both traditional and contemporary aspects of culture along with pluralistic and intersectional identities, affirm the positive contributions of diverse cultures and communities, and make sure to avoid reinforcing inaccuracies and stereotypes.

Educators radically empower students in their classrooms, their primary roles being co-creating community and facilitating meaningful and relevant learning experiences. Students' roles are to be curious, critical thinkers and problem-solvers, to construct their own knowledge and understanding, and to build increasingly complex social, emotional, and cognitive skills. There are many opportunities for students to give input or feedback on what or how they learn. They are also invited to analyze and critique rules, power structures and authority figures

Goals for students are focused only on meeting standards and performing well on assessments. Learning may occasionally connect to current and historical social and political issues, but it may be surface-level or may even perpetuate inequity (e.g., *avoiding controversy, oversimplifying progress, promoting a savior mentality*).

Use of Language and Cultural Practices

Educators have very limited understanding of the diversity of language and cultural practices in their school community (e.g., *languages spoken, communication styles including tone and gesture, social norms, forms of self-expression*), which may result in limited communication or miscommunication, exclusion, biases and a lack of trust-building interactions.

Educators only use and validate dominant-group language and cultural practices in their classrooms (e.g., *Standard English, accepted hairstyles and clothing*), framing different ways of speaking and being as “incorrect” instead of important and valid for different purposes and spaces.

Educators may provide some access and support for families and the school community (e.g., *a school newsletter in both Standard English and Spanish*), but efforts may be limited or only include some of the community.

Goals for students may sometimes be restricted by mandates around meeting standards and performing well on assessments, focusing occasionally on preparing students to be agents of change (e.g., *building real-world skills, a positive sense of their own identity, and a social-political consciousness*). Learning is sometimes situated within current and historical social and political issues, providing opportunities for students to begin to examine topics of culture, identity and equity.

Educators have some knowledge of the diversity of language and cultural practices in their school community (e.g., *languages spoken, communication styles including tone and gesture, social norms, forms of self-expression*), which supports more effective communication and builds trust among staff, students and families. There may still be some missed opportunities for collaboration or miscommunication based on linguistic/cultural differences or biases.

Educators create access to the dominant culture (e.g., *Standard English*) in order to create *access to power* for all students, while valuing and validating linguistic/cultural diversity along with students’ flexibility, fluidity and pluralism (e.g., *code switching*).

Educators also provide access and support for families and the school community by providing things like translation services, resources in multiple languages, etc.

in their school and in the local and global community, and to reimagine and innovate around what is possible.

Goals for students go beyond just meeting grade-level standards to prepare students to be agents of change (e.g., *building real-world skills, a positive sense of their own identity, and a social-political consciousness*). Learning is often situated within current and historical social and political issues, providing opportunities for students to critically examine topics of culture, identity and equity.

Educators continuously work to understand the diversity of language and cultural practices in their school community (e.g., *languages spoken, communication styles including tone and gesture, social norms, forms of self-expression*), which fosters constructive communication and builds trust among staff, students and families. Educators always use language that is respectful to groups’/individuals’ identities, such as their preferred pronouns, person-first language, etc.

Educators create access to the dominant culture (e.g., *Standard English*) in order to create *access to power* for all students, while valuing, validating and including diverse linguistic/cultural practices in students’ learning experiences. This not only affirms students’ flexibility, fluidity and pluralism (e.g., *code switching*), but also sustains those practices and avoids forced assimilation.

Educators partner with families and community members to co-create opportunities for authentic collaboration through supports such as translation services, resources in multiple languages, support for families to develop student literacy in multiple languages, etc.

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