

Systems to Support School-Wide Youth Development and Shared Responsibility Rubric

PURPOSE OF THE SCHOOL-WIDE SYSTEMS RUBRIC

The following rubric attempts to describe the key indicators of the systems that are needed to support and sustain a school-wide youth development focus. They describe what the systems might look like at different stages of development to help gauge the current state as well as progress towards meetings your goals. Being able to track progress is important, as the work is hard and requires persistence. It’s easy to fall back into old habits that are not aligned with your vision. In fact, it’s important to realize that this process is not necessarily linear, as circumstances can lead to setbacks. We hope this tool can serve as a helpful reminder of where you want to be and help to maintain optimism and persistence in working toward that vision.

BACKGROUND

Why Do School-Wide Systems Matter?

The following rubric is based on the school-wide systems that are needed to support and sustain any school change effort. While not specific to a youth development approach, we do integrate principles important to community school change efforts (such as shared leadership) as well as research-based effective professional development and school reform efforts. These school-wide systems are vital to constructing the organizational supports necessary for building and sustaining whole-school change.

Rubric Descriptors

This rubric attempts to describe what is happening at different stages of school-change: What you might see and what members might feel at these different stages. It does not, however, give specific strategies for achieving these changes because each school’s unique conditions and populations will affect the process. Other parts of the guide provide research-based effective practices that might inform your school’s strategies as well as activities your school might adapt or use as you work toward your vision.

We suggest using this rubric in conjunction with the [Caring and Supportive Community Rubric](#), which describes the development of skills in working productively through conflict and engaging in collaborative decision-making, critical to the success of shared responsibility systems.

The descriptors are adapted from what we know from other school change efforts, such as the Bay Area School Reform Coalition (BASRC), the work of the Children’s Aid Society, and the John W. Gardner Center’s prior work on Stages of Development in Community School, as well as the current research on Professional Learning Communities.

Definition of School-Wide Systems: School-wide systems are structures (e.g., schedules, buildings), infrastructure (e.g., new or refined collaborative or decision-making bodies); cultural norms (e.g., norms of behavior, values, and beliefs of school community members); and processes (e.g., how meetings are run, internal communication processes) that govern the interactions and decisions of all members of the school community (all staff, students, and parents).

Underlying Principles of This Rubric

The school change principles underlying the following descriptors are:

- The school change process takes time and persistence. Typically any organizational change effort requires at least three to five years before new norms and practices are operationalized.
- School change is most effective when there is:
 - Strong support from leadership and a number of vocal champions in the school
 - A known sense of direction that is clearly and consistently communicated
 - Structures, processes, norms and practices that are aligned with this vision
 - A long-term commitment to work toward this vision in incremental, doable steps
- When leadership is shared among school members who follow ideals rather than a person, individuals are self-motivated and self-directed in their work and perform at a higher level.
- The use of data based on student outcomes and perspectives has helped schools to continually improve, build shared accountability, ensure the success of all students, protect effective practices/programs and improve or eliminate ineffective practices.

In addition, some descriptors are also based on the following research-based youth development principles related to collaboration and shared responsibility:

- Adult relationships and connections to one another affect youth:
 - When adults feel connected and supported, they want to be at school and are more engaged in their work
 - Adults are role models for youth and set the tone for the school
- When youth see evidence that their voice or actions have an impact in their immediate settings (e.g., classroom, school, home, after-school program), they are more likely to be engaged and intrinsically motivated to learn and they develop important decision-making, communication and leadership skills necessary to becoming productive, contributing adults.
- When youth are engaged in projects and activities tied to their personal interests and to their culture or background, they are more likely to be engaged in school and they develop important leadership skills and sense of belonging important in their growth into healthy adults.

| Pre-Conditions to Change → | Trail Blazing → | Building Momentum → | Thriving |
|---|--|---|---|
| The following descriptors help to paint a picture of what a school might look like prior to a change effort or during times of stress when setbacks can occur. | At this stage, a group of leaders begins to form and define a vision for their school. Individuals in the school begin to experiment with changes in individual practices and school norms and practices. | At this stage, a critical mass (at least a third of school staff) act as vocal champions for the vision and begin to establish norms, structures, and processes that support this vision. | At this stage, norms of collaboration, community and care are operationalized as “the way we do business,” and all members (students, all staff and parents) act and feel as described. |
| Shared Responsibility Around a Shared Vision | | | |
| <p>In the school, you see that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A vision, school policies, practices, decisions, structures, and processes may be in place, but are established at the top with little or no input from others in the school community• Even if the vision includes the importance of meeting students' physical, emotional, and social needs, this vision is seldom communicated, and the school norms, structures, and strategies focus primarily on academic achievement with little or no attention to other areas of development• There are many methods of communication between different school members* (e.g., meetings, newsletters, events) but there is not a cohesive approach to communicating with all school members (all staff, parents, students) and communication is primarily one-way (top-down) <p>In general, school members* feel they do not have input into school policies that affect them.</p> | <p>In the school, you see that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• At least one group of school leaders representing different school groups** begins to work together toward one cohesive, student-centered vision and measurable goals around some aspects of students' physical, social and emotional well-being as well as academic achievement. These leaders begin to identify the types of data that can best inform progress and effectiveness of strategies toward these goals• Administrators and other school leaders begin to continuously communicate the school vision and how policies/activities connect to/support this vision• Administrators begin to seek input from some school members on policies that affect them• School leaders begin to analyze their existing communication mechanisms in terms of their purpose, audiences and flow and begin to define a more cohesive system that supports collaboration between all school members* <p>In general, school members* feel they have some input into school policies and direction.</p> | <p>In the school, you see that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A critical mass of school staff at all levels as well as parent and student leaders vocally and actively lead work toward one cohesive, student-centered vision and measurable goals around the physical, social, emotional, and academic well-being of all students. Staff are expected to also work collaboratively toward these goals. There are structures and supports (e.g., collaborative teams, professional development, materials, processes) in place to support staff in working toward these goals and school policy decisions are tied to this vision.• School staff collect and analyze data from multiple perspectives (including students and parents of all socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds) to measure progress on goals and to evaluate the effectiveness of strategies in working toward these goals• Most members of the school staff at all levels as well as many students and parents communicate the school vision and how school policies/strategies support this vision. This group knows the process for giving input into school decisions.• School leaders create and begin to implement a cohesive communication system that includes formal mechanisms for two-way communication among all school members* and clear, collaborative decision-making processes. <p>In general, school members* feel they have some input into school decisions that affect them and can see how their input informs and improves school practices.</p> | <p>In the school, you see that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Almost all school members* work together across different groups** to shape the school policies, practices, structures, and processes aligned with one cohesive, student-centered vision and measurable physical, emotional, social, and academic goals for all students• School members across groups collect, analyze and reflect on data from many sources to inform practices most effective in achieving shared goals. School members routinely adapt their strategies based on input and data and thus are able to meet the needs of a changing population.• There is a cohesive communication system among all school community members (students, all staff and parents) that includes formal mechanisms for all members to give input into key governance decisions and strategies and to be regularly informed of decisions and progress toward the school vision. <p>In general, school members* including parents and students feel they have input into school decisions and see how their input affects school decisions.</p> |
| Collaborative Relationships | | | |
| <p>In the school, you see that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• School members tend to work primarily in isolation or in teams of like roles (teachers, after-school, students, parents, administrators)• The primary connection between classroom, after-school, school events and home activities is teacher-defined homework• Staff must find time to collaborate outside of school time, and often this time is spent discussing problems with little plan for solutions | <p>In the school, you see that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Some individuals representing different groups** begin to work together to try to make connections between their respective settings. (e.g., classroom/after-school curricular connections; classroom activities that make family/cultural connections/involve family members)• School leaders begin to define different structures and processes for collaboration across school groups, which begin to explore the use of data to inform practices around student-centered goals | <p>In the school, you see that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• School leaders identify or create collaboration time, structures and support that allow a critical mass of representatives of different groups** regular school time to collaborate on activities and strategies for meeting shared student social, emotional, physical and academic goals and that draw connections between student cultures and school activities/ instruction• Different groups participate in events hosted by other groups | <p>In the school, you see that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Collaboration and reflection time is operationalized. There is regular, sanctioned and paid staff collaboration/reflection time as part of the normal school day. Staff use this time to collaborate/reflect and often involve parents/ youth as appropriate.• There are connections made between school members' passions, family, and cultures, and school activities and instruction• Different groups** co-host events together |

* By “school members” we mean all administrators, staff, parents, students, and community partners with whom you interact
** By “groups” we mean different roles (students, parents, teachers, after-school staff, administrators) as well as other differences such as ethnicity, socio-economic background, ability levels, etc.

Physical and Psychological Safety Rubric

PURPOSE OF THE PHYSICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY RUBRIC

The following rubric describes the key indicators of what a safe school might look like at different stages of implementation. The intent of this tool is to help gauge the current state of the school, identify areas of focus, and track progress towards meeting your goals. Being able to track progress is important, as the work is hard and requires persistence. It’s easy to fall back into old habits that are not aligned with your vision. In fact, it’s important to realize that this process is not necessarily linear, as circumstances can lead to setbacks. We hope this tool can serve as a helpful reminder of where you want to be and help to maintain optimism and persistence in working toward that vision.

BACKGROUND

Underlying Principles of This Rubric

The research-based principles underlying the rubric indicators and descriptors are:

- Youth must feel physically and emotionally safe to be ready to learn
- Youth are intrinsically motivated to learn when they believe they can be successful and feel it is safe to make mistakes

Rubric Descriptors

This rubric attempts to describe what is happening at different stages of establishing a school-wide culture of safety. It captures the adult actions that you might see at each stage which take a school from a reactionary/instruction focused model to a preventative/whole child-focused model and related youth indicators.

The rubric does not give specific strategies for achieving these changes because each school’s unique conditions and populations will support different solutions. However, the following is a short list of examples of specific strategies that could be used to address safety issues in a school, which might spark additional ideas for your school.

Examples of practices and policies that support a safe environment include:

- Safety and emergency response plans known by all school members
- Buddies for all incoming youth who provide support and guidance
- Peer conflict resolution programs
- School therapists, counselors, or outreach teachers who provide one-on-one and small group therapy sessions for troubled students
- A safe place where students who are misbehaving can go to “cool down” or talk through issues with trained support staff
- School-wide grading policies that reward effort by requiring teachers to provide feedback on homework and giving students the opportunity to correct and improve work

What are the Key Components of a Safe School?

This rubric is broken down into the following key components for building a safe school environment:

- Adult Actions to Create a Safe Environment
 - Rules and Rule Enforcement
 - Discipline
 - Physical/Social/Emotional Well-Being
 - Safety to Make Mistakes
- Student Actions and Perception/Experience of Safety

Since it is not possible to really know how safe students feel without asking students themselves, staff will likely want to collect student data to help inform the school safety plan/policies. This can be done through surveys, interviews, focus groups, or other data collection methods. The sample can be representative of the entire school population, as long as it truly represents all students. Data can also be drawn from existing sources such as the California Healthy Kids Survey.

| Reacting to Problems → | Beginning a Safety Plan → | Preventing Safety Problems → | Culture of Safety |
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| The following descriptors help to paint a picture of what a school that is not safe might look like prior to a change effort or during times of stress when setbacks can occur. | At this stage, school members begin to look critically at youth outcomes related to safety, question the adequacy of their safety policies, and develop new safety policies. | At this stage most staff work collectively on implementing the school safety plan, feel that their campus is safe, and are collecting data to improve these policies/practices. | At this stage, processes and norms of safety are operationalized by all school members as “the way we do business.” |
| Adult Actions to Create a Safe Environment | | | |
| Rules and Rule Enforcement | | | |
| <p>In general:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Rules, norms for behavior, and rule enforcement vary by location (eg., classrooms, programs, school yard) and are enforced inconsistentlyThere is a lack of clear behavior expectations for staff or the staff expectations are not enforcedSchool administrators feel that unsafe activity that occurs off of school property and after-school hours is not the concern of the school.Most school members* report that they do not feel welcome or safe at the schoolPolice are called to punish students <p>Many staff ignore or even participate in/encourage unsafe behavior.**</p> <p>Staff may:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Fail to step in when students are physically, verbally, psychologically or sexually harassed/bulliedIgnore rumors of unsafe behavior, etc.Allow students to be excludedMake discriminatory remarks about students to other staff, in front of other students or directly to students (eg., “These low kids aren’t going to achieve anyway. They don’t want to learn. Their parents don’t care.”) | <p>School leaders and staff begin to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Define what safety looks like at the schoolDevelop rules, norms for behavior, and rule enforcement for the school with student inputWork with school staff to teach and enforce these rules and normsDevelop norms for staff behavior at school-wide meetingsModel and enforce norms for staff behaviorDevelop partnerships with police to begin to cultivate a safety plan for the schoolImmediately stop unsafe student behavior** <p>In general:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Rules may still vary between after-school programs and school-day contexts or between individual classrooms.Staff begin to become more conscious of the things they say about students (and other school members) and begin to speak more respectfully of and to all students (and other school members) | <p>Most school staff:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Enforce a consistent set of rules and norms for behavior in all school contexts developed by administrators, teachers, and after-school staff (eg., classrooms, after-school programs, school yard, etc.)Use school-wide established systems and processes to enforce these rulesAre concerned about the safety of students to and from school as well as on campusAgree to norms of behavior for staff and begin to hold each other accountable to theseImmediately stop unsafe student behavior** <p>School leaders:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Investigate and work to resolve the conflicts that lead up to most of these unsafe behaviorsRegularly communicate with police to help ensure that students make it to and from school safely <p>Police are seen as school partners and are regularly called in to help to prevent gang activity and see that students make it home safely.</p> | <p>Almost all school members*</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Understand the school rules developed in partnership with all school members including studentsEnforce them fairly and consistently using school-wide established systems and processesAre concerned about the safety of students all hours of the day, whether they are on campus or notAdults and students are held accountable to the same rules of conductReport that they feel welcome and safe at the school <p>All staff immediately stop unsafe student or adult behavior**</p> <p>School staff also investigate and work to resolve the conflicts that lead up to these unsafe behaviors.</p> <p>Police are seen as school partners and work closely with all school members to help maintain safety for students and families at school and in their community.</p> |
| Discipline | | | |
| <p>Many staff tend to discipline students by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Publicly criticizing studentsYelling at studentsThreatening to punish studentsProviding rewards or consequences often inconsistently and publicly and as the primary discipline method | <p>School leaders and some staff begin to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Identify students who chronically disobey the rules and provide additional supports for these studentsDevelop stronger relationships with students and try to understand underlying causes behind misbehaviorTeach and recognize desired behaviorsAddress behavior (not the person) with empathy and without judgmentUse private correction/ behavior improvement plansExplain reasons for rules and consequences | <p>Most school staff:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Develop relationships with students and families to understand individual student challenges and to connect students to community school supportsWork collaboratively to understand individual student challenges and to provide needed supportsTeach, model, and encourage desired behaviorsPrivately discuss behavior choices and consequences with students without judgmentPrivately praise/acknowledge student effort and positive behavior | <p>Almost all school members*:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Work collectively to identify student strengths, provide needed supports and teach and model expectations within and across all contextsOften communicate about student positive behavior/ accomplishmentsEngage students to support each other’s successGuide students in developing strategies for working through conflict by mentoring them through choices, lessons learned, and how they might apply those in future |

* By “school members” we mean all administrators, staff, parents, students, and community partners with whom you interact

** By “unsafe behavior” we mean all forms of bullying and harassment including physical intimidation/fighting, verbal harassment (teasing, discriminatory remarks, name-calling, threats), psychological harassment (spreading rumors, manipulating social relationships, non-verbal teasing/intimidation, exclusion), and sexual harassment as well as gang dress/activity and possession of weapons/illegal substances.

| Reacting to Problems → | Beginning a Safety Plan → | Preventing Safety Problems → | Culture of Safety |
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| Adult Actions to Create a Safe Environment | | | |
| Physical/Emotional/Social Well-Being | | | |
| Most staff: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Feel that their job is only to educate students• Tend to ignore physical, emotional or social concerns that they observe such as students who are hungry, angry, withdrawn, depressed, etc. | School leaders: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Connect students with obvious needs to appropriate school resources to address basic needs or emotional concerns• Make staff aware of available supports for students and referral processes Some staff begin to refer students to available services/ supports. | Most school staff: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Recognize student depression, anger, exclusion, and other concerns• Quickly address emotional concerns by showing care, referring students to available supports, and following up with support staff• Work to include students who are alone or excluded• Are available to students to talk through social challenges | Almost all school members*: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Work collaboratively to collectively address student emotional, social and physical needs• Are aware of and regularly use the supports available to students and the processes for accessing these supports |
| Safety to Make Mistakes | | | |
| In general: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Students struggle to acknowledge mistakes• Only students who know the right answer are called upon• when students are not paying attention or get an answer wrong, they are often publicly shamed or ridiculed | School leaders: Communicate the importance of effort and safety to make mistakes in order for students to learn Some staff begin to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Consciously praise effort• Model learning from mistakes• Provide feedback to students on learning• Use low-stakes ways for students to show what they know (eg., Think/Pair/Share, one-on-one conversations) | School leaders: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Establish and enforce school-wide policies (e.g., grades, honor roll, participation in extra-curricular activities) that reward and celebrate effort Most school staff: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Establish classroom/program policies (e.g., homework, assignments, assessments) that reward and encourage effort and allow students to learn from mistakes• Reassure students that fear of failure/ inadequacy is okay and normal and feel safe to expose their own mistakes with students and staff in order to learn | Almost all school members*: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Show genuine appreciation for effort• Frame “mistakes” as valuable opportunities for learning and growth by asking youth why they think they got a particular result and what they might do differently next time.• Seek challenges for themselves and all students so that they can learn and grow• Trust that it is okay to make mistakes, to say, “I don’t know,” to expose weaknesses and receive feedback in order to learn |
| Student Actions and Perception/Experience of Safety*** | | | |
| No school members: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Are aware of student perceptions about safety at the school Students tend to <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ignore, participate in, and encourage unsafe behavior** | School leaders and some staff begin to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Collect data on student indicators of safety (such as discipline referrals/ suspensions/ expulsions)• These data are used to track progress but don’t inform practice In general, students: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Follow the school rules• Refrain from engaging in unsafe behavior**• Alert an adult when they witness unsafe behavior | Many school staff: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Individually collect data on student perceptions of safety at the school• Use these data to inform and improve the effectiveness of safety policies/practices Most students: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Indicate that they feel safe at the school• Model behavior that is aligned with the rules, which they help to define• Discourage fellow students from engaging in unsafe behavior** | Almost all school members*: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Collectively use multiple data sources to track progress over time and constantly improve shared school practices and policies.• Indicate that they feel safe at the school and know what to do when they observe unsafe behavior.** Almost all students: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Model and enforce safe behavior with each other and with other school members.• Help define and improve school rules and safety policies. |

* By “school members” we mean all administrators, staff, parents, students, and community partners with whom you interact

** By “unsafe behavior” we mean all forms of bullying and harassment including physical intimidation/fighting, verbal harassment (teasing, discriminatory remarks, name-calling, threats), psychological harassment (spreading rumors, manipulating social relationships, non-verbal teasing/intimidation, exclusion), and sexual harassment as well as gang dress/activity and possession of weapons/illegal substances

*** Student perceptions can be assessed using surveys, interviews, focus groups, or existing data already being collected such as the California Healthy Kids Survey.

Supportive and Caring Community Rubric

PURPOSE OF THE SUPPORTIVE AND CARING COMMUNITY RUBRIC

The following rubric attempts to capture the key indicators of what a “caring and supportive school community” might look like at different stages of development to help you gauge where you are today, where you would like to be at the end of the year and in years to come, and to track your progress as you move toward this goal. This is important, as the work you are doing is hard and requires persistence. It’s easy to fall back into old habits that are not aligned with your vision. In fact, it’s important to realize that this process is not necessarily linear, as circumstances can lead to setbacks. We are hopeful that this tool can serve as a helpful reminder of where you want to be and help to maintain optimism and persistence in working toward that vision.

BACKGROUND

What Is A Supportive and Caring School Community?

Thinking about your own life experiences, when have you felt most engaged and excited about your work as an adult or as a student at a school?
What was it about you and the people around you that made that possible?
What did they do and say that made you feel this way?

When asked these questions, most tend to recall times when we worked as part of a collaborative team or group where we felt accepted, valued, supported, and cared about. From these experiences, we know how this sense of community affects our energy level and engagement in our work and how that, in turn, allows us to perform at our very best. This is true for adults and even more so for youth during the difficult transition of adolescence.

Definition of Community: We are defining community as inclusive of all school members (students, staff, parents) who are committed to a common vision that they all collectively help to shape and carry out. Communities help define a school climate which doesn’t rely on individual members and continues to thrive through transitions.

Underlying Principles of This Rubric

The fundamental youth development research-based principles underlying these rubric descriptors are that:

- When youth are in a community where they feel cared for, known and supported by adults and peers, they are more likely to attend school and are more likely to be engaged and motivated to learn
- Adult relationships and connections to one another affect youth:
 - When adults feel connected and supported, they want to be at school and are more engaged in their work
 - Adults are role models for youth and set the tone for the school

Rubric Descriptors

This rubric attempts to describe what is happening at different stages of community building—what you might hear, see, and what members might feel at these different stages. It does not, however, give specific strategies for how these behaviors are achieved, because this could look very different for each school’s unique conditions and populations. Other parts of the guide provide research-based effective practices that might inform your school’s strategies as well as activities your school might adapt or use as you work toward your vision. The descriptors come both from research and from our observations of the process at Kennedy Middle School.

It is not possible to know if students feel cared about and supported without asking them. Therefore, staff will likely want to collect student data to help assess student feelings of care and support. This can be done through surveys, interviews, focus groups or other methods. The sample can be representative of the school population, as long as it truly represents all students. Data can also be drawn from existing sources such as the California Healthy Kids Survey.

| Pre-Conditions to Change → | Trail Blazing → | Building Momentum → | Thriving |
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| A Caring School Community | | | |
| <p>In the school, you tend to hear school members*:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use disrespectful language (swearing, offensive jokes, yelling at or belittling youth or other school members)• Share personal information about other school members in public areas.• Blame or complain about members in other groups** <p>In general, school members feel:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Alone, isolated, unwelcome, disrespected, unappreciated, afraid, like they do not belong, and/or like they are not capable of success• Frustrated and that they lack control over addressing challenges in the school• Unsupported and that there are very few or no other members of the school they could go to for support, advice, or needed resources. (Most students cannot identify a supportive adult to go to for help with school or personal matters.) <p>In the school, you see that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• When school members are in conflict, they tend to avoid interaction with one another, complain to others or attack each other• When a school member says something disrespectful or points blame at another school member or group, other staff members agree, ignore or complain to others but do not confront the individual• Accountability is primarily on an individual level. Individuals have personal goals, and everyone is only responsible for taking care of themselves• There tends to be “cliques” of both adults and students from which others are excluded | <p>Some of the time, you hear school members*:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Begin to use more respectful and positive language• Consciously begin to question and test their own and others’ assumptions about other groups, begin to respectfully confront disrespectful behavior in others, and work through differences using productive conversations or mediation.• Begin to talk about strategies they can control in their specific contexts. <p>In general, school members feel:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• That at least one other person in the school cares about them and understands their struggles/challenges• That they have at least one or a few others in the school that they can go to for support, advice or needed resources• They have an increased understanding/ appreciation of members of other groups**• Motivated to try new strategies <p>In the school, you see:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Administrators and school leaders begin to model, communicate, encourage, and enforce norms of respect, collaboration, and holding each other accountable through productive conversation.• Some school members begin to intentionally try to connect with other school members, particularly of other groups. For example:<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ Adults begin to seek to understand the social and emotional challenges youth are facing◦ Individuals ensure that students who need additional academic support receive it◦ Staff begin to seek to understand parents’/other staff members’ struggles and begin to problem solve together◦ Administrators check in with staff and begin to identify supports and resources staff might need to address challenges or to facilitate communication and collaboration | <p>Most of the time, you hear school members*:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use respectful and positive language• Seek to understand members of other groups** by actively seeking their input and ideas in collaborative problem solving• Constructively work through conflict• Actively seek to understand the strengths, supports, challenges and needs of youth and parents of all socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds• Work collaboratively (across all staff roles) to meet the needs of all students <p>In general, school members feel:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Connected to their school and to each other• Respected by members of other groups and that they trust each other• Supported and cared for and can identify at least one person they can go to in the school for support. (All students can identify at least one adult they can go to for support with school or personal problems and most students feel cared for, known and that they belong.)• Capable of being successful <p>In the school, you see:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Shared agreements on how school members treat each other• Norms and processes begin to form for large groups (e.g., teams, committees, whole staff) to address and work through conflict productively and to make collaborative decisions• Staff and students tend to hold each other accountable to these norms and agreements• Supports (e.g., mediators, conflict resolution training) to help school members work through conflict and to practice and use new strategies• Processes begin to develop for all school members to seek needed support and resources• The beginning of systems for welcoming and supporting new staff and students | <p>Almost all of the time, you hear school members*:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Speak of members of other groups** with respect, appreciation, and admiration• Work collaboratively (across all staff roles, and in partnership with students and parents of all socio-economic backgrounds and ethnicities) to solve problems proactively and to come to consensus on important school policies/practices• Work through conflicts in a constructive way through productive conversations and mediation• Describe their school as a family <p>In general, school members feel:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• They are treated fairly and equitably• Welcome and supported at the school• That other school members really know them, and what’s going on with them• That they have many different people they could go to for help. (All students can identify multiple adults that they can go to for support with school or personal issues.)• Confident in themselves and in each other <p>In the school, you see:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Norms of respect, collaboration, productive communication, and conflict resolution are operationalized as “the way we do things here.”• Processes and systems for supporting all school members and for welcoming and incorporating new school members are in place• That school members care for and have compassion for one another and are connected across groups• All school members go out of their way to help each other, are flexible, listen to all school members’ perspectives and find compromises around a shared vision |

* By “school members” we mean all administrators, staff, parents, students, and community partners with whom you interact.
** By “groups” we mean different school roles (students, parents, teachers, after-school staff, administrators) as well as other differences such as ethnicity, socio-economic background, ability levels etc.

Support for Autonomy Rubric

PURPOSE OF THE SUPPORT FOR AUTONOMY RUBRIC

The following rubric describes the key indicators of a school that embraces meaningful youth participation at different stages of implementation. The intent of this tool is to help gauge the current state of the school, identify areas of focus, and to track progress towards meeting your goals. Being able to track progress is important, as the work is hard and requires persistence. We hope this tool can serve as a helpful reminder of where you want to be and help to maintain optimism and persistence in working toward that vision.

BACKGROUND

What Is A Support for Autonomy?

When do you feel most engaged in your school? Most of us feel engaged in our school when we have input into the things that affect us and have some freedom to make choices about how to carry out the school vision. This is equally true for youth. Support for autonomy results when youth are given opportunities to make meaningful choices, to provide input or to take action that results in a noticeable impact on their personal development as well as their immediate environment.

A meaningful choice is one in which there are authentic differences between the options. For example, students may be given different ways to demonstrate competency in a particular concept through art, music, a written report, or oral presentation. A choice that is not meaningful is one in which the options are basically the same, such as writing a report or writing responses to questions. Admittedly, schools that face many demands and pressures because of test scores, may feel they don’t have a lot of freedom to give choices. Given the importance of youth participation, it is important to look for where choices can be provided such as lunch-time or exploratory activities.

Why Does Support for Autonomy Matter?

Support for autonomy helps young people develop the skills and confidence to participate as productive partners in decisions affecting them individually and collectively. As a result, youth feel empowered, connected, and valued by adults, peers, and communities, and they develop life skills crucial to their development into healthy, stable, contributing adult citizens.

Underlying Principles of This Rubric

The research-based principles underlying the rubric indicators and descriptors are:

- When youth have meaningful choices in things that affect them and when they see evidence that their voice or actions have an impact in their immediate settings (e.g., classroom, school, home, after-school program, neighborhood), they are more likely to be engaged and intrinsically motivated to learn and develop important decision-making, communication, and leadership skills necessary to becoming productive, contributing adults.
- When youth are engaged in projects and activities tied to their personal interests and to their culture or background, they are more likely to be engaged in school and they develop important leadership skills and sense of belonging important in their growth into healthy adults.

Rubric Descriptors

This rubric attempts to capture the practices and policies that you might see at different stages of moving a school from an adult-led model to an adult-youth co-leadership model.

It is anticipated that while some individual staff members may already be using “Adult-Guided Youth Leadership” strategies or “Co-Leadership” strategies, it will take more time to move the majority of staff to these areas. Many of us did not grow up in a culture that valued and encouraged meaningful youth participation. As adults, we need to see successful examples of meaningful youth participation and to have opportunities to experiment with youth participation and to gradually move through the continuum on an individual level.

What Additional Youth Indicators Can Help Inform this Rubric?

To truly assess whether student participation and choice in your school is meaningful, it is important to hear from students. This can be done through surveys, focus groups or interviews. Data can also be drawn from existing sources such as the California Healthy Kids Survey.

| Adult Run → | Youth Input/Emerging Participation → | Adult-Guided Youth Leadership → | Youth/Adult Co-Leadership |
|---|--|--|---|
| The following descriptors describe what a school that provides little or no meaningful youth participation might look like prior to a change effort or during times of stress when setbacks can occur (The locus of control lies in adults). | At this stage, school members begin to collect youth data and seek youth perspectives to inform school programs, policies, and instruction and begin to intentionally provide increased opportunities for student choice and participation (The locus of control begins to shift to youth, but is still primarily with adults). | At this stage, members establish whole-school policies and guidelines for integrating meaningful choice and participation into most school instruction and activities and guided opportunities for choice/leadership with increasing levels of responsibility (The locus of control is primarily in youth with adult support and guidance). | At this stage, processes and norms of meaningful youth participation are operationalized by all school members as “the way we do business,” and youth are represented in some school policy decision-making (The locus of control shifts between youth and adults depending on the activity). |
| Youth Choice | | | |
| <p>In general:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Students are given few or no meaningful choices* in class/ program/activities/ projectsIf students are given choices, they tend to be choices of extra-curricular activities/school events or choices between essentially identical optionsAll students in a given class or program are given the same instruction, instructional support and assignmentsRestrictions (e.g., physical barriers or rigid rules around activities) of school space and activities limit student choices during non-class times to one main area in the school. Student space is separate from adult spaceThe underlying message is, “Students are not capable of making good decisions about their personal behavior/ growth.” | <p>In their individual programs/settings, many staff:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Begin to give students meaningful choices* in some of the school/instructional/program activities/ projects, behavior rules or conflict resolution strategiesProvide general instructional variety and some teacher-selected choices to address different learning styles, personal interests or to connect to student culture or background. (e.g., teachers select cultures and representatives of those cultures to study) <p>In general:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Students have more than one area on the school grounds available to them during non-class times and have a number of activities they can participate in, but some physical barriers still exist (e.g., some teachers may open their classrooms at lunch or after school).The underlying message is, “Middle school students are capable of making some decisions when given limited adult-defined choices.” | <p>Most school staff:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Regularly give students meaningful choices* in school/ instructional/ program activities/projects, as well as behavior rules, behavior improvement strategies/plans and individual goal-setting plansWork with students to assess their own individual needs, strengths, learning styles, personal interests, and cultural backgrounds and provide meaningful student-driven choices, differentiated assignments, and support that allow students to develop self awareness/personal interests and leverage their strengths (e.g., students choose cultures and cultural representatives to study). <p>In general:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Students have many choices of spaces and activities in which they can engage during non-class time with other students and adultsThe underlying message is, “Middle school students are capable of making decisions when given general guidelines and adult support.” | <p>Almost all school members**:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Regularly give students meaningful choices* in all facets of their learning including their teachers, classes, instructional pacing, and level of additional support based on their individual needsAre aware of the passions, interests, strengths, cultural backgrounds, and learning needs of all students and work in partnership with students to help meet these needs. Students and adults share responsibility for student learning and growth. <p>In general:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Students and staff co-habitate the school. The majority of the school grounds are open to students at all times, and students and adults regularly engage in conversation and fun activities together.The underlying message is, “Middle school youth are capable of sharing responsibility for decisions affecting their personal development.” |
| Youth Participation | | | |
| <p>In general:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Adults make all decisions about school rules, policies and activities without input from youthWhen youth voice an opinion, it is ignored, discouraged or even belittledThe underlying message is, “It doesn’t matter what middle school students think. Students should do what adults say, because adults are in charge and know what is best for students.” | <p>In their individual programs/settings, many staff:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Begin to seek youth data/input/perspective, but may not use these to inform rules/instruction/ policies or show youth how their input was usedBegin to listen to youth voiced opinions and either validate that opinion as worthy of consideration or explain why a different decision was madeProvide adult-directed youth leadership opportunities (e.g., student presentations/ performances, tutoring, or student aid opportunities)In general:<ul style="list-style-type: none">Leadership opportunities are provided after school or in special groups (student council)The underlying message is, “Youth are worthy of respect and have valuable ideas to contribute.” | <p>Most school staff:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Regularly seek youth input and perspective, which is seen as essential in informing their practices and policies. Youth regularly see the impact of their input.Provide adult-guided youth leadership opportunities (e.g., students teaching small groups, writing/ directing school performances, planning/ implementing school events)In general:<ul style="list-style-type: none">The school has established school-wide norms, policies and processes for integrating youth input/involvement in school policies and practices. (e.g., youth representatives speak/give input at some staff meetings or a youth advisory board gives input on policies.)The underlying message is, “Students’ perspectives are essential in designing policies/practices to meet their needs.” | <p>Most school staff:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Involve youth in the co-development of school activities/ instruction/ practices and policiesProvide independent or co-leadership opportunities for youth (e.g., co-teaching a lesson/activity, partner with adults, or work independently on school events)Actively seek ways to give every student leadership opportunities in and outside of classIn general:<ul style="list-style-type: none">Youth are authentically engaged in decision-making in the school through established school-wide structures (e.g., youth representatives sit on school committees as appropriate; or student council has decision-making authority over some policies)The underlying message is, “students are partners in leading our school.” |

* By “meaningful choice” we mean a choice in which there are authentic differences between given options. For example, students may be given different ways to demonstrate competency in a particular concept through art, music, a written report, or oral presentation. A choice that would not be meaningful would be one in which the options are basically the same, such as students calling their parents or a staff member calling their parents.

** By “school members” we mean all administrators, staff, parents, students, and community partners with whom you interact.

Meaningful Skill-Building Experiences Rubric

PURPOSE OF THE MEANINGFUL SKILL-BUILDING EXPERIENCES RUBRIC

The following rubric describes the key indicators of a school that embraces challenging and engaging learning experiences at different stages of implementation. The intent of this tool is to help gauge the current state of the school, identify areas of focus, and to track progress toward meeting your goals. Being able to track progress is important, as the work is hard and requires persistence. We hope this tool can serve as a helpful reminder of where you want to be and help to maintain optimism and persistence in working toward that vision.

BACKGROUND

What Are Meaningful Skill-Building Experiences?

Think about a time when you were so engaged in learning that you didn’t notice time passing—a time when you were motivated to hone a particular skill or understand a particular concept. What was it about that experience that made it challenging and engaging?

For many of us, we tend to be most engaged in learning, when we are interested in the subject/skill, when we see a purpose for learning the subject/skill and when we are challenged to think deeply and apply knowledge or skills. How often do we hear students complain that they are bored or don’t understand why they need to know something? These are indicators that instruction is not challenging and engaging. As educators at schools facing pressures around standardized testing and budgetary struggles, this area may feel particularly challenging to address. Test preparation/lack of resources may cause schools to feel like they do not have a lot of latitude to teach content deeply or to help students apply concepts to real life. Yet when students are challenged to apply concepts to real-life situations and learn concepts deeply, they tend to be more motivated to learn and they retain knowledge during and long after testing, which allows them to build on this knowledge and apply it in their lives. This translates not only into improved test scores but also life-long learning.

Meaningful skill-building experiences also include a wealth of courses or activities that allow middle school students a chance to explore and develop different interests. During this exploratory time in their lives, it is important that middle school students have the opportunity to experience the arts, sports, and leadership as well as other life skills all crucial to the development of their personal identities and skills they will need as productive adults.

Underlying Principles of This Rubric

The research-based principle underlying the rubric indicators and descriptors is:

- When youth have the opportunity to explore their passions and develop new skills through a variety of challenging activities, particularly those that have real-world applications and/or contribute to their community, they are more likely to be engaged and intrinsically motivated to learn and they develop critical thinking skills important to their development as future citizens.

Examples of Meaningful Skill-Building Instructional Practices

The rubric does not give specific instructional methods because each school’s unique conditions and populations will support different solutions. However, the following is a short list of examples of specific instructional strategies that could be used to provide challenging and engaging learning experiences in a school, which might spark additional ideas for your school.

- *General Instructional Practices:* Problem-based learning and project-based learning, collaborative learning, connection to current events, student interests, and community involvement
- *Science and Math Instruction:* Scientific inquiry, design challenges, discovery learning, hands-on
- *Social Studies Instruction:* Simulations, debates, role play
- *Language Arts Instruction:* Critical study of literature, self expression through writing/art/computer applications, etc.

Rubric Descriptors

This rubric attempts to capture the practices and policies that you might see at different stages of moving from a school that offers few opportunities for some students to participate in meaningful skill-building experiences to one that offers a wide variety of experiences to all students.

What Additional Youth Indicators Can Help Inform this Rubric?

To truly assess whether learning experiences in your program/class are meaningful and challenging, it is important to receive feedback from students. This can be done through surveys, focus groups or interviews.

| Pre-Conditions to Change → | Trail Blazing → | Building Momentum → | Thriving |
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| <p>The following descriptors describe what a school that provides little or no challenging and engaging learning experiences might look like prior to a change effort or during times of stress when setbacks can occur.</p> | <p>At this stage, school members begin to realize the importance of providing opportunities for youth to explore and develop life skills and personal interests and begin to integrate this into individual programs/instruction.</p> | <p>At this stage, school staff establish whole-school policies and guidelines for integrating challenging and engaging learning experiences into most school instruction and activities and for helping to involve students in a variety of after-school and exploratory activities.</p> | <p>At this stage, processes and norms of challenging and engaging learning experiences are operationalized by all school members as “the way we do business.”</p> |
| <p>In general:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• There are little or no opportunities for students to:<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ Make connections between the curriculum and students’ experiences, prior knowledge, personal questions, interests or future life applications◦ Explore interests or develop skills in real-life applications (e.g., engineering, business, computer skills, civic engagement, etc.)◦ To explore personal interests/passions (e.g., art, music, theater, sports, leadership, etc.)◦ To develop physical, social, emotional, and life skills (e.g., goal setting, time/financial management, health, communication skills, critical thinking skills, etc.)• The overarching goal toward which the school culture is focused is test preparation evidenced by:<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ Standardized test data as the only form of evidence that informs instruction◦ Significant instructional time spent on test-taking strategies and factual knowledge◦ Significant meeting time spent on completing forms and requirements for testing◦ Communication/actions reflect general fear of punishment• Students receive little or no specific, individual feedback on how to improve their learning• Exploratory opportunities are primarily available after school and are not accessible to all students• Students report that they don’t understand why they need to learn something and that they find school boring. In general, students do not show a natural curiosity about what they are learning, do not persist through challenges and do not show pride in their work. | <p>In general:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• There are some exploratory activities available through electives, lunch-time clubs/activities, and after school accessible to most students• The school forms and begins to communicate a vision around preparing students to be productive, contributing adults, and begins to shift toward this vision as evidenced by:<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ Some school staff begin to look at other data in addition to standardized test to inform instruction◦ Some instructional time spent on creatively bringing standards-based concepts alive by either starting with a student question and linking this to standards or starting with a standard and allowing students to explore that standard in directions of interest to them◦ Some meeting time spent on reflection on data and research to inform instructional practices◦ Communication/actions begin to reflect a growing trust between school members* who begin to de-privatize their practices, share their fears, and challenge each other’s assumptions and beliefs• Students report that they have some opportunities to explore personal interest and skills they will need as adults, but that they would like to have more opportunities. <p>In their individual programs/ settings, some school staff begin to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide some individual feedback to students on how they might improve their learning, usually through written comments• Adjust instruction to the needs/levels of different students by providing more challenging assignments to students who quickly master a new skill or concept and additional supports or adjusted assignments for students who struggle with a new skill/concept• Encourage students who seem disengaged to explore personal interests through exploratory, lunch-time, or after-school programs | <p>In general:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• There are many exploratory activities available through electives, lunch-time clubs/activities and after school accessible to most students• The school regularly communicates a vision around preparing students to be productive, contributing adults, and engages all staff in this vision as evidenced by:<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ All school staff begin to look at other data in addition to standardized test to inform instruction◦ An increase in instructional time spent teaching standards-based concepts deeply, with an emphasis on connections to students’ interests/life skills/prior knowledge and higher order thinking skills that will result in enduring understandings◦ Increased meeting time spent on reflection on data, research, and outside observations to inform instructional practices◦ Communication/actions reflect trust between most school members* who regularly challenge each other’s assumptions with data and regularly try and share results of new practices• Students report that they enjoy a wide variety of engaging activities that allow them to explore their interests and that they feel that the things they are learning in school will help them in life <p>In their individual programs/ settings, most school staff:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide individual feedback and guidance to students on improving their learning both verbally and in writing• Adjust instruction to the needs of students based on collaborative reflection with students, which results in accelerated learning and frequent adjustments or placements of students• Provide opportunities for students to explore personal interests and encourage and recognize these passions in their students | <p>In general:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• There are a wealth of opportunities for all students to explore personal interests/passions and to develop physical, social, emotional, and life skills through all of their classes as well as a wide variety of electives and after-school programs/ activities• The overarching goal toward which the school culture is focused is preparing students to be productive adults as evidenced by:<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ Multiple forms of data inform instruction and adaptation of instruction to the needs of all students◦ Significant instructional time spent on enduring conceptual understandings and important skill development (e.g., communication, cooperation, critical thinking, problem solving, creativity, higher order thinking skills, etc.) through connections to students’ interests/cultural background and experiences preparing them to perform well on standardized tests as well as in real-world applications◦ Significant meeting time spent reflecting on data/ research/observations to inform instructional practices◦ Communication/actions reflect trust and safety between all school members* to take risks and find innovative solutions in supporting all students• Students regularly receive individual written and verbal feedback on learning, understand the need for learning each concept/skill, are aware of supports available to them, and actively seek help when they need it• Students have individualized goals and differentiated assignments based on these goals, which are frequently assessed and adjusted through student reflection on their progress in partnership with teachers• All school members actively encourage every student to pursue and develop individual interests. Students are recognized for their passions and talents, and allowed to explore and develop many different interests.• Students demonstrate their love of school through their steady attendance and high participation in after-school activities. They show a natural curiosity about the topics they are studying, show pride in their work, and work hard to learn tough concepts/skills because they see how it will help them in their life goals. |

* By “school members” we mean all administrators, staff, parents, students, and community partners with whom you interact.