

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?

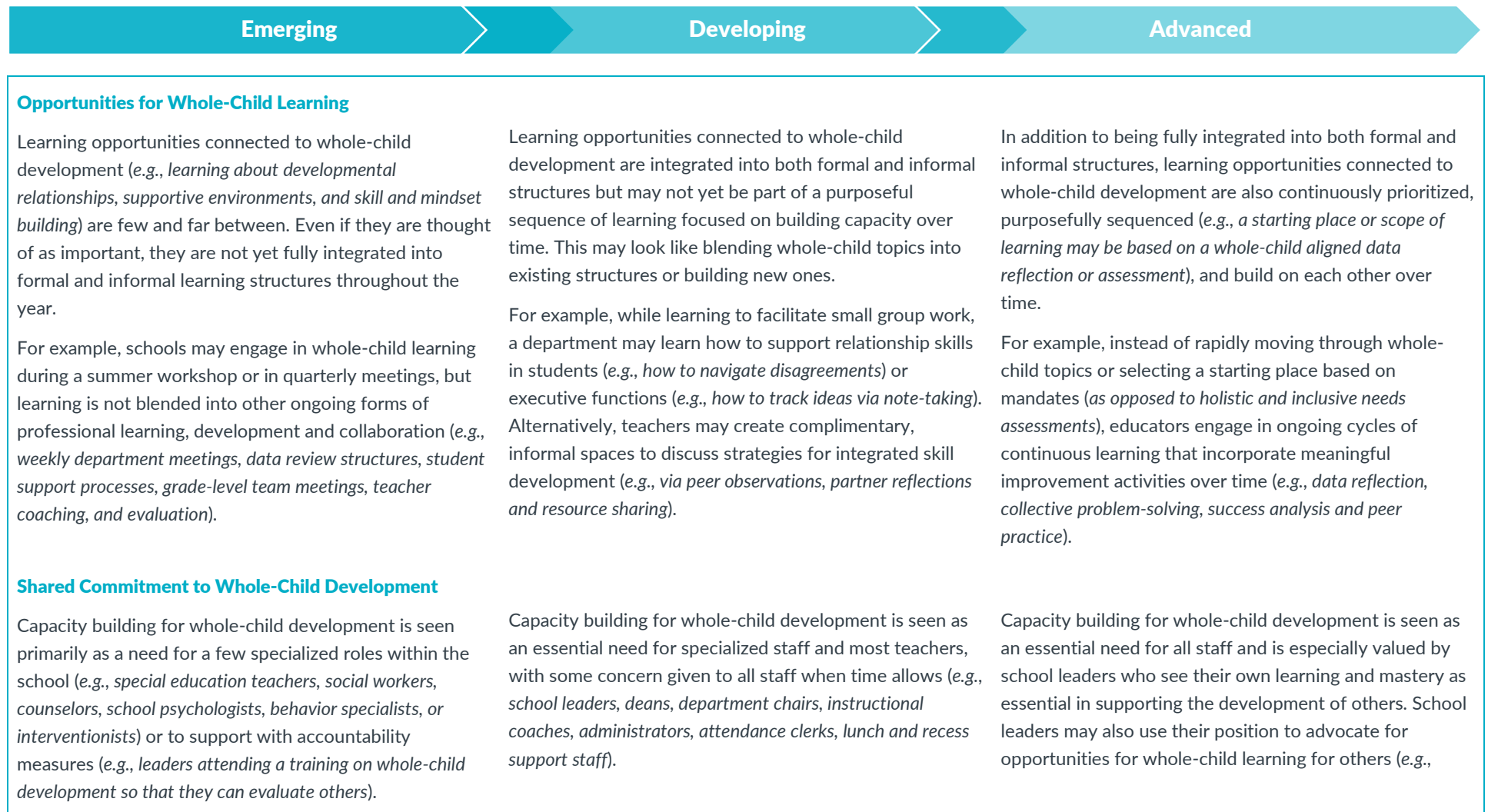
Applying the lens of a school leader:

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: Capacity Building for Whole-Child Development

Structures and processes that go beyond the adoption of programs or best practices and instead support continuous improvement, ongoing learning, and active skill building for whole-child development.



This means resources are not consistently allocated, and time and space for whole-child learning is often seen as competing with other priorities (e.g., *resources, time and space for teachers to collaborate on lesson planning and instruction are perceived as competing with resources, time and space for relationship building and skill and mindset building*).

Authentic Skill Building for Adults

Learning opportunities connected to whole-child development are mostly centered on the adoption or implementation of prescriptive programs or best practices. In such professional development opportunities, sharing technical strategies or quick fixes may take the place of ongoing, active and authentic capacity-building efforts (e.g., *providing a list of trauma-informed best practices for teachers to start implementing without ongoing support, further analysis and connected skill building, or using the curriculum from a program without adapting it to the unique context of the school or modeling the skills required to do the program well over time*).

Active Engagement in Capacity-Building Efforts

Capacity-building efforts connected to whole-child development are planned and facilitated by a small group of people (e.g., *a primary leadership team determines the topics, sequence and format of whole-child learning opportunities in isolation and then shares the plan with teachers who will experience the predetermined sequence of*

This means resources for whole-child learning and development are inconsistently allocated (e.g., *funds are made available for some people to attend training, or budget may be provided for a time-bound whole-child initiative one year but not the next*), or time and space are conditionally provided (e.g., *whole-child learning initiatives might be abandoned or deprioritized to focus on something perceived as more important, such as learning loss or discipline and behavior management*).

Learning opportunities connected to whole-child development are sometimes centered on the implementation of a program or adoption of a set of best practices, but at other times the content is contextualized for the unique school setting (e.g., *after reading about a strategy or program, teachers are given the space to reflect on the transferrable learning for their own classrooms, as opposed to being asked to take a one-size-fits-all approach*) or opportunities for practice are provided (e.g., *beyond sharing a list of strategies, leaders may model a strategy and provide teachers with a chance to practice in scenarios that are unique to their context and experiences*).

Capacity-building efforts connected to whole-child development are planned and facilitated in increasingly collaborative ways (e.g., *learning may start out being planned by one team, but as others begin to engage and become more involved, ownership is shared across several departments, teams or individual staff members*).

insisting more holistic topics and perspectives be integrated into district-level professional learning).

This means leaders allocate and advocate for the resources, time and space needed to consistently prioritize whole-child learning and development for all (e.g., *resisting pressure to focus on academics at the expense of integrating meaningful whole-child learning for staff*) and collaborate with others to ensure continued, shared commitment (e.g., *offering to collaborate with another school or sharing learning and problem-solving*).

Learning opportunities connected to whole-child development consistently go beyond the implementation of a program or adoption of a set of best practices and extend into specific feedback and support opportunities throughout the year (e.g., *after engaging in models and authentic practice in an all-staff session, individualized learning and support continues via ongoing live coaching, collaborative problem-solving, real-time practice, and feedback loops*). As a result, all adults are actively and continually supported to build their knowledge and skills connected to whole-child development in their unique contexts.

In addition, capacity-building efforts connected to whole-child development allow for meaningful collaboration with others and opportunities for self-direction (e.g., *not all whole-child learning topics are dictated by the same scope and sequence, staff have some shared goals but also some autonomous goals, and there is flexibility in terms of how and*

learning without any proactive input or role in shaping the experience).

As a result, there is uneven engagement and investment in whole-child capacity-building efforts among staff and stakeholders. Some are more passively receiving the learning, while others are leading it or are seen as the experts doing the work on behalf of others (e.g., advisors are made responsible for relationships with students, or counselors are positioned to be the only experts in student intervention and enrichment). When there is staff engagement, it is often performative or driven by compliance.

Mindsets About Adult Capacity Building

Leaders may struggle to create the conditions for staff to hold a growth mindset (e.g., about self and others) in terms of continuously improving systems, structures and practices connected to whole-child development. Leaders may become impatient when growth or progress toward whole-child aligned goals is jagged (e.g., may show signs of anger, frustration or disengagement when change takes longer than expected).

As a result, some staff may begin to abandon initiatives, resist new approaches, refuse to adjust approaches, blame others for failure, or resort to old patterns, behaviors and mindsets as a coping mechanism (e.g., a principal may become quick to blame staff for not being on board with an initiative when it does not yield immediate results or is challenging to implement).

As a result, capacity-building efforts connected to whole-child development may start off as more top-down experiences, or some individuals may be seen as starting off with the expertise, but as time goes on, more people are engaged, invested and involved in planning, facilitating and following up on capacity-building efforts (e.g., an instructional coach may begin by modeling how to integrate skill and mindset development into a lesson, but then later, teachers who are innovating might model their own examples from which others can learn). This begins to empower and actively engage more staff in their own learning and development.

Leaders sometimes facilitate a growth mindset in staff in terms of continuously improving systems, structures and practices connected to whole-child development, but at other times may struggle. For example, a leader may sometimes value mistakes and failure as expected learning tools, but at other times may become overly evaluative and begin rewarding mastery as opposed to celebrating growth (e.g., leaders may not yet have aligned their performance management practices, such as coaching and evaluation, to reflect their commitment to a whole-child purpose).

As a result, some staff may feel motivated to work through dilemmas, try multiple approaches, learn something new, adjust practice, and resist old patterns, while others become demotivated, targets of blame, or disheartened by persistent challenges.

when staff approach their reflection, learning and skill building).

As a result, capacity-building efforts connected to whole-child development are distributive and personalized, and do not rely on top-down mandates that must be implemented in the same way, at the same time, by everyone. Instead, adults are actively engaged in the capacity-building efforts for self and others (e.g., via modeling, neutral time practice, peer-to-peer observations, and collaborative problem-solving). This empowers all staff to learn and develop in ways that complement overarching, holistic school goals but that are also personalized for their own unique context.

Leaders successfully and consistently facilitate a growth mindset in terms of continuously improving systems, structures and practices connected to whole-child development. Leaders remain patient and dedicated when growth and progress are jagged. They understand capacity building as a process, believe skills are malleable, and believe that improvement happens over time (e.g., leaders may support staff in navigating external pressures around data that does not reflect a commitment to a whole-child purpose).

As a result, staff feel empowered to investigate root causes in dilemmas and challenges, including examining historical and systemic reasons for the challenges. Staff members embrace learning by doing, and all staff, including leaders themselves, are challenged to grow, take risks and try new things that may lead to improved outcomes for students.