

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

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: Intervention and Enrichment Structures

Structures that ensure all students experience universal and tailored supports and expansion, responsive to their unique developmental pathways, that put them on the path to thriving by removing barriers to access and developing essential knowledge, skills and mindsets.



Emerging

Developing

Advanced

### Universal, Enriching Experiences

The school environment is not intentionally designed to be enriching or to build off students' interests and passions. Instead, experiences and relationships might be primarily oriented toward remediating deficits and/or building a narrowly defined set of skills and knowledge. Programming is primarily focused on academics, and it is rare to see evidence of the prioritization of holistic developmental opportunities that support social, emotional, identity development, and physical and mental health outcomes (e.g., *school programming might solely consist of core academic subjects and remediation as measured by standardized test performance*). The small number of enrichment activities that do exist may not be well received by students because they are poorly matched to students' cultures, interests, contexts and needs.

Adults are overwhelmed by the needs their students demonstrate. They may refer most students for specialized supports, rather than reflecting on and adjusting the universal experience of students within the school community. Inequitable patterns likely persist and may manifest themselves in a variety of ways, such as systems of rewards and punishment that exclude students from accessing enrichment.

The school environment may be designed to provide enrichment as a bonus or add-on, providing opportunities for students to explore interests and passions in some settings but not consistently. Programming may demonstrate a commitment to skills beyond just academics, but this approach may be set aside for large periods of the year (e.g., *in the months leading up to standardized testing*) or for some students (e.g., *students who require "remedial" supports may not have access to enrichment coursework*). Alternatively, enrichment might occur in silos, such as during STEAM blocks or clubs, but other settings might not be organized to leverage students' passions and interests. Enriching experiences might prioritize the culture in power within the school, rather than the cultures, interests, contexts and needs of students (e.g., *a heavy focus on exposure to opportunities outside of students' communities and exclusion of community-based learning*).

At times, adults recognize that when many students demonstrate an intensive need, it signals that changes to universal experiences are required. However, these changes might be constrained and technical. Some inequitable patterns may be addressed, while others persist (e.g., *there may be a focus on moving away from*

The school environment is designed to be enriching, providing diverse and rich opportunities for students to explore interests and passions to build holistic skills, mindsets and knowledge across settings. Programming demonstrates the prioritization of academic, social, emotional and identity development, recognizes the importance of physical and mental well-being, and is responsive to students' ever-evolving cultures, interests, contexts and needs (e.g., *field and community-based learning, guest speakers and resident experts, student affinity groups, project-based learning, relational structures such as mentorship and class meeting, passion- and interest-based work, small-group and differentiated instruction, team building, expanded learning opportunities*).

Adults recognize that when many students require intensive, personalized supports in an area, it signals changes are required to the universal experiences of students within the school community. This includes proactively addressing the impacts of institutionalized privilege and oppression on student experience and adult decisions, such as what resources are leveraged, ensuring that students are not excluded from enriching

exclude students from accessing enrichment opportunities, stigmatizing and deficit-based tracking systems that force students into entirely remedial courses with no opportunities to explore interests and passions, and increased access to enriching opportunities for those students who already had a lot of access to enrichment.

### Asset-Driven, Collaborative Approach

Intervention and enrichment structures may take a deficit-based approach to collaboration, excluding or blaming students, caregivers, families or staff who work directly with students, and/or shutting them out of processes for planning, implementing and evaluating supports, instead making decisions about students in isolation (e.g., caregivers may be perceived as lacking competence or concern about students' functioning in school and are not leveraged accordingly; staff might be blamed rather than consulted and supported when students struggle; student voice may be dismissed and/or problematized). Attempts at intervention and enrichment may compete for resources and undermine one another.

Roles and responsibilities for supporting students are siloed and rigid, or unclear. They are determined based on titles and assumptions. For example, teachers may be seen as purely responsible for academics. There may be a divisive culture with confusion about work across roles with minimal knowledge exchange (e.g., teachers may be frustrated with student support staff because their work is not transferring; student support staff might be unsure about what is happening in classrooms). Trust is likely limited, and there may be

*disproportionate punitive disciplinary interventions, without recognizing the importance of also addressing unequal access to enriching experiences for students).* There may be some efforts to make sure that enrichment opportunities are accessible to institutionally underserved students, but these experiences are still not universally accessible or may not be structured to work for all students.

Intervention and enrichment structures facilitate connection and collaboration among many community members, but some may not be valued as fully. Collaboration may occur during some, but not all, phases of planning, implementation and evaluation of these systems (e.g., school staff and leaders might make most decisions and then look to families, caregivers and community members for perfunctory feedback). School and community members may share resources according to tradition, favoring the status quo rather than revisiting how to use resources to most equitably provide enriching supports and experiences to students.

Roles and responsibilities for supporting students may be clear but may also unduly burden certain adults as holding more responsibility for students' development and skill building (e.g., teachers and staff from institutionally underserved communities may be disproportionately responsible for addressing inequities and serving students from their communities). Trust may occur in some groups and spaces but is not consistent throughout the school community.

experiences due to their behavior or academic performance, intentionally making sure that enrichment opportunities are accessible to institutionally underserved students through inclusive communication and removal of barriers to access (e.g., multilingual communication with families and caregivers about opportunities, community rather than individual funding of things like field trips).

Intervention and enrichment structures facilitate connection and collaboration driven by strengths, bringing together community members in service of students (e.g., school staff, students, caregivers, and families, community-based organizations, support providers). Planning, implementation, and evaluation of these structures include empowering collaboration between various stakeholders (e.g., caregivers are interviewed as part of the tiered support process; students are invited to participate in determining their services in developmentally appropriate ways). School and community members collaborate to make decisions about using resources such as space, time, physical resources and money in flexible and innovative ways.

Roles and responsibilities for supporting students are clear yet flexible. They are determined based on strengths and expertise, as well as student needs, not solely based on titles or assumptions about roles, and they distribute responsibility and ownership. Adults collaborate to share expertise about how students learn, including by sharing specialized knowledge about expected developmental variation across student groups (e.g., culturally and linguistically diverse learners, learners with disabilities, learners with specific

pervasive negative mindsets about students and families.

There are minimal partnerships with community providers. If things like after-school enrichment are available, they may simply use the school space and have only logistical interactions with school leadership and staff. School staff make little or no effort to understand or connect to these experiences.

Adults may fail to recognize that when they focus on student deficits and have negative beliefs and stereotypes, it harms how they treat students and the opportunities that they provide. Notably, there is likely a focus on gaps and deficits, creating a culture of blame and frustration. Structures likely exacerbate these beliefs (*e.g., tiered supports processes might focus primarily on describing student deficits, rather than being structured around examining adult practice*).

### Personalized Webs of Support

There may be processes in place for some students to receive additional supports (*e.g., only students who have failed a screener or standardized test; students who have been labeled as behaviorally challenging*). These processes may be dehumanizing and/or may address one part of a student's development (*e.g., behavior, math skills*) but have an overall negative impact by sidelining other facets of development such as sense of belonging or emotional and identity safety (*e.g.,*

Community partners are engaged to provide some services to students such as mental health supports, medical care, expanded learning and out-of-school activities. There are instances of bi-directional collaboration between school staff and community providers, but also missed opportunities to share knowledge about students and connect students with in-school and out-of-school experiences.

Adults may take some time to reflect on their mindsets and beliefs about students and acknowledge that this plays an important role in how they treat them. However, this work might be siloed, and it may still be common to hear adults have casual conversations that focus on student deficits. Structures may have formal processes in place to reduce bias (*e.g., discussion protocols, structured questioning, the inclusion of multiple voices*) but may also engage in practices that contribute to biases.

There are some processes in place for personalized intervention and enrichment for most students. These processes are designed to ensure students who have been identified as requiring additional supports get what they need to learn and grow and take multiple parts of students' experiences into account, such as their social, emotional and academic development and well-being (*e.g., targeted academic supports, access to expanded learning, free meal programs*). A small number of staff and/or community members might volunteer

*health/mental health needs*). Trust is intentionally built through inclusive partnership and shared ownership.

Community partnerships are sought out and leveraged to provide comprehensive, culturally affirming, convenient services such as mental health supports, medical care, expanded learning and out-of-school activities. These partnerships are bi-directional – school staff leverage the insights of community partners about students and their context, and connect to the experiences that these partnerships provide outside of school, while also sharing with community partners their own expertise about students.

Adults recognize that their mindsets and beliefs about students and communities influence how they treat them and what opportunities they provide. They intentionally curate an asset orientation and engage in structured approaches to unpacking biases and shifting approaches accordingly (*e.g., referral processes for tiered supports include structured questioning to reduce biases; there are regular opportunities to audit the accessibility of extended learning opportunities*).

In addition to universal, enriching experiences and relationships, there are comprehensive processes for personalized intervention and enrichment for each individual student. These processes are humanizing, holistic, and designed to ensure each student gets what they need to learn and be well while experiencing connection, belonging and emotional safety (*e.g., access to weekend meals; expanded learning opportunities such as after-school and summer activities; targeted academic supports in the context of trust-filled relationships; school-*

*shaming disciplinary interventions, stigmatizing academic supports).*

Within these structures, when students demonstrate that they need supports, adults may see vulnerabilities as deficits rather than a predictable part of development. Strengths and students' contexts may be ignored completely. Data is likely used in ways that reinforce a focus on students without helping adults reflect on their environments, relationships and experiences with students (*e.g., end-of-year standardized test scores used to counsel students out*).

Practices identified to support individual students are implemented inconsistently. Reflection likely focuses primarily on why things have not happened or have not worked. When seeking to improve practice, information may be siloed, and processes may focus on moving students around rather than building a shared understanding about how to support them (*e.g., referrals for testing to remove students from general education*). There are minimal structures in place to ensure that information is documented, updated and shared. Because of this, follow-through might be a challenge – students may fall through the cracks even though all involved adults feel as if they have done their part.

their time to connect students to these experiences, and responsibility might not be shared equitably.

Within these structures, when students struggle, adults may reflect on their role but may also default to blaming students rather than acknowledging systemic barriers. Strengths may be leveraged in limited ways. Data might support reflection on context and/or adult practice, but it primarily measures students' ability to change.

Practices identified to support individual students are implemented consistently, and some ongoing reflection occurs to improve students' experiences and growth. When seeking to improve practice, there may be a small number of adults who hold most of the expertise on what might be effective and/or what students need. There are likely some structures ensuring that information is documented, updated and shared to ensure follow-through and adjustment, and adults reflect on effectiveness but might not always have enough information to make sure students are getting what they need.

*based programming aligned with students identities and needs; a school crisis plan for providing universal and targeted supports during a collective or individual traumatic experience).*

Within these structures, when students struggle, adults examine students' environments, relationships and experiences (both in and out of school) to address or remove barriers to growth, learning and well-being, both in and out of school. Students' strengths are identified and leveraged throughout these processes. Data is used to support reflection on context and adult practice, rather than to make quick fixes that place the onus on students to change.

Practices identified to support individual students are implemented consistently, with fidelity, and include support for staff along with regular reflection on how practices are impacting students' growth and experience. To improve practices, information is shared regularly about unique developmental pathways (*e.g., understanding the impact of trauma and adversity on learning and development; understanding how specific learning disabilities impact students' academic performance and needs*) as well as specialized knowledge about each student (*e.g., family or caregiver perspectives on students' needs, strengths and vulnerabilities; staff reflections on what has, and hasn't, worked well for students; insight from community partners is leveraged*). There are structures to ensure information is documented, updated and shared regularly to ensure effectiveness and follow-through, as context may vary over time.

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