

# Planning Integrated Whole Child Supports

## Key Questions for Collaborative Discussions

This is a companion tool to the brief [\*Expanded Learning Partnerships: A Foundation for Rebuilding to Support the Whole Child\*](#).<sup>1</sup> This tool is intended to help schools and expanded learning providers develop a comprehensive plan for designing and implementing integrated services for students and families. Use the questions provided below to inform meeting topics, shape agendas, and engage key stakeholders.

The Youth Development Work Group of the Aspen Institute National Commission on Social, Emotional, and Academic Development developed a [\*\*framework\*\*](#) for building partnerships between school systems and youth development partners, including expanded learning providers. The Work Group provided five recommendations for strong partnerships that schools and expanded learning partners can uphold:

1. include youth development partners in setting a clear vision;
2. strengthen and expand adult capacity;
3. create and support engaging learning settings throughout the day and the year;
4. provide systems and supports to maintain and grow partnerships; and
5. leverage resources efficiently and equitably.

---

<sup>1</sup> Vance, F., Wolforth, S., & Kimner, H. (2021, February). *Planning integrated whole child supports: Key questions for collaborative discussions* [Companion tool]. Policy Analysis for California Education. [edpolicyinca.org/publications/expanded-learning-partnerships](https://edpolicyinca.org/publications/expanded-learning-partnerships)

## Collaboratively Plan and Implement Integrated Services

Planning and implementing integrated services for students and families requires deep partnerships between schools and expanded learning providers.

**Ensure strong representation and meaningful participation of expanded learning partners on rebuilding teams.** Rebuilding teams that have been mobilized to respond to the pandemic have typically been led solely by district leaders. Instead, school and district leaders should consider how to engage staff and leadership from the expanded learning field.

- 1 Are multiple levels of the expanded learning system represented (e.g., site coordinators, directors, and/or regional leads)?
- 2 If expanded learning partners were not a part of the initial reopening planning, are there opportunities for reflection and course correction that considers their perspectives?

### Designate Partnership Coordinators

Partnership coordinators can develop processes and practices that will facilitate the work of the school–expanded learning partnership. This includes establishing regular communication strategies (e.g., meetings, listservs, shared documents); managing joint projects and the improvement process; and monitoring resources.

**Codesign an improvement process that allows the reopening and rebuilding team to set goals, check in on progress, and make adjustments.** Through an improvement process, rebuilding teams will set the foundation for making collaborative and data-informed decisions.

- 1 Kick off the partnership with a shared understanding of success. What will change in our district, our schools, and our communities look like as a result of our ongoing partnership? What do we want to accomplish?
- 2 How does our shared understanding of success align with what we know about the priorities of students and families?
- 3 What are the Specific, Measurable, Actionable, Relevant, and Time-bound (SMART) goals that will guide our work? Which level of the education system will our goals address (i.e., classroom/group, school/program, and/or district/community levels)?
- 4 What information will we need in order to track progress towards our goals? From whom will we gather this information? When will we gather it?
- 5 What have we learned from the information we gathered? How will we use the lessons we learned at each level of the school system (i.e., program, school, community, and district levels)?

- ? Who are the priority stakeholders we need to engage in the improvement process? What strategies will we use to engage them?
- ? What kinds of learning opportunities can we offer to help strengthen this work?

**Design proactive and responsive communication strategies.** There is a heightened need to communicate effectively with students and families. Communication must be ongoing, timely, and clear.

- ? How will we communicate with one another to ensure that each partner has up-to-date information? How will these communication strategies change in emergency situations?
- ? How will we communicate to students and families if we need to respond to new circumstances, including emergencies? How will we ensure that this reaches our hardest-to-reach students?
- ? What are the barriers for students and families receiving information? How can we address these barriers?
- ? How will we communicate effectively with multilingual families?
- ? What opportunities will we provide students and families to share information with schools and educators? How will we maximize participation in those opportunities?

### Principle 1: Related Resources

[Communications Playbook](#), National Commission on Social, Emotional, and Academic Development and Learning Heroes

[COVID Quick Guide: Expanded Learning Supports](#), The Partnership for Children and Youth

[No Longer Optional: Expanded Learning in School Reopening](#), The Opportunity Institute and The Partnership for Children and Youth

[A School Year Like No Other Demands a New Learning Day: A Blueprint for How Afterschool Programs & Community Partners Can Help](#), The Afterschool Alliance

## Provide Integrated Supports That Reflect the Science of Learning and Development

Findings from the [Science of Learning and Development Alliance](#) pinpoint practical strategies to create and strengthen student-centered systems, practices, and environments.

**(Re)design systemic supports to address the whole child.** Rebuilding teams should review how the current district, school, and expanded learning systems meet the basic needs (e.g., food, shelter, etc.), physical health, social and emotional well-being, academic needs, and mental health of students and families, as well as those of teachers and other school partners.

- ❓ To focus on the whole child, we must better understand the lived experience of students and families. What strategies will we use to understand the priorities of students and families?
- ❓ How can we align our current assets and supports to the priorities that students and families identify?
- ❓ Distance learning challenges the ability of schools to provide trusting and supportive learning environments in which young people and adults can develop positive relationships. What virtual and in-person tools (field tested and emerging) can we use to promote relationship building and shape supportive learning environments?
- ❓ Distance learning allows for nontraditional instructional strategies that reflect the experiences of students, their families, and their communities. What are the concepts and skills that young people need to be learning/mastering, and how might expanded learning providers and schools partner to provide engaging content and support to students?

### Principle 2: Related Resources

[Designing for Learning](#), Transcend Education

[Education Leadership in the Time of COVID](#), Science of Learning & Development Alliance

[Linking Schools and Afterschool Through Social and Emotional Learning](#), Beyond the Bell at American Institutes for Research

[Reunite, Renew, and Thrive: Social and Emotional Learning Roadmap for Reopening School](#), Collaborative on Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning

## Prioritize Equity

The pandemic has unequivocally pointed out the existing inequities deeply embedded in our society as well as how our education system fails to serve our most vulnerable students. Policymakers and practitioners across youth-serving systems must consider the ways in which equity has been challenged in their local contexts—both before and during COVID-19—and how they might design more equitable policies, environments, practices, and experiences.

**Develop a clear vision for equity.** Prioritizing equity as a central tenet to rebuilding will first require local policymakers and practitioners to articulate a clear vision for equitable learning.

- ❓ What do we mean when we say “equity”? In what ways does our definition of and vision for equity reflect the tenets of “robust equity”?<sup>2</sup>
- ❓ How can we maximize engagement from students, families, and community partners in developing a vision for equity? How will we ensure that voices not typically at the table are elevated in these equity conversations?
- ❓ Who in our community has developed a strong vision for equity? What can we learn from their process?
- ❓ How will we maintain a focus on equity at each stage of our work?

### Redesign the existing system to advance equity goals.

Rebuilding should include a critical examination of policies and practices with an explicit focus on systemic barriers. As teams work to understand systemic barriers and develop solutions, it will be critical to elevate the voices of multiple stakeholders, particularly those that have not been well represented in the past.

- ❓ What are the equity challenges that are facing students, families, teachers, and communities?
- ❓ What information do we have about these barriers? To whom have we spoken about understanding the challenges caused by barriers and potential responses to them?

### STOP–LOOK–LISTEN

We must avoid falling back into familiar practices and processes that counteract equity. Use the STOP–LOOK–LISTEN method often to disrupt recurring patterns. STOP and provide time to reflect on what the team is implementing and why. LOOK for evidence that new and desired changes are occurring. LISTEN to what students, families, and educators are saying about their experiences. Are they experiencing the type of change we hoped to make?

<sup>2</sup> **Robust equity** is the *intentional counter* to inequality; institutionalized privilege and prejudice; and systemic deficits, and is the *intentional promotion* of thriving across multiple domains for those who experience inequity and injustice.

- ❓ Which student groups require focused attention? What are their most pressing needs?
- ❓ What are the existing strategies in place to address these challenges? Do those strategies align with our vision for equity? Are they working? What else needs to be done?
- ❓ When and how can we invite families, students, and teachers to partner with us to identify needs, design supports, and implement strategies? What processes will we use to ensure that their involvement is ongoing?
- ❓ How might this work extend and evolve to strengthen school and expanded learning partnership opportunities post-COVID-19?

**Make staffing choices that reflect (re)designed systemic supports and that leverage the assets of professional staff across systems.** Students need more caring adults to support their learning. Together, the teaching workforce and the expanded learning workforce can meet the needs of students.

- ❓ How can school and expanded learning practitioners work together to implement selected learning strategies? What can they do individually?
- ❓ How can partnerships address the basic needs of the teaching and expanded learning workforce, for example, COVID-19 precautions, hazard pay, healthcare and other benefits, childcare, living wages, and social and emotional supports?
- ❓ What kinds of resources will school and expanded learning practitioners need in order to be successful, for example, common planning time, communications and data systems, professional development?
- ❓ What spaces are available? What changes might be needed to those spaces to accommodate new learning modalities?
- ❓ What technologies are available to implement selected learning strategies? What are the limitations of each technology and how do we address those limitations?

### Principle 3: Related Resources

[Guidance on Culturally Responsive-Sustaining School Reopenings: Centering Equity to Humanize the Process of Coming Back Together](#), Metropolitan Center for Research on Equity and the Transformation of Schools

[New Definitions Driven by Equity; Informed by Science](#), The Forum for Youth Investment

[Recommendations for Prioritizing Equity in the Response to COVID-19](#), Alliance for Excellent Education

[Thriving, Robust Equity, and Transformative Learning & Development](#), The Forum for Youth Investment