

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: Staff Relationships and Collaboration

Practices that foster a sense of belonging, trust, safety and well-being among staff so that they can effectively collaborate and thrive as they work toward achieving comprehensive, holistic student outcomes.

Emerging

Developing

Advanced

Cultivating Staff Relationships

Strong staff relationships may organically form (e.g., two grade-level teachers who work closely together may take the time to learn about each other and provide supports for each other, or one department may consistently celebrate the accomplishments of teammates), but there are not explicit, schoolwide efforts to cultivate meaningful relationships among all staff members.

As a result, there may be pockets of meaningful relationships among staff members, but there may also be some staff isolated without support networks, cliques, or the cultivation of relationships only in groups where they naturally happen (e.g., among school leaders, between co-teachers, with others in the same subject area, with other new staff, or with identity-alike staff).

Strong staff relationships organically form and there are some explicit, schoolwide efforts to cultivate meaningful relationships (e.g., there may be a process for welcoming new staff into the school environment, such as staff mentors and school tours), but those efforts can become deprioritized (e.g., because of perceived time constraints, competing initiatives, lack of interests, overly booked schedules, and lack of adult spaces in the building).

As a result, there may be times in the school year when staff are able to connect and get to know and support one another, and other times when they are working in isolation, disconnected from support networks, or actively discouraged from spending time on relationships for fear of loss of productivity.

Strong staff relationships organically form and explicit, schoolwide efforts to cultivate meaningful relationships are consistently prioritized regardless of pressures to do otherwise (e.g., there are normed routines for seeking support among team members, time is consistently built into agendas for relationship building, spaces are set aside for the purpose of staff connecting with one another, and staff celebrate each other).

As a result, staff experience consistent connection with people on their immediate teams, with those in similar roles, and with others across the school. All staff members report they have ample time to learn about the unique expertise and experience context and identities of others and can easily reach out to others for support in their professional goals via formal or informal structures.

Supporting Staff Trust and Belonging

Clear, co-created norms, policies and procedures that support positive staff interactions may not be established, modeled or consistently followed by staff in the school community (e.g., how to resolve conflicts, engage in critical conversations, request support, proactively negotiate deadlines, share responsibilities, share resources, or make apologies).

Some clear norms, policies and procedures that support positive staff interactions are co-created (e.g., teachers decide how they want to collaborate on lesson plans, or staff may agree on what the communication norms should be when emailing or texting for support), but others are created without the involvement or input of the larger community.

Clear norms, policies and procedures that support positive staff interactions are well established, routinely co-created, and consistently reviewed to ensure they align with the goals and needs of the school community. For example, there may be existing norms, policies and procedures that were co-created at one point, but they

Alternatively, norms, policies and procedures may be developed in exclusionary ways and may conflict with culturally affirming and sustaining practices (e.g., *staff dress codes ban cultural attire or reinforce one set of cultural norms over another*). As a result, staff do not experience a consistent sense of trust and belonging (e.g., *conflicts among staff members may happen frequently with little resolution, individuals may withdraw themselves from the larger school community, staff may not believe what others tell them, or they prefer not to collaborate*).

Supporting Staff Well-Being

Staff are not supported to prioritize their collective, holistic health and well-being (e.g., *mental health, life satisfaction, and social, emotional and cognitive well-being*) as they work toward school goals.

Norms, policies and procedures often impede self-care and personal well-being (e.g., *pressure to work when sick, frequent requests to stay late, unreasonable workloads, communication norms requiring evening and weekend responses, restrictive leave policies, and recognition systems that reward and reinforce unhealthy work habits*). Or, efforts to support well-being may be reactive and perfunctory (e.g., *creating a temporary wellness challenge after staff report feeling stressed*).

As a result, the school may experience low reports of job satisfaction, high staff absentee rates, and low staff retention rates.

Facilitating Shared Efficacy via Staff Collaboration

Staff have inconsistent or ill-defined structures and expectations in place for collaboration, resulting in individualistic approaches to work (e.g., *lesson planning in*

Alternatively, individuals may be held accountable to the norms, policies and procedures for interaction in inequitable ways (e.g., *some staff may be addressed by leadership when they have not met an expectation, whereas others might not*). As a result, there may be patterns in terms of which staff do or do not experience a sense of trust and belonging (e.g., *staff of color may report feeling less of a sense of belonging, or staff who are not part of the leadership team may feel less trust*).

Conditions in the school sometimes support the collective, holistic health and well-being of staff, but other times, school goals, wants and needs get in the way of prioritizing well-being.

Norms, policies and procedures sometimes facilitate self-care and personal well-being (e.g., *adjusting schedules to support working parents in their own childcare, providing access to mindfulness or meditation opportunities, offering access to mental health providers, or scheduling adequate breaks during the workday*). However, those practices may be abandoned due to a sense of urgency, lack of progress on prioritized schoolwide goals, or budget concerns. Or, the well-being of some staff is prioritized over the wellness of others.

As a result, some staff report their well-being is only supported when it is convenient.

Some formal and informal structures and expectations are in place to encourage active collaboration among adults, resulting in some staff working together on shared goals,

need to be revisited to be more inclusive of new staff members.

Staff report high levels of trust in other staff members and a strong sense of belonging in their school community. Staff believe the norms, policies and procedures are welcoming, reflect their identities, are supportive of collective action, and are enacted equitably across all staff members. When norms are broken or conflicts arise, they are addressed quickly and efficiently through existing protocols to repair relationships and restore trust.

Conditions in the school consistently support the collective, holistic health and well-being of staff. Staff understand the relationship between well-being and performance and do not view supporting well-being as conflicting with achieving school goals. Staff report that others care about them and are actively working to buffer the occupational stress educators often experience.

As a result, the school experiences high levels of job satisfaction and staff retention. Staff of all identities report that their school supports them in their unique holistic wellness goals, not those defined by dominant cultural norms (e.g., *the school environment is supportive of wellness as it is defined by each individual staff member regardless of race, culture, gender, health or religion*).

Staff work together to facilitate a rich culture of collaboration, resulting in an increased sense of self-efficacy among individuals and collective efficacy among

isolation, a lack of communication around student interventions, resistance to sharing work or ideas, and disinterest in learning from one another). When collaboration does exist, it is part of a forced accountability setting (e.g., collaborating only during meetings where you are required to collaborate).

With a lack of rich collaboration opportunities, staff may inconsistently implement new strategies connected to school goals or routinely switch back to familiar and comfortable strategies.

but not all staff experiencing effective collaboration (e.g., staff may feel comfortable collaborating with individuals on their formal teams, but uncomfortable collaborating across teams).

Staff report they sometimes feel they can reach out to others for support, resources, learning or collaborative problem-solving. However, at other times, individuals may be unresponsive, too busy or not receptive to feedback.

all staff members. All staff can easily and comfortably seek support and engage in collaboration in both formal and informal structures.

Staff report they are confident in their ability to collectively accomplish school goals (e.g., collectively solve problems, take risks, learn new things, implement new practices, and overcome challenges).