

Science of Learning and Development Design Principles for Schools Self-Assessment Tool

Purpose of This Tool: This self-assessment tool is intended to be used as part of a reflective process to support stakeholders and leaders in schools, district offices, and education support organizations in examining the extent to which the structures, systems, and practices for the features associated with the principles of whole child design are in place and consistently used throughout a school. It can also help school and district leaders prioritize areas for their redesign efforts, drawing on the *Design Principles for Schools Playbook*.

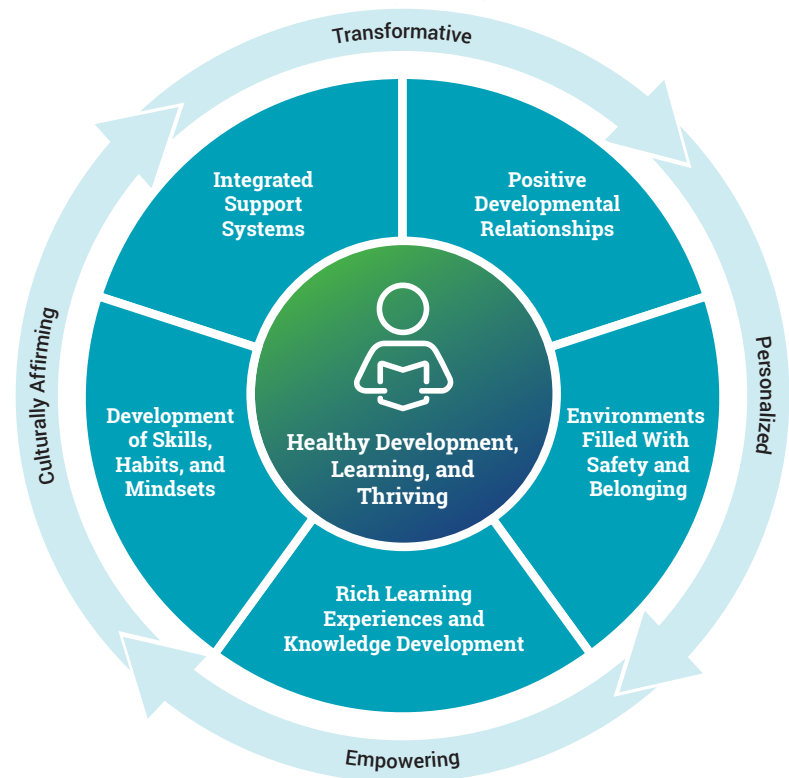
How to Use This Tool: This self-assessment tool is organized around the five Guiding Principles for Equitable Whole Child Design and the design principles for the structures and practices associated with each that create the conditions for transforming the quality of relationships, adult practice, and student learning and experience, as described in the *Design Principles for Schools Playbook*.

The self-assessment tool can be completed one section at a time, but we recommend ultimately completing all areas of the self-assessment to have a comprehensive and integrated picture of the extent to which a school has the structures and practices in place for equitable whole child design. Before completing the self-assessment items for each guiding principle, review the design principles for that specific area (which are linked below). Then consider each item and record evidence of how the school does and does not meet the criteria. After completing the self-assessment, note the areas that are a priority for identifying next steps.

To produce a comprehensive and inclusive assessment of the extent to which the principles from the science of learning and development are in place in your school, we recommend either engaging a cross-functional team or gathering input that represents the diverse perspectives and experiences of your school community, which may include teachers, coaches, students, and families, to surface a comprehensive and inclusive understanding. The *Whole Child Design Inventory* includes a suite of tools that may be useful in gathering input and data to inform the overall assessment of the school.

To see the full playbook, visit <https://k12.designprinciples.org>.

Guiding Principles for Equitable Whole Child Design



Rating				Priority?
Not in Place (This element is not available at this time.)	Getting Started (This element is not yet in place, but planning or initial piloting has begun.)	Partially in Place (This element is implemented to some extent across the school.)	In Place (This element is systematically and consistently practiced across the whole school.)	

1. Positive Developmental Relationships						
1.1 Personalize Relationships With Students by Creating Time and Space to Build Responsive and Attuned Relationships						
1.1a	School has established personalizing structures that ensure that every student can be well-known (e.g., small learning communities, looping, advisory systems, block scheduling, longer grade spans). Evidence: _____ _____					
1.2 Support Relationships Among Staff for Collaboration and Shared Learning						
1.2a	School has structures in place that support collaboration time for teachers in grade-level and/or content teaching teams to plan curriculum, address problems of practice, and discuss student needs. Evidence: _____ _____					
1.2b	School has structures in place that provide opportunities for shared learning and decision-making (e.g., distributed leadership and regular occasions for professional development) and school improvement discussions (e.g., at staff meetings and retreats that support caring, communication, and collaborative school design, fostering school coherence). Evidence: _____ _____					

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1.3 Build Relationships With Families as Partners for Deeper Knowledge of Students and Alignment Between Home and School									
1.3a	School has tools for outreach and positive, regular communication to actively engage families as partners (e.g., positive phone calls home, informational emails, and web access to student events and assignments). Evidence: _____ _____								
1.3b	School has student-teacher-family conferences that are scheduled around families' availability and engage families as partners in their child's learning. Evidence: _____ _____								
1.3c	School has dedicated time and resources for home visits or meetings located where parents are comfortable (virtual or in person) that enable educators and families to learn about and from one another as equal partners in the learning process. Evidence: _____ _____								
2. Environments Filled With Safety and Belonging									
2.1 Build a Safe and Caring Learning Environment for Positive, Culturally Responsive Interactions									
2.1a	Each classroom has created safe and caring learning environments with shared values and norms that guide relationships (e.g., respect, responsibility, kindness) as part of proactive, positive approaches to classroom management (e.g., through co-developed community agreements and roles and explicit teaching of prosocial behaviors). Evidence: _____ _____								

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<p>2.1b Educators establish consistent routines that support purposeful activities and positive, culturally responsive interactions to create a safe and caring environment (e.g., daily greetings, regular community meetings, shared classroom practices, and celebrations of student experiences).</p> <p>Evidence: _____ _____</p>					
2.2 Develop Practices That Are Trauma-Informed and Healing-Oriented to Promote Wellness and Provide Targeted Supports					
<p>2.2a School implements healing and calming opportunities that create opportunities for students to reflect, reduce stress, monitor and redirect their attention, and develop emotional awareness (e.g., mindfulness, reflection protocols and calming spaces when challenges occur, breathing exercises, and quiet corners).</p> <p>Evidence: _____ _____</p>					
<p>2.2b School provides trauma-informed and healing-oriented supports that allow school staff to know what students are experiencing and to get young people the support they need when they need it (e.g., regular check-ins with students, empathetic responses to signals of distress, communication channels with families, access to counseling, structures that support attachment, and advisory systems).</p> <p>Evidence: _____ _____</p>					

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2.3 Implement Educative and Restorative Practices to Build Community and Prevent and Address Conflict						
2.3a	School has eliminated zero-tolerance and exclusionary discipline practices and has implemented educative and restorative practices to proactively build healthy relationships and a sense of community to prevent and address conflict and wrongdoing. Evidence: _____ _____					
2.3b	School has in place consistent structures for relationship-building and sharing of experiences (e.g., community circles and regular classroom meetings) to provide opportunities to build trust and connection among and between students and educators. Evidence: _____ _____					
2.3c	School has developed strategies for conflict resolution for all students and faculty and uses restorative justice methods when challenges arise (e.g., restorative conferences that allow students to reflect on any mistakes and repair damage to the community with the support of trained mediators or peers). Evidence: _____ _____					
2.4 Foster Inclusive, Culturally Responsive Learning Environments So That Students Are Seen and Valued						
2.4a	School supports culturally affirming practices that represent students' identities and experiences and allow for multiple modes of learning and knowledge expression (e.g., curriculum materials, community-based projects, and affirmations that communicate the many ways students are seen and valued). Evidence: _____ _____					

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2.4b	School has designed inclusive learning environments that provide students with universal access to high-quality curriculum and minimize tracking or other exclusionary practices that communicate differential worth and ability. Evidence: _____ _____					
2.4c	School has inclusive and supportive curricular and extracurricular opportunities that are made available to all, without screens or financial barriers, to affirm students' identities and interests and strengthen their interpersonal skills and relationships. Evidence: _____ _____					
3. Rich Learning Experiences and Knowledge Development						
3.1 Universal Design for Learning to Ensure Access to Learning for All Students						
3.1a	Educators implement Universal Design for Learning to create learning experiences that allow students to use multiple tools, forms of engagement, and modes of expression to learn and to demonstrate their learning. Evidence: _____ _____					
3.2 Inquiry-Based Learning That Builds on Students' Prior Knowledge						
3.2a	Educators design and support inquiry-based learning, thoughtfully integrated with direct instruction, to engage students in finding the answer to meaningful questions, so that they take an active role in constructing their knowledge. Evidence: _____ _____					

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3.3 Scaffolds That Enable Students to Master Increasingly Complex Skills										
3.3a	Educators use effective scaffolds to enable students to master increasingly complex skills and conceptual understanding through well-designed tasks that productively challenge students and are supported by formative assessments, feedback, targeted instruction, and opportunities to revise their work. Evidence: _____ _____									
3.4 Performance Assessments That Apply Students' Knowledge and Skills										
3.4a	Educators use performance assessments that enable students to demonstrate their learning in authentic ways and apply their knowledge and skills to new contexts by creating products, presentations, and/or demonstrations that reflect understanding and mastery. Evidence: _____ _____									
3.5 Culturally Responsive Pedagogy That Invites Students' Identities Into the Classroom										
3.5a	Educators across the school implement culturally responsive pedagogies that invite students' identities into the classroom, help them learn about and from students and their communities, and provide opportunities for student voice and agency. Evidence: _____ _____									

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4. Development of Skills, Habits, and Mindsets					
4.1 Explicitly Addressing Cognitive, Social, and Emotional Development to Support Learning					
4.1a	School has dedicated time and explicit approaches for teaching social, emotional, and cognitive skills learning (e.g., in classroom meetings, advisories, and other settings through instruction and modeling) that help students develop self-awareness, interpersonal awareness and skills, executive function, problem-solving skills, and growth mindset that support perseverance and resilience, along with valued skills and competencies like collaboration, self-management, and academic tenacity. Evidence: _____ _____				
4.1b	School implements evidence-based programs and curricula that enable students to explicitly learn and practice valued skills, habits, and mindsets in active, well-sequenced ways with dedicated and consistent time in the school schedule. Evidence: _____ _____				
4.1c	School has in place integrated opportunities and routines (e.g., collaboration protocols, schoolwide norms, and conflict-resolution strategies) that support practice and reinforce skills, habits, and mindsets in intentional and organic ways during classes, lunchtime, recess, extracurriculars, and other parts of the school day. Evidence: _____ _____				

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4.2 Developing Productive Habits and Mindsets to Promote Learning and Well-Being						
4.2a	Educators nurture productive mindsets that enable perseverance and resilience through practices that support a growth mindset (e.g., frequent opportunities for feedback and revision) to challenge and support students to perform at the edge of their current abilities; help them transfer knowledge and skills to new content areas; and, ultimately, improve achievement and lead to greater competence. Evidence: _____ _____					
4.2b	Educators implement instructional strategies to develop students' executive function (e.g., well-designed projects and exhibitions of learning that help young people develop the ability to plan, organize their efforts, problem-solve, and self-manage). Evidence: _____ _____					
4.2c	Educators implement instructional strategies to develop students' interpersonal and communication skills through opportunities for well-structured student collaboration and peer-to-peer interaction that enable students to describe their academic work and learning and develop their social skills. Evidence: _____ _____					
4.2d	Educators implement instructional strategies to promote students' self-awareness and metacognitive thinking through opportunities for reflection, self-regulation, and self-assessment that enable students to take stock of their strengths, challenges, and progress (e.g., reflection protocols, rubrics, and cumulative portfolios of work). Evidence: _____ _____					

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5. Integrated Support Systems						
5.1 Universal Supports (Tier 1) to Support Students Every Day						
5.1a	School has in place collaboration structures among staff and between staff and families that allow for regular communication, knowledge sharing, and discussions of how to best support students. Evidence: _____ _____					
5.1b	School has communication structures and practices that support shared understandings of child development across school staff members and partners that enable them to think about students holistically and nurture them in consistent ways. Evidence: _____ _____					
5.2 Supplemental Supports (Tier 2) to Provide Additional Interventions Needed to Support Learning and Well-Being						
5.2a	School organizes learning specialists, counselors, and social workers to work as part of student support teams to provide students with extra supports for academic needs (e.g., Reading Recovery, math tutoring, extended learning time) and/or nonacademic needs (e.g., family outreach, counseling, and behavioral supports). Evidence: _____ _____					
5.2b	School provides additional time (e.g., open office hours or dedicated class periods) during which students and educators can come together to work through course material or other learning challenges. Evidence: _____ _____					

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5.2c School provides opportunities for students to address learning challenges through high-quality tutoring, which is implemented by well-trained tutors who work consistently with individuals or small groups of students. Evidence: _____ _____					
5.2d School provides extended learning time (e.g., after-school or summer learning programs and bridge programs held during school breaks) in which expert teachers work with small groups of students to accelerate or enrich their learning. Evidence: _____ _____					
5.3 Intensive Supports (Tier 3) to Provide Highly Personalized and Well-Integrated Services and Supports					
5.3a School has in place structures and personnel to enable the coordination of services to ensure that students have responsive access to a range of academic, health, and social services that support their learning and well-being (e.g., through multi-tiered systems of supports). Evidence: _____ _____					
5.3b School facilitates access to intensive intervention for students who are at particularly high levels of risk or whose needs are not sufficiently met by universal or supplemental supports (e.g., additional social, health, or mental health services, as well as academic supports such as effective special education). Evidence: _____ _____					

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5.3c	School has in place structures for regular check-ins and meetings across teams, roles, and stakeholders that can enhance communication and data exchange and ensure that students have access to what they need when they need it. Evidence: _____ _____					
5.3d	School has established partnerships with other governmental and community agencies that enhance its capacity to provide access to health and mental health supports, special education, social services, youth programs, and academic and cultural enrichment. Evidence: _____ _____					
5.3e	School integrates and personalizes supports (e.g., through a community school model) in ways that can uncover and address student and family needs with dedicated staff who support service coordination, family engagement, and resource and needs assessments. Evidence: _____ _____					