



## Whole Child Framework: Supporting Educators in Their Plight toward MTSS and Equity

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### Abstract

The Whole Child Framework (WCF) was created to assist educators globally seeking to develop or refine a comprehensive system to meet the needs of all their students through the lens of equity. The WCF is rooted in social ecological model (SEM) and the various interventions approaches to the strategies within this framework are also rooted in empirical evidence from neuroscience, biology, psychology, and educational best practices. The WCF intentionally separates the academic, behavioral, and social-emotional learning (SEL) domains and provides framework in each domain and tier that is rooted in evidence based educational techniques and wellness research. The academic domain is represented upside down on the trapezoid in between the SEL and behavioral pyramids that make up the trapezoid. The purpose is for educators to understand that SEL and behavior systems do not stand alone, and that they both serve as the pillars to completing the ‘whole child’ in education. SEL is considered as the process where students acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills critical to understand and manage emotions, as well as the capacity to feel and demonstrate empathy, maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions (Colorado Education Initiative, 2014). Generally, factors that hinder student success overlap and are multifaceted. These complex issues raise challenges when attempting to measure exactly how to support students through their academic journey. WCF was developed to help educators have a framework that is evidence based around academic, behavioral, and SEL interventions, since several notions are being presented *de novo*.

### Keywords

*whole child framework, MTSS, equity, special education*

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### Educational De Novo

The concern around behavioral and social emotional learning (SEL) interventions is that there is still no clear definition, and several notions are being presented *de novo*. *De novo* means lacking academic rigor and ignoring past researchers’ intellectual development of comparable notions (Anderson Turner, Heath, & Payne, 2016). Traditionally, educators run with these ideas and concepts, but they do not understand the theoretical underpinnings or limitations of these ideas and how these ideas apply to their specific educational setting. Generally, educators do not

understand the theoretical implications and true science behind how interventions work in the SEL and behavioral domains. Since the education system was engineered to instill academics and punish bad behavior, educators often create comprehensive systems which illuminate negative outcomes and create interventions that only focus on the individual, not the larger issue. Anfara and Mertz (2006) stated that the main character difference of social sciences in comparison to natural sciences is its numerous theoretical approaches. These differences at no time manage to find a fixed consensus in academia, like the empirical referents or explanatory schemes which are embodied by the natural sciences. It appears that rival theories obtainable in social sciences are frequently glamorized because they set to correct a certain issue. The nature of the phenomenon being studied allows its consideration through multiple perspectives, which can add more confusion and create contradiction between the individual and the social structures with most research only focusing on one of these aspects (Anderson et al. 2016).

The education system has historically dealt with extreme SEL and behavior problems with special education, individual skill building (ignoring the systematic oppression), or punitive practices. The education field has failed to understand the recent advancements in neuroscience, biology, and psychology as it pertains to human development and wellness. This dynamic in turn, is harming students by not modifying these new best practices into an educational setting to best serve students. For instance, complex trauma disorder appears in various diagnoses given to disenfranchised students such as: attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), oppositional defiant disorder, memory loss, trouble concentrating and several other behaviors or cognitive deficiencies. Complex trauma is known to be misidentified as the aforementioned labels among marginalized students; but in reality, these conditions are a manifestation of repeated and concentrated daily trauma one is experiencing in their daily life. This type of exposure can create negative outcomes to an individual's physiological reaction to this type of recurring stimuli (Perry & Szalavitz, 2008), and needs a different level of intervention. This lack of understanding in public education has misplaced many of the students who are suffering from complex trauma disorder in special education or have displaced students from school without proper intervention. If the lack of understanding continues in the next 5 years, this (the lack of people in education understanding intervention and theory) should be considered as an epidemic and we need to find ways to help education serve our students properly, rather than solely placing them in special education, kicking them out, or not providing the proper intervention according to modern day research. Most districts use the tiered system to label students as "tier three" or the "individual" with issues. This has created a colossal issue within the education system as educators lose faith in positive behavior systems or positive discipline practices, because most of these interventions are not designed to understand complex trauma disorder and best practices when it comes to Educational-Neuroscience and building on an individual who lives in a community saturated in poverty. What tends to happen is that systems are built, in which children are rewarded through extrinsic motivation simply to comply with a direction, but without the safety net and proper treatment for the student to benefit intrinsically.

This dynamic of feeding a child's survival brain with extrinsic motivation often can skew data and offer the facade that improvements are being made, but the child is simply being bribed or manipulated due to the misunderstanding of how to develop targeted evidence based interventions that align to the internalizing and externalizing factors. There is an art and science behind intervention and the public education system simply is not designed to respond to SEL and behavioral interventions that will heal individuals, families, communities, and systems. In the past decade, it has been acknowledged that non-cognitive factors can essentially change the trajectory

of a wide range of students (Anderson et al, 2016; Duckworth & Yeager 2015; Goleman, 1995; Tough, 2012). There is concern around non-cognitive skills or these forms of interventions, being that there are still no clear definitions, and several notions are being presented *de novo* (Anderson et al., 2016). Easton (2013) suggested that research has not found a consensus on the meaning of non-cognitive skills or interventions, and in education this term is used broadly since there is no better alternative. We create systems/programs in education and hire consultants to come save our students, and we blame our students (usually the one's with the most needs) or skew the data (to manipulate the results we want) when the intervention or strategies do not work; but in reality it is because most of these ideas have no theoretical basis and educators are overwhelmed looking for the "silver bullet." This creates an absence of perspective and confounds the growth of theory as well as the advancement of educational practices in general. In education, there is a criticism that these recreated concepts assume that personal attributes remain significant from that of operational contexts (Anderson et al., 2016). By strengthening theoretical practice, we can support educators and politicians alike understand how to best develop enriching experiences for all students in all educational settings (Duckworth & Yeager, 2015).

Over the past few years a new system called Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) has emerged as a promising practice which offers a preventive framework that emphasizes on evidenced based interventions which are driven by data based decision making to improve learning, behavior and SEL for every student. MTSS infuses Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) with Response to Intervention (RTI) to encompass more of a comprehensive approach to meeting all students' needs in a certain educational setting. MTSS strives to provide equity for all subgroups and eradicate the disproportionality that exists in education (specifically with the subgroups) among academic achievement and access to a quality life, now, and in the future (Colorado Education Initiative, 2014). This comprehensive tiered system encompasses behavior, SEL, and academic interventions by tier and intentionally supports educators to develop systems that encompass shared leadership, universal screening and progress monitoring, evidence based instruction, intervention, and assessment practices, data-driven decision making and problem solving, and family, school and community partnerships (Colorado Education Initiative, 2014). MTSS offers educators a triangle tiered model that educators utilize as a framework to list interventions that they feel fit in the tiered model. This article argues that most educators miss the idea of equity and social justice for all students by perpetuating traditional ideals of education that lead to today's disparities in education. This article offers a model to help educators not only look at the whole child specifically by various domains, but helps transform the system from within to help traditionally marginalized populations reach equitable outcomes, heal, from their trauma, and be in a position to have the same access as other students and areas in the same state.

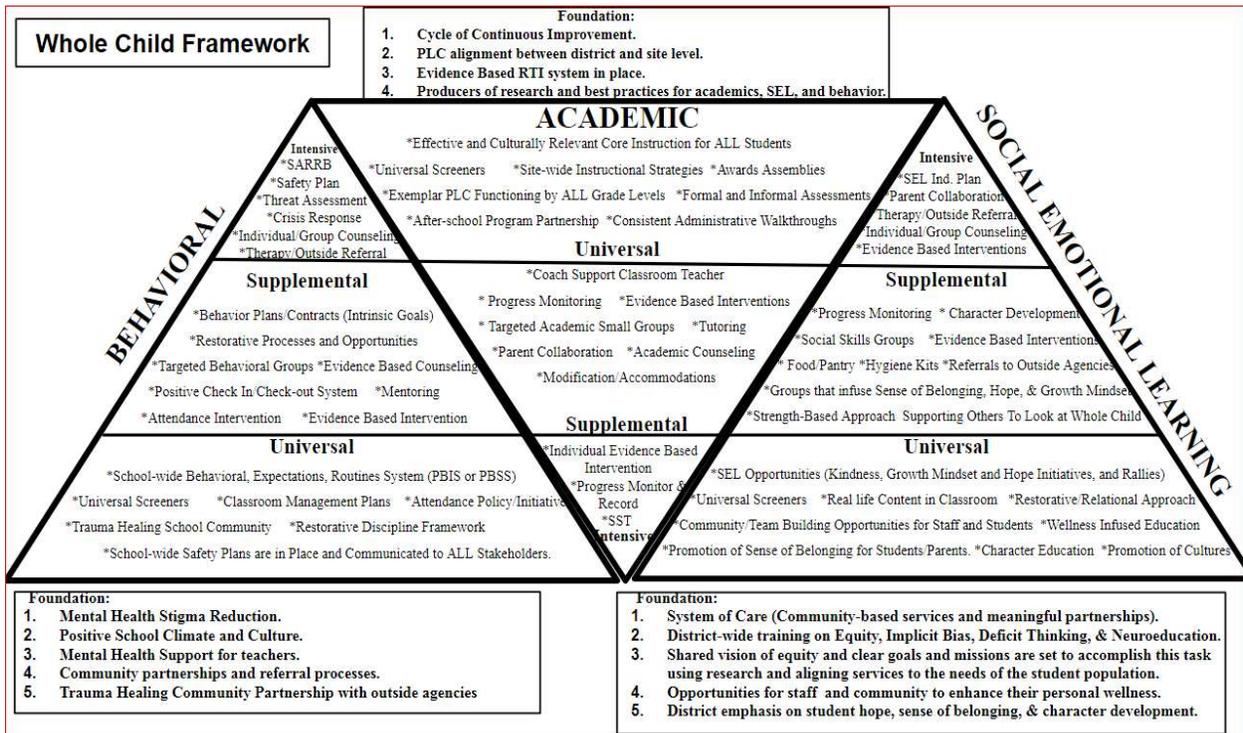
### **Whole Child Framework (WCF)**

The Whole Child Framework (WCF) will be used to explain how school districts and school sites can actually transform the system to meet the needs of all students. A trapezoid is used to symbolize the WCF. The logic behind this illustration is that in education the behavioral and SEL domains often get combined in the traditional triangle tiered model; which causes confusion for educators as most do not understand the difference between SEL and behavioral interventions. The WCF intentionally separates the academic, behavioral, and SEL domains and provides framework in each domain and tier that is rooted in trauma informed and neuroscience research to help the public education system really accomplish equity and growing the whole child. In addition, it provides foundational initiatives and philosophies for each domain before starting

the work; because there is a certain shift in mindsets and practices that needs to take place within educators and policymakers at this foundational level in order for any tiered system to be effective. The trapezoidal model was created by Dr. Felipe Mercado to assist the educational field in meeting the needs of our all students in education across the world (see model 1).

The WCF offers educators a framework that has a theoretical foundation (social ecological model), and is rooted in Educational-Neuroscience, system of care framework, academic evidence based philosophies, and supports educators in assessing the whole child with the intention of equity for all children. It is critical that the people in education understand the need to recreate itself from the inside out to meet the needs of the students they serve in each community. School generally neglects the students’ needs by providing extrinsic motivation that feeds the traumatized psyche of a child that is at the time only wired for survival. With the explosion of research around trauma informed practices and neuroscience which can inform educators on best practices around neuroscience, epigenetics, epidemiology, and network and system theory we now have new insights to the origins of social, health, and learning outcomes and we must adapt as an educational system. Over the past few decades, scientific discoveries in epidemiology, neuroscience, epigenetics, and network and systems theory have changed our understanding of the origins and dynamics of social, health, (Anda, Martin, & Porter, 2016), and educational challenges.

Model 1  
Whole Child Framework



### Theoretical Underpinning

Dealing with the whole child takes a societal approach that intersects and affects communities and families with the goal to have profound positive impacts on children now and in the long-term. The social ecological model (SEM) offers a lens to understand how individuals

relate to themselves, the people, and the social contexts that surround them, how they influence each environmental sphere, and how the environment in turn influences them (CDC, 2018). The SEM allows educators to observe and address the factors that put children at risk for or protect them from experiencing or perpetrating this harm. The model goes deeper by providing the prevention strategies that can be used at each level to address these factors such as the WCF. At the individual level listed are personal factors that include characteristics, biological factors, behavior, and personal experience, such as education, income, gender, age, level of social connectedness or isolation, employment status, substance abuse, or history of violence. At the next level the interpersonal phase of the SEM includes family or relationship factors that can create adverse childhood experiences such as lack of child supervision, family violence, divorce or separation, various types of child abuse or emotional or physical neglect; which can help educators make more accurate assessments when it comes to children and their needs. The lens of the SEM model helps educators understand the community based organizations that exist or do not exist in their area that meet the needs of various stakeholders. It also encourages for educators to develop partnership with these entities to better meet the need of our students holistically. SEM is used to create the WCF to support educators with a theoretical framework that intentionally addresses the whole child and supports educators in their mission to reach more humane practices that capture the needs of all our students in their communities and across our nation and does not displace certain subgroups. The next sections break down the WCF model by domain: academic, behavior, and SEL using evidence based research to define the systems and interventions within every tier; with the sole focus on equity, healing trauma, and building and sustaining systems of care (SOC) in efforts for all students to flourish holistically now and beyond adulthood.

### **Inclusive Academic Domain**

The academic domain is represented upside down on the trapezoid in between the SEL and behavioral pyramids that make up the trapezoid (see model 1). The purpose is for educators to understand that SEL and behavior systems stand alone, and that they both serve as the pillars to completing the whole child in education. The next sections of this article will highlight the various best practices that should be found in an effective comprehensive system after the foundation is set by the district and site administration. At the foundation of the academic pyramid you have the following non-negotiables set forth by the district and inspired by the site before utilizing any MTSS model or the WCF:

- Cycle of Continuous Improvement.
  - Plan, do, study act (PDSA), Improvement science, growth mindset.
- PLC alignment between district and site level.
  - High Functioning, collaborative, data driven, and strength-based.
- Evidence Based RTI System in Place
  - Curriculum that aligns to the student needs and that is culturally practical and realistic that encompasses a three tier systems that is concentrated with evidence based interventions that are embedded with progress monitoring, tracking, and recording strategies.
- Producers of research and best practices for academics, SEL, and behavior.
  - Educators should be producers of knowledge and evidence best practices that align to their student population for their particular subject area, grade level, and/ or role.

### **Academic- Tier I**

- Effective and Culturally Relevant Core Instruction for ALL Students
  - Should be student-centered and meet the basic needs of a child, as well as their development and neurological needs.
  - Students should be able to engage in a variety of thought-provoking activities such as explaining, finding evidence and examples, generalizing, applying, making analogies and representing the topic in new ways.
  - Should honor the understanding of multiple intelligences and embrace it.
- Universal Screeners
  - A brief evidence based assessment that can be conducted with all students at a grade level, that is followed by additional testing both short term and long term to identify or predict students who may be at risk for poor learning outcomes academics outcomes should be in place for all subject areas as a method to get student targeted intervention that is specific to their academic need.
- Site-wide Instructional Strategies
  - Administration must collaborate with teachers to create what their top 5-7 high leverage strategies are for their site that both engages students and stimulates learning and ensure that these strategies are universally implemented when appropriate.
- Awards Assemblies
  - This does not just have to be for traditionally high achieving students, you can add in awards like the A for “effort” award, the biggest growth in the quarter in a certain subject, best study habits, improvement in attendance and etc.
- Exemplar Professional Learning Community (PLC) Functioning by ALL Grade Levels
  - Collaboration, discussions focused on student learning and engagement, collection of evidence and data, consolidation on subject methodology and assessments, and healthy conflict centered around what is best for students is the environment we want to create.
- Formal and Informal Assessments
  - All learning opportunities and decisions should be made using data driven informed decision making. Everything should have a purpose and be tracked by the entire class, the individual, and by subgroups.
- After-school Program Partnership
  - A partnership between site administration and the after-school coordinator is critical. They also must find ways to enrich the academics during this time for students without mentally exhausting them from a whole day of learning.
- Consistent Administrative Walkthroughs
  - In education at times this is one of those checkboxes administrators click to say they completed the task. Administration needs to be intentional, mindful, consistent, and remember you are a coach there to support when conducting walkthroughs. Feedback and relationships between administration and the classroom teacher is huge as change often happens during the dialogue after the walkthrough when done effectively.

## **Academic- Tier II**

- Academic Coach Support Classroom Teacher

- At times teachers need an extra set of eyes and extra support such as co-teaching and effective feedback to support their instructional practice. Having a respected and highly skilled academic coach can support teachers working with students with higher needs.
- Progress Monitoring
  - An evidence based tool or system that can assess a student's (individual or entire class) academic performance and quantify a student's rate of improvement or responsiveness to instruction (RTI), while at the same time evaluating the effectiveness of instruction considering cultural and linguistic factors that recognize the strength of the students in your present class.
- Evidence Based Interventions
  - Practices, programs, or systems that have a theoretical framework, have been peer reviewed, embedded in empirical evidence that specifically align to your need.
- Targeted Academic Small Groups
  - Teachers work with targeted small groups in rotations (when necessary) to differentiate, alternate, or target students' individual learning needs.
- Tutoring
  - Highly qualified educators that can provide similar methodology to what is being created in the classroom that have a knack for connecting with students during unstructured time and after school.
- Parent Collaboration
  - Creating venues to bond and inform parents in their language of the academic requirements, pedagogy, resources, high leverage non-cognitive skills, and strategies that can provide them the same access as any other parent
- Academic Counseling
  - It could be a counselor or done intentionally in the classroom; but students need to understand the ins and outs of their grades, the standards, and have realistic goals set for them as the educator uses a strength based perspective in guiding the students.
- Modification/Accommodations
  - A teacher can create opportunities for students to thrive in specific subject area or areas of learning by adjusting assignments for the student to have a better opportunity to grasp and be successful with the learning task.

### **Academic- Tier III**

- Individual Evidence Based Intervention
  - That are progressed monitored, targeted, recorded, and have realistic and specific goals set for the student.
  - This could include tutoring, replacement curriculum, and other individual high leverage strategies that are research based and align to the specific goals we are trying to accomplish for a student.
- Intentional and Specific Progress Monitor & Record
  - Documentation that can tell a timeline and story of targeted interventions rooted in data of the strategies provided for the student and the rationale behind why that approach was used, and how and why the student did or did not benefit, as well as the rationale to why you did the next step you did and the data to prove this.

- Student Success Team (SST)
  - Student success teams should only be referred to when all interventions within the WCF have been tried with fidelity and tracked and monitored. The team should consist of various experts in the academic, behavioral, and SEL best practices as well as the student's teacher(s), parents, and other who know the student well and have good intentions for the child.

### **Inclusive Behavior Domain**

Schools have dealt with misbehavior by implementing suspension, expulsion, and other means of punishment that they call discipline that generally shames, reproduces trauma, and can create resentment and sometimes hate within an individual toward the system and situation. With Educational-Neuroscience providing academia with new insight to how human beings process various stimuli in the academic setting, it is important that we create new frameworks that help the educational system not recreate punitive types of experiences for students, and create interventions that repair students now and in-the future. The behavior domain is one that needs to be handled with sensitivity as many educators' implicit biases do not allow them to shift mindsets when it comes to the new behavioral paradigm of teaching students and not just punishing them. To help offset this dynamic here are some recommended foundational items that need to be in place by the district level and reinforced by site administration.

- Mental Health Stigma Reduction
  - Supports with intervention and breaks down the stigma that disenfranchised populations can hold around getting intervention around mental health.
- Positive School Climate and Culture
  - At the core, schools are a business, and by aiming to provide experiences at every opportunity that create a healthy and caring culture and positive climate as well as the highest degree of customer service for all stakeholders that interface with the system.
- Mental Health Support for teachers
  - Teachers have baggage and they need to have healthy and built in outlets to seek proper support, as well as experiences that enrich mental health.
- Community partnerships and referral processes.
  - Systematic process between school and community based organizations that accurately place students in the proper service.
- Trauma Healing Community Partnership with outside agencies
  - Builds the capacity of the community to whole-heartedly create new cultural norms that improve collective health, safety and productivity for current and future generations (Anda, Martin, Porter, 2016)

### **Behavior- Tier I**

- School-wide Behavioral, Expectations, Routines (PBIS or PBSS)
  - Universally communicated behavioral systems that include a fair and accurate tracking system, clear expectations, routines, and promote a positive school culture and student connectedness.
- Universal Screeners

- An empirically based tool that can accurately classify the unique behavioral traits, challenges, and strengths a student has which can identify and match the appropriate intervention for the student to have healthy behavioral temperament.
- Classroom Management Plans
  - At the beginning of the year, every teacher should turn in a classroom management plan that includes their class routines for transitions, attention signal, procedures for all interactions from late assignments to how to ask for help during an assignment, how they deal with discipline in their classroom, and their known biases in the classroom around misbehavior.
- Attendance Policy/Initiative
  - With attendance being a mandate, educating the community and promoting attendance to be something that is fun and builds school connection and community can help create a paradigm shift for those who do not see public education as a safe haven or equitable learning center for their student.
- Trauma Healing School Community
  - These healing centered approach forces educators to observe the cultural, spiritual, civic action, and collective healing that needs to be tended to heal the whole person and a community.
- Restorative Discipline Framework
  - Discipline that aligns to the misbehavior or action that provides that student with an opportunity to learn and repair the harm caused that is humane, fair, equitable, trauma informed, and holds the end goal of sustaining a positive school relationship and holding the student accountable for their actions.
- School-wide Safety Plans are in Place and Communicated to ALL Stakeholders.
  - School lockdown, fire drills, and other safety procedures are communicated, taught, and practiced universally by students and all staff, as well as systems are in place to communicate to parents, the community, and internally before and after procedures take place.

### **Behavior- Tier II**

- Behavior Plans/Contracts (Intrinsic Goals)
  - Systems that help students be aware of their behavior and help the student and teacher be self-reflective of their behavior during various transitions in the day and/or in the classroom.
  - The end goal should be to develop resilience for a student and extrinsic motivation.
- Restorative Processes and Opportunities
  - Opportunities and the right personnel who are certified and trained which can facilitate healing circles, restorative conferences, healthy dialogue and conflict for students and all staff.
- Targeted Behavioral Groups /Evidence Based Intervention
  - That is consistent, monitored, and specifically designed to offset or improve a specific behavioral conditions for an individual or group of individuals.
  - When developing any program, please ensure it has a theoretical foundation, it is tracked and monitored, strategies are archived, and that the professional is operating on the experience and carries it on with integrity and fidelity.
- Evidence Based Counseling

- With so many good ideas, not every idea is evidence-based or should be tried with students. Counseling provided to students should have purpose, be intentional, have interval goals, and be codified in research.
- If a counselor is using multiple approaches they should understand why and be able to articulate why the approach works best for one child over another.
- Positive Check in/Check-out System (CICO)
  - A systematic approach to support and foster positive relationships between a student and school officials should be progressed monitored and have set goals and outcomes for the student.
  - The program has to be designed around staff members or mentors that have a knack for connecting with all children and can see strengths that generally other staff members cannot see. The CICO intervention has to be created around the idea that the relationship between the student and staff member is where the magic happens (intrinsic); not in the reward or praise given for meeting benchmarks (extrinsic).
- Mentoring
  - A program where students can connect to others in which they feel that they identify with what provides positive and wise feedback and learning opportunities.
  - A student advocate that can help the school system better meet the needs of the student and the students navigate the school system that much better.
- Attendance Intervention
  - Fostering and advertising healthy habits of attending school and reinforcing the message with the importance of a community, sense of belonging, and resources to offset any reasons people miss that are not connected to excused absences.

### **Behavior- Tier III**

- SARRB
  - At the tier 3 level, we have already set meetings with parents, provided resources to the family/student and exhausted all of our tiered resources. Here we are looking at other alternatives and outside services that can help support the situation.
- Safety Plan/ Threat Assessment
  - When it is assessed that a student wants to harm themselves or others, schools must ensure that they have a pre-planned process and systems in place to filter this out before and after the threat or safety issues occurs.
  - Modes of communication and confidentiality should also be systematized.
  - Universal flowcharts that document and outline procedures developed at the district level and universally used by the proper professional.
- Crisis Response
  - A developed team with roles when it comes to crisis that can provide expertise and intervention during times of different crisis.
- Individual/Group Counseling
  - At this level, counseling interventions should be progress monitored, specific, and based in empirical methodology.
  - A counselor can infuse empirical ideas, as long as there is logic and the approach meets the need of the student.
- Therapy/Outside Referral

- Specialized professionals that operate differently than the school that can provide students and families additional consistent, targeted, and specialized support.

### **Inclusive Social Emotional Learning (SEL) Domain**

The WCF supports the idea that social and emotional variables are the most powerful influence on academic performance. The SEL domain is generally the most misunderstood and underdeveloped area in education. SEL is crucial when it comes to educating the whole child and ensuring that they have the best chance to thrive into adulthood.

- System of Care (Community-based services and meaningful partnerships)
  - A spectrum of effective, community-based services and supports for children and youth with or at risk for mental health or other challenges and their families, that is organized into a coordinated network, builds meaningful partnerships with families and youth, and addresses their cultural and linguistic needs, in order to help them to function better at home, in school, in the community, and throughout life (Blau, Friedman, & Stroul, 2010)
- District-wide training on Equity, Implicit Bias, Deficit Thinking, & Educational-Neuroscience
  - Exemplary training to support all staff on the above topics. Being able to have a conceptualization of equity infused with the aforementioned topics sets up the collective to offset disparity and provide equity and access for students.
- Shared vision of equity and clear goals and missions are set to accomplish this task using research and aligning services to the needs of the student population.
  - Creating a task force team to ensure that the above items are being met across the school system, and developing protocol to best communicate these approaches.
- Opportunities for staff and community to enhance their personal wellness
  - Developing opportunities for all stakeholders to interact and build community around their personal wellness.
- District emphasis on student hope, sense of belonging, & character development.
  - These non-cognitive skills can be considered very high leverage to be taught and intentionally exuded for students by a school system, teacher, and community.

### **Social Emotional Learning- Tier I**

- SEL Opportunities (Kindness, Growth Mindset and Hope Initiatives, and Rallies)
  - Fostering skills such as kindness, growth mindset, and hope at the universal level can naturally support students' social emotional development.
- Universal Screeners
  - A systematic assessment of all students on social-emotional indicators for the purpose of identifying students who are at-risk, and may require support that varies in terms of level, intensity, and duration.
- Real life Content in Classroom
  - Learning should be fun and engaging. Infusing real life content can support a student's SEL by providing examples and content that they can relate to; which helps them feel connected, heard, and like they have hope.
- Restorative/Relational Approach

- Conversations, opportunities, and approaches that unconditionally provide connection, bonding, humanity, and fairness.
- Community/Team Building Opportunities for Staff and Students
  - Team building and community building should take place at every opportunity, in the classroom, during unstructured time, and before and after school.
- Wellness Infused Education
  - If we want to breed the whole child and raise career and college ready individuals, we must not ignore issues like mental health, health, spirituality, and other soft skills that can sustain human success and longevity.
- Promotion of Sense of Belonging for Students/Parents.
  - Sense of belonging or better yet a sense of actual belonging should be a focus that schools should not ignore when it comes to children and parents/guardians.
- Character Education
  - Intentionally taught individual traits that focus on building the whole child with the focus on growing students to be more responsible, caring, kind, and contributing citizens to society.
- Promotion of Cultures
  - With all school demographics orientating differently, it is important to understand all the various subgroups and bring in cultural ambassadors to promote culture activities and help the school become more culturally sensitive and competent.

### **Social Emotional Learning- Tier II**

- Character Development
  - When students do not respond to the character education approach conducted universally, it is critical that etiquette classes, and other classes that provide students with an opportunity to develop their character with a healthy role model they trust and feel connected to.
- Social Skills Groups/ Evidence Based Interventions
  - Some of our students come in with a lack of social skills for various reasons and it is important that school sites create opportunities to teach students healthy and positive social skills and build on SEL strengths.
- Food/Pantry and Hygiene Kits
  - Having a built in system can help students get their basic needs met (Maslow, 1954), and help with their social emotional learning.
- Referrals to Outside Agencies
  - Partnership through the SOC should include places and opportunities for students to go in efforts to build their social emotional efficacy and capacity.
- Groups that infuse Sense of Belonging, Hope, & Growth Mindset
  - Interventions that offer students with the aforementioned skills that are rooted in empirical evidence or with a logical plan of action.
- Strength-Based Approach Supporting Others to Look at Whole Child
  - Professional working with students at this level should observe strengths that students have and help others across students build off these strengths.

### **Social Emotional Learning- Tier III**

- SEL Individualized Plan

- Specialized plans for individual students that understand and have a plan in place for a student and the school to follow to create success for both sides.
  
- Parent Collaboration
  - Through the various tiers parent partnership, sense of belonging and voice is critical; but at the tier 3 level, this collaboration involves trying to get services, supports, and resources for the student as well as for the parent/guardian.
- Therapy/Outside Referral
  - Partnerships, referral, and communication protocol between schools and outside agencies to offer students and families additional support that meets their need.
- Individual/Group Counseling/Evidence Based Interventions
  - Monitored for progress and very targeted around a specialized need.

### **Conclusion**

The WCF was developed to help school districts create a framework rooted in 21st century pedagogy and theoretical tactfulness which offers school systems with an understanding of how to achieve equity utilizing an MTSS framework. These concepts serve as an evidence based framework that infuses evidence based strategies like progress monitoring, universal screening, and the cycle of continuous improvement within every tier. The WCF uses MTSS language to ensure that it aligns with the new educational paradigm and does not confuse educators. The WCF emphasizes on the types of interventions and the substance needed within these interventions to meet equity and meet the needs of our students using improvement science, aligned vision, tracking, monitoring, and evidence and research based approaches. The aforementioned list of domains and the various tiers within them are to be used as a framework to create experiences for all students to thrive through equity, social justice, and guide educators in a public education setting. A well designed comprehensive system like WCF can positively impact the trajectory of all students' mental health, academic career, and ultimately their life as a whole. WCF needs to be further explored to determine the reliability and effectiveness on all students' academic and holistic wellbeing when implemented with fidelity in an educational setting.

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