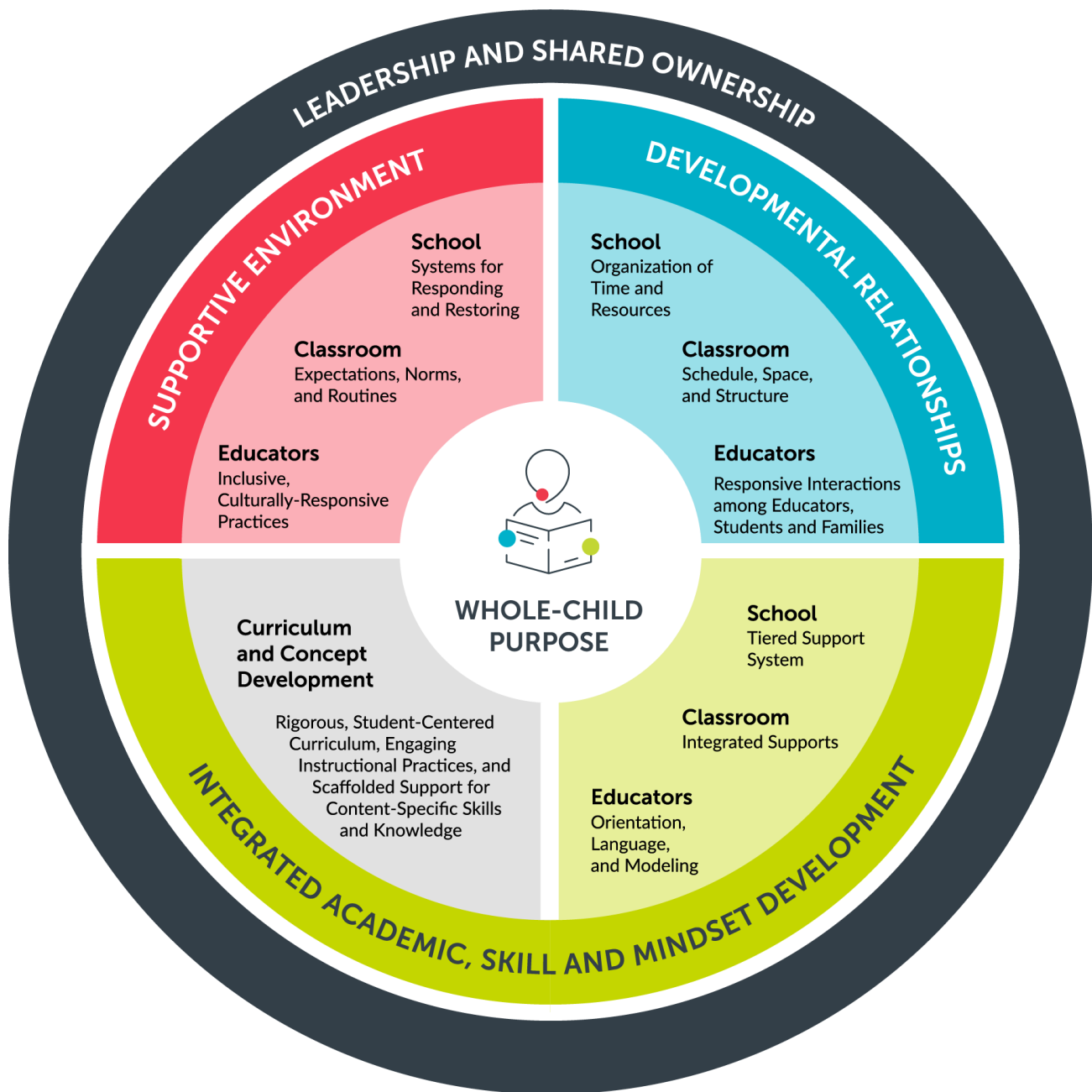


# VISION FOR SCHOOL AND STUDENT SUCCESS

## A Framework for Transformational Change

Knowledge from educational practice and research together clearly points towards a whole-child purpose as the driving force of school transformation, which is actualized through a set of systems, structures and practices that promote a supportive environment, developmental relationships and integrated academic, skill and mindset development for all students. This type of transformational school change critically relies on strong leadership and shared ownership and responsibility of all school community members.



## Driving towards an equitable, whole-child approach for all students – especially those who have experienced significant adversity.

Most schools in the United States have not been designed for equity – for developing individual, whole children, given their unique strengths and needs, in preparation to live the lives they choose. This problem affects all children, and children who have experienced significant adversity face more and greater challenges.

In order to educate the whole child, schools must recognize that all children arrive at school with a “backpack” full of experiences, including assets such as culture and community, and challenges such as adversity and trauma. It is the critical job of schools to deeply understand and support each individual student accordingly. However, current school and classroom organization, combined with pervasive accountability pressure, falsely separates “academic” and “social emotional” initiatives and dictates spending comparatively less time on building strong relationships and supportive environments. This results in students moving through an educational system that misses the critical opportunity to create a context that nurtures the cognitive, motivational, social, emotional, and behavioral development of *all* learners. Due to barriers in other youth and family-serving systems, historically under-served students may also have less access to resources outside of school, further increasing the opportunity gap, and highlighting the importance of the role of school.

At Turnaround for Children, we have leveraged our 18 years of experience and partnership with students, teachers, and schools alongside our deep knowledge of brain development, developmental science, and cognitive science to understand both this challenge and the opportunity for schools, and to support them in their transformation towards an equitable, whole-child approach. Together with our partners, we seek to answer the question: *What does it look like when a school is designed using the science of learning and development to catalyze healthy development and academic growth and mastery?*

## Whole-Child Purpose

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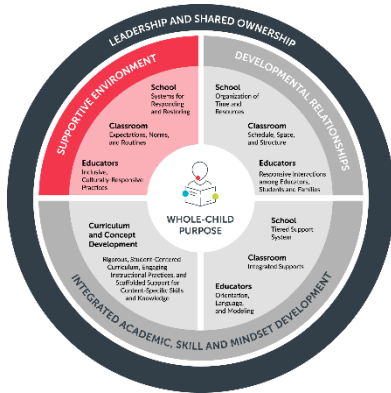
### Start with shared purpose and commitment.



Effective change towards an equitable, whole-child approach relies on a vision that clearly communicates the school’s purpose, beliefs and values about what student outcomes it is organized to achieve. Grounded in the science of learning and development, it sets the stage for school design and focus on student interests and needs by providing the roadmap for goals, objectives and improvement. This purpose should *specifically* describe the type of school context and outcomes we aim to create for students, in order to ensure focus and drive decision-making and prioritization of time, resources, commitments, and energies consistent with school values.

## Supportive Environment

### Create a context full of safety and belonging.



#### TOOL CONNECTION

Educational Practice Toolkit 4.2:  
*Plan and Align T1 Schoolwide Behavioral Systems*

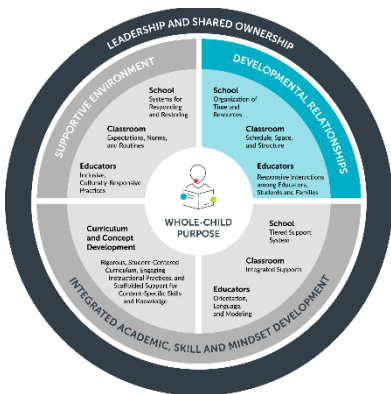
Creating the conditions for healthy development and academic growth and mastery means first designing an environment where students feel *safe* – physically safe, emotionally safe, identity safe – and a strong sense of *belonging* and community. This is critical for all students, and especially for students who may be on “high alert” from chronic, unbuffered stress.

The establishment of **Classroom Expectations, Norms, and Routines** sets the stage for a productive and inclusive community. This process involves alignment with schoolwide expectations, norms and routines (e.g., *creating a behavior matrix*), and meaningful co-creation with students (*co-creating classroom expectations and norms, modeling and role-playing routines, etc.*). These classroom-level practices would be supported by the school’s **Systems for Responding and Restoring** (e.g., *schoolwide procedures for student escalation, re-entry procedures, referral protocols*) which create predictability and consistency in both the in-the-moment and following actions of adults when student needs and behaviors arise.

These systems and structures are successful only when educators consistently implement **Inclusive, Culturally-Responsive Practices** that ensure each student feels they are an *accepted* and *important* member of a *safe* school and classroom community. These practices include both proactive strategies (e.g., *adult reflection on their own cultural perspectives and biases in their interactions and using the cultural knowledge, prior experience and frames of reference of students in classroom instruction*), and reactive strategies (e.g., *defusing and deescalating strategies*).

## Developmental Relationships

### Shift to relationships – among teachers, students, leaders, families - as the foundation.



Positive developmental relationships are the “active ingredient” in any effective child-serving system or intervention, characterized by emotional attachment, joint, reciprocal interactions, progressive complexity, and balance of power. It is not simply about being friendly or caring, but knowing, respecting and valuing the background, interests and goals of students and families, while holding high expectations coupled with adequate supports that convey belief in students. Importantly, these relationships also buffer the negative impact of chronic stress. A focus on relationships is especially important for students who are more likely to be impacted by implicit or explicit bias. The centrality of relationships should extend beyond student-teacher relationships, to those between and among teachers, leaders, staff, families, and other community stakeholders.

The re-design of school systems and structures to cultivate developmental relationships should be reflected in the **School’s Organization of Time and Resources**, including places like the master schedule (i.e., *creating space for class meeting or advisory and adult collaboration time in the school day*), professional development time (*allocating PD towards supporting educator’s knowledge, mindsets, and skills to build and maintain relationships*), student scheduling (*block classes, looping structures, etc.*), and the presence of opportunities to create and sustain relationships throughout the school community (e.g., *parent-teacher conferences, community walks, home visits, family engagement activities, etc.*).

### TOOL CONNECTION

Educational Practice Toolkit 3.3:  
*Build Relationships by Structuring  
the Class Environment*

### TOOL CONNECTION

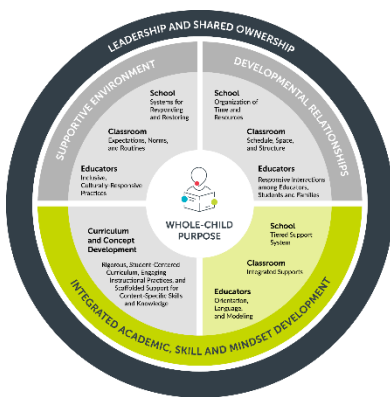
Educational Practice Toolkit 3.8:  
*Engaging in Restorative  
Conversations with Students*

The same prioritization should be evident in the **Classroom Schedule, Space, and Structure**, as class meeting or advisory becomes a predictable and sacred routine and both the classroom physical structure (*organization of desks, collaborative workspace and resources, etc.*) and schedule structure (*time during and between lessons, regular opportunities for group learning*) promote consistent collaboration amongst students and between educators and students.

Within these systems and structures, positive **Interactions among Educators, Students and Families** build, maintain and restore relationships among all school community members. This includes educator practices such as building adult self-awareness and modeling (*identifying and managing one's own "triggers," providing co-regulatory support by modeling strong emotion regulation, etc.*), demonstrating attunement (*identifying students' needs and experiences*) and increasing responsiveness, especially during challenging situations (*relationship-restoring practices, etc.*). This set of practices includes interactions with other adults and families as well as additional practices such as planning for positive communication with families that centers around holistic development (*academic, social, emotional, cognitive, behavioral, etc.*).

## Integrated Academic, Skill, and Mindset Development

### Intentionally integrate the development of Building Blocks for Learning.



Research across diverse scientific fields points to a set of skills and mindsets critical for success in school and beyond. The Building Blocks for Learning Framework (*see p. 5*) includes foundational skills and mindsets (*such as self-regulation, attachment, self- and social awareness, and stress management*) that lay the groundwork for higher-order skills and mindsets (*such as resilience and agency*) (Stafford-Brizard, 2016). These Building Blocks represent an interconnected set of affective, cognitive, social and emotional processes, controlled by anatomically cross-wired and functionally interrelated neural pathways, that drive all learning (Immordino-Yang, 2018). A robust evidence base confirms the importance of each building block to academic achievement.

The building of these skills and mindsets must be supported at all levels of a Multi-Tiered System of Supports. In Tier 1, **Classroom Integrated Supports** include creating space for explicit instruction around these skills and mindsets (*such as using a problem-solving protocol during class meeting or advisory*), and incorporating routines for students to use the skills during everyday instruction (*such as the use of resources to support executive function or the building of emotional vocabulary during a literacy lesson*), as well as regularly providing additional supports for students who may benefit. Within these classroom systems, **Educators' Orientation** (*such as considering each students' developmental range*), **Language** (*such as using metacognitive language for instruction*), and **Modeling** (*such as modeling and role-playing strong emotion regulation*) provide ongoing and consistent support.

When students' needs are not fully met by Tier 1 classroom supports, **School Tiered Supports** may be leveraged. Tier 2 systems provide targeted individual or group support, while Tier 3 systems provide intensive supports to students. These tiered systems can often be most effective through partnership with a community mental health provider and may also include wraparound support for families.

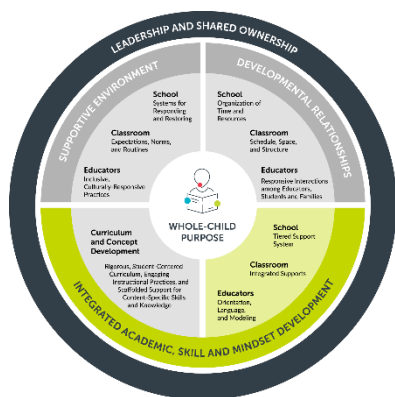
### TOOL CONNECTION

Educational Practice Toolkit 9.4:  
*Supporting Executive Function  
through a Metacognitive Approach  
to Teaching and Learning*

### TOOL CONNECTION

Educational Practice Toolkit 6.1:  
*Plan and align foundations of T2  
and T3 systems*

## Set students up for academic success by integrating skill and mindset development with rigorous curriculum and concept development.



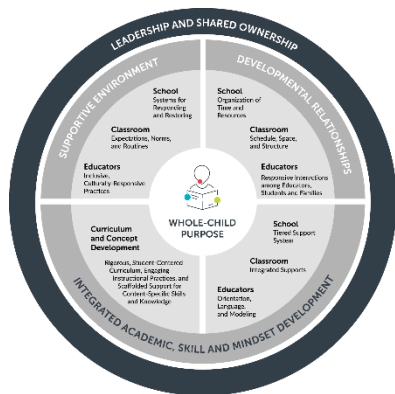
Adopting a whole-child purpose means fundamentally expanding our understanding of what great instruction looks like. Doing so has implications at the school, classroom, and educator practice levels.

For students to successfully demonstrate academic growth and mastery, they must be able to use their Building Blocks skills and mindsets in the context of rigorous, student-centered curriculum and authentic and engaging learning experiences for students to master content-specific knowledge and skills. For instance, students demonstrating academic mastery in the context of reading must be able to calmly concentrate, remember what they have read, think flexibly, and continue to try when the text is difficult (*self-regulation, stress management, executive functions, growth mindset, etc.*), and recognize different genres and decode the words on the page (*content-specific knowledge and skills*).

**Note:** Turnaround does not partner with schools specifically on curriculum and concept development, although all other aspects of Turnaround’s support contribute to effective teaching and learning.

## Leadership and Shared Ownership

### Implement Sustainable Change.



Creating effective and sustainable change in a school requires strong school leadership and shared ownership, responsibility and commitment from stakeholders, grounded in relational trust and focused on continuous improvement.

**Leadership** in the context of school transformation means implementing effective leading and managing change practices. These practices include identifying the change needed and developing a vision (*i.e. the whole-child purpose*) that mobilizes, motivates and enables stakeholders to imagine a new reality for their schools. Leaders must next act on the vision by building a team (*building a Team for School Initiatives, or TSI*) that communicates the vision in their daily interactions and works on and ensures follow through on school-wide improvement goals. Distributing leadership across capable and willing staff creates **shared ownership**, so the responsibility and energy for the changes needed lives throughout the school community. Effective leaders articulate clear roles and expectations for all staff in the building in ways that address issues central to achieving their goals and aligned with the whole-child purpose and values. Together, the leader and TSI run effective meetings, communicate throughout the process, and use data to thoughtfully plan for continuous improvement.

#### TOOL CONNECTION

Educational Practice Toolkit 5.4:  
*Act on the Vision by Building a Team*

#### TOOL CONNECTION

Educational Practice Toolkit 7.3:  
*Implement Improvement Using*

Mirroring the commitment to making relationships the foundation of school for students, these practices together, over time, create relational trust. “A community that values an emphasis on building trust among all of its members is able to more collaboratively and effectively achieve a shared set of goals or aspirations,” (Bryk & Schneider, 2003).

**Success for students means being put on the path towards healthy development and academic growth and mastery.**

Ultimately, the purpose of putting in place systems, structures, and practices that create supportive environments, promote developmental relationships, and integrate skill and mindset development is to influence outcomes for students. These positive outcomes include both aspects of healthy development, as well as academic success.

**Healthy Development:**

**Physical and Emotional Safety**

Students will *feel they are safe* at school.

**Relationships**

Students will experience positive, supportive relationships with adults and peers, through which they will build relationship skills.

**Sense of Belonging**

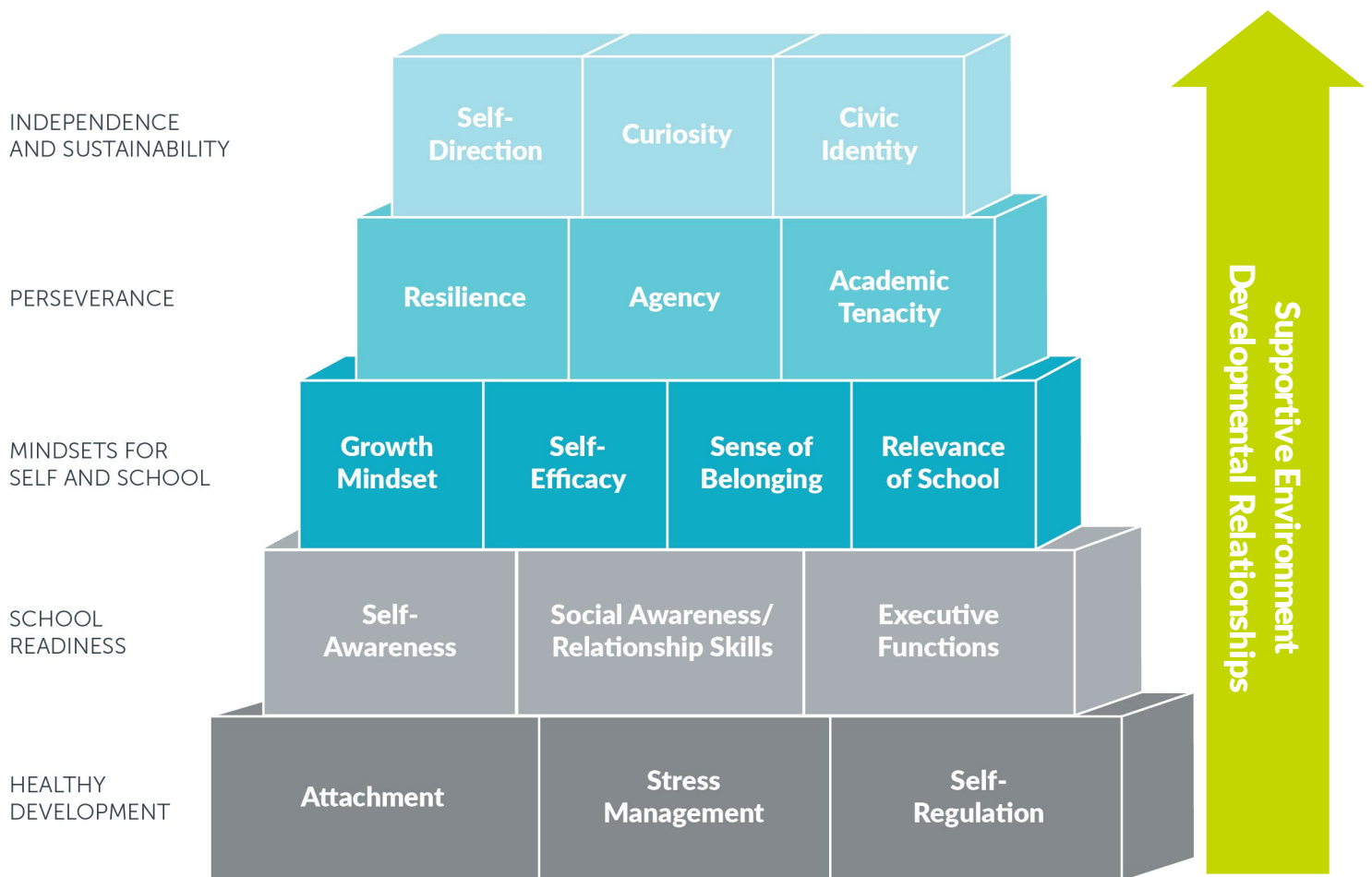
Students will feel they are an important and accepted member of the community.

**Self-Regulation Skills**

Students will build the skills to adaptively manage thoughts, emotions, and behavior (*including related skills, such as stress management, executive function, etc.*)

**Growth Mindset**

Students will believe that their intelligence and ability is *not* fixed but can grow with effort.



**Academic Growth and Mastery:**

With their holistic, healthy development supported – in the form of safety, relationships, and foundational skills and mindsets - students will grow academically, towards mastery.