Summer Learning and Beyond

Opportunities for Creating Equity

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Introduction

It will be a summer like no other. People are teeming with hopefulness, worry, and a range of expectations, needs, and opportunities as we emerge out of pandemic life. As schools and districts plan for summer learning experiences and beyond, it is more important now than ever that they do so in ways that center the range of experiences, needs, and dreams that young people will be bringing with them to learning environments.

Many students may be experiencing their first time back in school after months of virtual learning at home. It may also be their first time back with peers and teachers. Students and families have had complex experiences during the past year, including multiple traumas from the pandemic and racialized violence, and have displayed remarkable strength, resolve, and caring. Many children have lost relatives, their parents may have lost employment, they may have seen or experienced illness, or they may be experiencing food and housing instability.

While we must be prepared to support students as they heal from trauma and anxiety, this moment also offers an opportunity for a reset and a chance to consider what we can do differently to better serve students, families, and communities, particularly those marginalized by inequitable systems even before the pandemic. We should not return to the old "normal"; we should accelerate systems change toward equitable, rigorous, and transformative education.

Many have expressed concerns about missed opportunities during this year of disrupted schooling and potential *learning loss*, leading to calls for intensive remediation. Research on the science of learning and development indicates that intensive remediation alone will not meet students' needs and—if conducted in a way that is segregating, stigmatizing, and separated from children's real-life concerns—could even deepen inequalities and exacerbate trauma. Instead, research points to the need for learning environments that center strong teacher–student relationships, address students' social and emotional learning, and provide students with opportunities to construct knowledge that builds upon their experiences and social contexts in ways that deepen their academic skills.

Children will need multiple supports to help them learn what they do not know and to ensure they master necessary academic skills. But the approach to accomplishing these goals will matter. It is critically important for schools to facilitate intellectually rich and expansive learning for all students that will engage them, excite them, and support academically rigorous study in the content areas. This will require a careful rethinking of how we see students, families, and communities and how we value what they know. This report provides a set of six design principles, or stances toward learners and learning, that are essential for creating intellectually rigorous and equitable learning settings. These principles provide a holistic framework for designing goals, practices, and activities for summer learning and beyond.

The Six Design Principles for Summer Learning and Beyond include:

1. Center Relationships

2. Create a Culture of Affirmation and Belonging

3. Build From Students' Interests and Take a Whole Child Approach to Their Development

4. Engage Students' and Families' Knowledge in Disciplinary Learning

5. Provide Creative, Inquiry-Based Forms of Learning

6. Address Educator Needs and Learning

The principles are guided by research on learning, which views learning as an essential life function that involves all aspects of what it means to be human. It is at once cognitive, physical, emotional, social, and cultural. Learning always involves biological and neurological mechanisms, is always shaped by economic and political forces, and is always cultural. This way of understanding learning has implications for how we design learning settings. It means that we cannot view the social-emotional aspects of learning as separate from the academic and cognitive aspects of learning. Through engaging with literature, social studies, science, math, the arts, and other content areas in intellectually honest and authentic ways and by providing opportunities for joy, exploration, play, and self-direction, learning settings offer a chance for young people to study and understand the world. These opportunities for learning and joy are also important for educators who are returning to classrooms after an incredibly challenging year. The forms of teaching, learning, and partnership they engage will be crucial to their well-being.

In what follows, we discuss each design principle and why it is important. We highlight key ideas and practices that are related to each design principle, and we list resources and references (hyperlinked in the text) that people can consult to learn more. We then provide an example to embody the principles in action and in concert with one another.

As you read, you will notice that some crosscutting *ideas* (meeting students where they are is crucial for learning, for example) and *practices* (partnering with families and seeking their advice and expertise, for example) appear across the design principles. The design principles are an interrelated set, meant to be used together to create learning environments that deeply support and celebrate children, educators, families, and communities this summer and beyond.

Design Principle 1: Center Relationships

Social relationships are at the heart of learning and of teaching. The intentional development of healthy and enduring social bonds should be a primary goal of learning, particularly as children and youth navigate reconnecting with peers and adults.

The pandemic has taught us a lot about the importance of relationships. And research shows that positive developmental relationships are key to learning. Children learn more effectively when they feel secure and when they have positive feelings about the people they are with and the content they are encountering. The brain shuts down, impeding learning, when there is a high level of anxiety, fear, or trauma. Strong, supportive one-on-one relationships with trusted adults are the most important way to address trauma, allowing children to seek counsel, process grief, and become connected to resources that can assist them. Healthy and respectful relationships between schools and families are also critical, as are meaningful connections to the local community.

This principle is about prioritizing as well as mending relationships. In some cases this work requires building trust for the first time. Families and students need reassurance about their physical safety as schools work to develop and communicate risk mitigation strategies for the pandemic. They must also be secure in their psychological safety and feel protected from the implicit and explicit racial biases that often operate in schools and result in exclusionary and discriminatory practices that increase rather than offset the experience of trauma. In the process of creating relationship-centered environments, schools can make explicit and proactive efforts to re-engage students and build trust among all students, families, and educators. And building positive classroom communities is important for moving away from punitive structures and toward restorative practices. Creating new ways to engage in dialogue, goal setting, and decision-making will be important in creating trust. Trust is often built through action.

What Key Ideas and Practices Does This Design Principle Motivate?

Focus first on building and repairing relationships with students. A strong evidence base indicates the importance of cultivating positive relationships and getting to know one's students, particularly in the context of developing "critical care" for students from minoritized communities. This means increasing educators' capacities to engage in issues of race and inequality as expressions of care and recognition of students' lives. Promote knowing each child deeply and well, building relationships, connecting between home and school, and opening up dialogue. A critical component of planning for summer and beyond is communicating to students, families, and educators that their experiences matter and that they will be listened to and supported. Spend time talking to children and families about those experiences, their desire to return to school, and how they want to be involved.

Center opportunities for expression, joy, play, social interaction, and experiences of relational connection. Joy and expression are at the heart of the human experience and how we connect with one another. Co-design and implement programs with community stakeholders. Institute comprehensive programs that focus on building relationships and a sense of bonding to people in school environments that have staff with a wide variety of skills to support student interest.

Many schools do not have structures in place to build and maintain strong relationships with students, families, and educators. Such structures may include smaller learning communities, advisory and mentoring structures, and training for staff to build relationships. All adults in a

school building should seek to know and understand the children and youth they serve and view interactions during lunch, during recess, and in the hallways as additional opportunities to build relationships. Summer learning programs can use strategies that foster relationships between students and adults, such as small relational groups focused on building community, tutoring (both by adults and older peers), and activities that build trust and opportunities for dialogue and caring. Beyond the summer, schools can consider approaches that build stronger relationships, such as looping students with the same teacher for more than 1 year; creating advisory classes; and forming interdisciplinary teams of teachers who work with the same group of students in secondary schools, creating a coherent and caring experience for them.

Resources to Learn More

- Schools and districts can adopt strategies to surround students with strong relationships and other types of support like personalized learning and social-emotional learning. For more information, see "Redesign Schools for Stronger Relationships."

- Schools and districts can think about expanded learning time this summer and next school year with small-group support and high-intensity tutoring that aid rapid skill development and have shown to be highly effective as functions of both the personalized focus on what students are ready to learn and the strong relationships that can be forged in one-on-one or small-group settings.

- Research indicates that trust among students, teachers, school and district leaders, and families and communities improves learning, teaching, and schooling.

- Learn about using restorative circles to build community and relationships in classrooms.

- See examples about how to center relationships in schools.

- Learn about centering empathy and joy in classrooms.

Design Principle 2: Create a Culture of Affirmation and Belonging

Learning involves whole persons and communities, and learning programs should embrace and affirm students' full personhoods and cultural backgrounds. For all of us, our cultural connections—where we are from, the norms in our homes and communities, our language and shared experiences—influence our ways of thinking, communicating, and learning. Research shows that learning happens best when students feel a sense of belonging and connection and that alienation and exclusion create additional cognitive barriers to engagement and learning. When students feel they belong, they feel safe in taking the emotional and intellectual risks that learning requires, and they are more open to taking on difficult cognitive tasks, the complex problem-solving tasks that result in deep learning.

Cultural affirmation, including racial affirmation, is a key contributor to a sense of belonging. Too often, especially for youth of color, schools and classrooms are places where their cultures and communities and identities are not reflected in the physical environment, materials, or teaching practices in meaningful ways and where they feel they must set their cultural selves aside in order to be accepted. This creates a barrier not only to belonging but to learning as well. Students can also feel disconnected when they are marginalized or stigmatized as a result of their sexual orientation, ability or disability status, religion, immigration status, or other social identity.

When students are affirmed and feel a sense of belonging, they have the trust and confidence to push themselves to try new things, to take up leadership, and to engage novel kinds of learning activities. Students should be provided support to develop positive racial, ethnic, linguistic, and other social identities that are connected to their academic identity and sense of belonging in school. When students have a strong sense of self, they perform better in school, are more engaged, and learn more. As students develop their own positive identities that are affirmed in school, they should have opportunities to discover similarities and points of connection, even across differences such as race, ethnicity, home language, and more. Creating a culture of affirmation and belonging is strengthened when students' families can inform program planning, are welcomed into the classroom, and are invited to contribute to student learning.

What Key Ideas and Practices Does This Design Principle Motivate?

Affirmation and belonging can be enacted through a variety of ways, including creating spaces in classrooms for students to share their personal experiences; providing opportunities for students to learn more deeply about their cultural, racial, and geographic heritage; taking students' questions and ideas seriously and seeing their connections to academic disciplines; involving families and communities in the learning space in a range of roles; and creating processes for collective youth and family influence on solutions in the school, in the district, and in the classroom.

The physical environment—for example, the art on the walls and on the bulletin boards—reflects the values of the community, and there is a representation of a diversity of perspectives and cultures in the curriculum materials. Activities reflect and open a range of ways of learning and doing and provide space for students to express their cultural, community, and familial selves.

In affirming classrooms, teachers avoid labeling students in ways that implicitly categorize some as worthy and others as unseen or problematic, and they find many ways to provide positive affirmations about individual and group competence. Support for cultural pluralism that builds on

students' experiences and intentionally brings students' voices and experiences into the classroom also helps create an *identity-safe* and engaging atmosphere for learning to take place and enables all students to enjoy a sense of safety and belonging.

Cultivating student agency and leadership are important aspects of belonging and affirmation. When students are encouraged to take up engaged leadership in their classrooms and communities, they feel valued and view their skills, talents, and selves as integral to the collective space. Opportunities for students to develop agency and leadership occur naturally when students are able to apply what they are learning to real-world situations (e.g., engaging a public audience, writing a letter to the city council, receiving opportunities to mentor younger students, etc.).

In schools where students feel like they belong and are culturally and personally affirmed, teachers reach out to ask students what they need, help families connect to needed resources, and engage families as worthy partners in school and classroom life. In such schools and classrooms, families are comfortable initiating positive contact with the school, and students are empowered to cross social boundaries and demonstrate agency over their own learning, such as asking for the kinds of resources they need to learn best.

Resources to Learn More

- Strategies to ensure that children and youth feel that they belong and are valued can be found here: "Educating the Whole Child: Improving School Climate to Support Student Success."

- Here are five strategies to strengthen family and community engagement: "Five New Ways for Schools to Work With Families."

- Here are ways to build a belonging classroom: "Building a Belonging Classroom."

- Schools and districts can use the following strategies to build an equitable, antiracist culture: "Seven Steps Toward Building an Equitable School Culture"; "Identify-Affirming Schools Need Race-Conscious Educators."

- Students should see themselves reflected in the examples used, books read, and curricular materials employed. Here are some examples of Asian American history curricula, for example, and other teaching resources for culturally grounded curricula from Learning for Justice.

- Educators can also motivate and educate students with opportunities such as the Children's Defense Fund (CDF) Freedom Schools. Modeled after the 1963 Mississippi Freedom Schools that developed leaders in the Black community, CDF Freedom Schools now partner with community organizations, churches, and schools to provide literacy-rich after-school and summer programs for k–12 students in all kinds of communities. These programs, found to be effective in promoting reading gains, motivate and inspire students as they read books that are culturally meaningful and discuss ideas aimed at social action and civic engagement for the betterment of their communities.

- The Remaking Middle School Learning Series has tools (e.g., examples, webinars, podcasts) that focus on middle schoolers and belonging (in addition to social-emotional learning).

Design Principle 3: Build from Students' Interests and Take a Whole Child Approach to Their Development

At its best, education supports young people's personal well-being, helps them meet their educational and life goals, and enables their communities to thrive. This means prioritizing student well-being and addressing ongoing racial and other sources of trauma. It also means deeply attending to student learning. Learning cannot be disconnected from students' social and emotional needs, their family and community cultural practices, and their identities.

Teaching students well during summer and beyond necessitates that we view students as more than their test scores, their attendance records, and their compliance with classroom and school policies. Taking students' interests seriously and considering the whole child suggests that educators evaluate their curricula from the vantage point of: "How does this curriculum meet the full spectrum of whole-child needs?" Curricular materials should connect student learning to what students already know and know how to do. Additionally, this principle encourages schools to take advantage of their unique opportunity to integrate social and emotional supports and skills into the learning process.

What Key Ideas and Practices Does This Design Principle Motivate?

Taking a whole-child approach to learning means understanding the full range of interests and needs that students might bring into an educational environment. There should be frequent opportunities to celebrate student interests and personal growth. Summer learning activities should make space for students to share their interests, experiences, and other aspects of their identities as well as those of their families and communities. Teachers should make connections to students' interests and identities in their teaching.

Summer learning should also build on what students have experienced over the past year. It will be important to provide opportunities for students to reflect on the past year—what they have learned, what they have experienced, and the challenges they have faced. Learning settings should also consider student needs and interests from familial and community perspectives and provide electives, such as art, music, and sports programming, to all students without extra fees or charges. Examples include programs that expand curriculum and pedagogy to address the lived civics and experiences of young people. Programs such as these integrate well-being and ethnic studies and teach community histories in ways that highlight resilience and social action.

Social and emotional learning (SEL) and supports are important elements of a whole-child approach that seeks to enable students to stay in touch with their feelings and receive support in their relationships. At the same time, schools and districts need to be careful when developing or utilizing SEL programs to ensure that these programs open emotional space for young people to express themselves and do not engage in a form of emotional behavior management that suggests that *self-regulation*, for example, means being quiet and unexpressive. Effective approaches to SEL support youth in expressing the full range of emotions as well as understanding themselves and their emotions more deeply.

Centering a whole-child perspective also includes addressing ongoing sources of trauma exacerbated by the pandemic, including racial trauma, which is the result of students and families experiencing ongoing systemic racism. Learning about trauma can be facilitated by holding listening

sessions with families through community conversations (e.g., community cafes, design circles) to discuss their experiences and sustaining these conversations over time as well as finding ways to learn one-on-one from students about their experiences through conversations and journaling. To address trauma, schools can organize group as well as individual counseling, and schools will benefit from hiring counselors and social workers skilled at drawing from community resources and other organizations, such as universities and community clinics. Community school models are a means for embedding a range of supports within the school, including wraparound supports, such as access to mental and physical health providers and practices that engage the community. All of these are identified as fundable under the several federal acts to support recovery from the pandemic.

Addressing trauma need not be disconnected from teaching and learning in the disciplines; for example, the teaching of literature can be a place to explore important themes around trauma and human experience. Additionally, healing-centered approaches can be a powerful way to move beyond individualistic clinical approaches to focus on culturally and community-grounded well-being.

Centering student interests and supporting the whole child require commitment to a reformulation of school as we know it. Beyond summer, building from students' interests and community strengths and engaging young people from a whole-child perspective will necessarily require changes in school and district policies and practices.

Resources to Learn More

- As in-person school resumes, schools can help teachers understand students' needs with tools like the CORE districts' RALLY Survey,* which provides regular information about students' experiences and wellness as they integrate social and emotional learning; mindfulness; and wraparound supports related to physical health, mental health, and social services.

- Community cafes are one avenue for educators to listen to families. These conversations are led by family members and highlight community ways of knowing. Community action stems from the strengths of families and communities.

- Learn about a lived civics approach in which young people explore the political and civic dimensions of their lived experiences and the world more broadly in "Let's Go There: Making a Case for Race, Ethnicity and a Lived Civics Approach to Civic Education."

- Schools and districts can implement strategies and policies to better support children's and youths' SEL. Read "Ensure Supports for Social and Emotional Learning" to find out how.

- Recognize how to implement social-emotional learning strategies in an antiracist fashion.

- Schools and districts can consider moving from trauma-informed practice to healing-centered engagement.

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* The CORE Districts began in 2010 as a collaboration across school districts exploring ways to improve teaching and learning.

- How schools and districts center the whole child and children's and youths' SEL instead of solely measuring learning loss will be crucial to supporting children's and youths' academic, social, and emotional development. Read about how schools and districts can rise to the occasion.

- Schools and districts can reframe learning loss and instead refer to the *learning gains* that children and youth have made over the past year.

- City Year Reports details promising practices and shares lessons learned. Several reports about SEL and student belonging are available.

- C. S. Mott Children's Hospital at the University of Michigan published a report about teens' mental health and how families (and educators) can help teens cope.

Design Principle 4: Engage Students' and Families' Knowledge in Disciplinary Learning

Human learning is an ecological and cultural process that reflects the many kinds of knowledge and practices that people engage in and develop over time, whether in school-based settings or family- or community-based settings. Meaningful academic learning supports the expansion of knowledge and skills in ways that engage with learners' prior knowledge, experiences, and identities. Opportunities to learn are shaped by how educators view and engage these experiences and identities and their relationship to disciplinary learning. All too often, learning environments view students and families—particularly students of color, low-income families, and multilingual learners and families—through a deficit lens. These views can lead to curricular and pedagogical approaches driven by assumptions that students are in need of remediation and that their home and communal lives are barriers to disciplinary learning and academic success.

Educators should engage students in sharing knowledge and practices from their families and their communities and support all learners to connect these to disciplinary practices and learning goals. Children actively construct knowledge based on their experiences, relationships, and social contexts. Learning is supported when educators provide multiple opportunities to connect knowledge-building to personally relevant topics and lived experiences, actively engage students with concepts, and honor the knowledge and experiences students bring as important and relevant. Effective teachers seek to understand learners' experiences so they can support learners in making connections between new situations and familiar ones while helping them develop strategies for learning and problem-solving within and across disciplines. Utilizing this principle ensures students can bring their whole selves and their experiences into learning environments in ways that can motivate interest and engagement.

What Key Ideas and Practices Does This Design Principle Motivate?

Teachers can build on students' prior knowledge and experiences by giving them space and opportunities to explain what they know and think. Teachers can also invite and cultivate family and community-based partnerships so that family and community expertise, knowledge, and practices are part of students' learning in schools. This will also broaden what counts as valid knowledge in the classroom. For example, educators can illustrate symbolic meanings in literature by beginning with songs and texts the students know and carrying their insights into the study of more formal canonic texts while providing an opportunity to explore the multiple meanings and insights in those informal texts. In mathematics, programs like the Algebra Project build on the everyday practices of adolescents, such as traveling on urban transit systems, as an anchor for mathematical problems on displacement and equivalence. In science classrooms, teachers might support students in learning more about family and community practices as a way to investigate scientific questions. For example, when studying plant growth and health, students might measure plant height and soil moisture with tools and also interview family members who garden to hear firsthand about how they keep plants healthy and thriving. The key is that teachers find ways to make use of the variation in students' life experiences, as well as in their reasoning and argumentation practices, to foster intellectual inquiry and engagement.

Generative learning environments provide multiple tools, models, forms of support, and types of collaboration that nourish a growing sense of competence and community over time for students. Instruction can include things such as making the structures of the domain visible (e.g., identifying

the moves writers are making within literature or poetry so they are available for young writers to try out), providing adequate supports to enter into activities and navigate new challenges, embracing multiple pathways and ways of knowing, recognizing, and supporting students' sense-making and the full repertoire of tools they bring to it, and grounding feedback in a sense of students' goals and ongoing growth within the domain.

When teachers contextualize problems and connect them to students' lives, introducing new concepts through discussion and asking students to explain and discuss their thinking, students can build on what they learn to draw closer connections. In making connections to communities, educators can expand the possibilities of where learning occurs. For example, learning can occur in outdoor places like parks and neighborhoods, as part of student internships, and in other community hubs. Further, schools can expand pathways to learning by taking advantage of a variety of learning opportunities through the local parks service, community centers, chamber of commerce, YMCA, Boys and Girls Clubs, sports leagues, theater and dance and musical groups, and local colleges and universities. Developing relationships with these entities can introduce learners to various perspectives and experiences, as well as potential role models, while drawing connections that support disciplinary learning.

Resources to Learn More

- Schools and districts can partner with families and communities and co-design educational experiences. Read about school and district leaders and researchers' lessons learned through the experiences of engaging families and communities.

- Schools and districts can explore what children, youth, teachers, and families have been learning together during these multiple pandemics.

- Schools and districts can use this framework to support equitable and rigorous teaching and learning. The framework highlights 10 priorities, from working to close the digital divide, to assessing what students need, to providing expanded learning time.

- Learn more about community schools by visiting the Coalition for Community Schools website that is supported by the Institute for Educational Leadership.

- World of Work is a k–12 career development curriculum that helps teach children and youth about various careers through the lens of their strengths, interests, and values.

- The indigenous STEAM Collaborative and other efforts are examples of making deep connections between communal ways of knowing and teaching disciplinary knowledges and cutting-edge disciplinary issues.

- One example of a school- and community-based organization partnership is that between the Franklin Institute and the Science Leadership Academy, a high school in Philadelphia. The Franklin Institute becomes an expansive classroom in which students learn a host of skills related to technology, leadership, entrepreneurship, and nonprofit management, for example.

- Read "Student Learning: Unfinished, Not Lost" from the Oregon Department of Education. In this report, it provides resources, strategies, criteria for decision-making, and a framework for "restarting and reinventing" schools.

Design Principle 5: Provide Creative, Inquiry-Based Forms of Learning

Summer learning and beyond affords new opportunities to provide creative, rigorous, and relevant forms of learning that can be interdisciplinary as well as discipline based. This may be especially true for students whose schools have been designated as "behind" and who are often placed into segregated classes with excessive drill-and-kill remediation in core subjects. Summer learning should be taken up as the opportunity to engage in locally relevant learning that helps students tell the stories of their experiences and make sense of them through a range of disciplinary perspectives. For example, a focus on understanding the pandemic can draw on knowledge from a range of disciplines, such as human and viral biology; the field of medicine; and social systems connected to policy, food, and transportation. Learning about history (of past pandemics and their connections to issues of race and social class in the United States, for example) is also required to explain the complexity of human experiences over the course of the pandemic.

Learning environments can engage in disciplinary and interdisciplinary inquiries through a variety of contexts and by using artistic forms of expression. All students deserve the opportunity to be treated as creative thinkers and makers. Learning should be an opportunity for play and authentic meaning-making, with the focus on *how* students are learning instead of drilling content in isolation. Children should be inspired, their curiosity encouraged, and their dreams fed. Research demonstrates that such environments provide rich opportunities for deep learning. Such forms of learning can support meeting multiple learning goals and create opportunities for students to imagine and contribute to thriving postpandemic worlds that serve themselves and their communities.

A core challenge for schools is to find appropriate curricular resources and new ways of supporting and assessing learning—particularly those that help educators develop effective methods that increase student learning. Reinstituting high-stakes testing in service of measuring learning loss is not a useful approach. Evidence demonstrates that such testing narrows the curriculum, results in few gains to transferable learning, and does not benefit students' long-term achievement. However, well-supported classroom assessment can provide students and teachers alike with insights to inform and support learning.

What Key Ideas and Practices Does This Design Principle Motivate?

Learning environments should engage learners in real-world explorations that require inquiry rather than drilling discrete, disconnected bits of information. Inquiry may take place in a single day's lesson or a long-term project, centered around a question or problem that requires conjecture, investigation, and analysis, using tools like research or modeling. The key is that—rather than just receiving and memorizing pieces of information that do not "stick"—inquiry provokes active learning and student agency through questioning, consideration of possibilities and alternatives, and applications of knowledge.

When students are engaged in creative forms of inquiry that take up multiple ways of knowing, being, and imagining in the world, educators notice how students make meaning of tasks, which can lead to unanticipated and rich forms of insight into students' knowledge. Further, new forms of collaboration between educators can emerge that enhance professional community and capacity. To foster inquiry-based learning environments, schools can leverage partnerships

with community-based organizations to support educators by sharing resources and organizing productive activities instead of relying on individual classroom teachers to do all of this work alone. For example, teachers might partner with a community garden, a museum, or a local business. Families are also a great resource for ideas about community members and organizations with whom students and teachers might partner.

Inquiry-based and project-based learning (PBL) provide a means of contextualizing academic skills and practices in purposeful activity. Such perspectives on learning can also shift how educators think about and conduct assessment. Assessment is not punitive, but informative. Educators can utilize authentic forms of diagnostic assessment (assessment *as* and *for* learning) across classrooms and subjects. In addition, providing opportunities for students to set goals and to assess their own work and that of their peers can encourage students to become increasingly self-aware, confident, and independent learners. For example, well-crafted rubrics describe the dimensions of high-quality work and can help students create presentations that allow for deeper questioning and exchanges among peers.

Where diagnostic assessment reveals productive next steps that students can take in their learning, tutoring can augment PBL to support the development of relevant skills. Research has demonstrated not only that tutoring can be highly effective but that hiring older peers as tutors, mentors, and coaches supports learning gains for both older and younger students. Further, paying them for their work within innovative cooperatives can support community economic development and meet the needs of many youths' and families' ongoing economic challenges.

Resources to Learn More

- Learn more about PBL and how to support students as they explore real-world issues, design potential solutions, and engage in interdisciplinary inquiry. Edutopia and PBLWorks (the Buck Institute for Education) offer example units, strategies, and ideas.

- Schools and districts can create intergenerational learning projects among students of different ages and with families and community-based partners. Read about one example.

- Learn more about examples of peer teaching and tutoring.

- Educators can partner with community-based organizations, as Tulsa Public Schools plans to do this summer with partners ranging from the YMCA to Tulsa's Bike Club, Global Gardens, Reading Partners, Debate League, and more, creating highly engaging opportunities that mix recreation with learning.

- Read about four design principles for new systems of assessment.

- Learning in Places is a collaboration among children in grades pre-k–3 and their families, teachers, and community members to support complex socioecological sense-making, deliberation, and decision-making using field-based science learning in outdoor places (e.g., learning gardens, parks, neighborhoods). The project team has developed a set of classroom tools and family tools.

- A team of teachers and researchers developed COVID-related units for grades k–2 and grades 3–5 that help children, teachers, and families explore the science of COVID-19 and issues of equity related to COVID-19. The units are purposefully written to engage families and communities and to support children's SEL.

Design Principle 6: Address Educator Needs and Learning

The pathway to enhanced relationships and learning experiences for children is through educators. Supporting educator learning is essential for supporting student learning. The summer return should be organized to be joyful and educative for teachers as well as for students. Furthermore, increasing evidence points to the importance of teachers' mental health and wellness for students' success. Teachers' social and emotional health translates into enhanced efficacy and student learning. The pandemic has placed additional stress on adults. In order to create the kinds of learning opportunities suggested, the well-being and growth of educators and school leaders should be a priority. Ensuring healthy teaching conditions and helping educators learn stress management skills, as well as other pedagogical and social-emotional skills, are key to their effectiveness and to reductions in burnout and turnover in teaching. Furthermore, when educators have developed these skills, they can teach them to their students to support their success.

What Key Ideas and Practices Does This Design Principle Motivate?

If summer activities are designed to be joyful, intellectually engaging, and relational, rather than focused on drill-and-kill with high stakes hanging overhead, educators will have opportunities to enjoy the children they are teaching and the work they are doing. An important goal is for teachers to feel appreciated and able to teach with joy, passion, and inspiration. A supportive return also depends on adequately staffing programs, ensuring healthy working conditions, avoiding overburdening staff with tasks that take them away from the essential work of serving students and families, and supporting forms of team teaching that are beneficial to both students and educators. Professional development for summer learning and beyond should support teachers in building affirming and racially just classrooms, recognizing and disrupting deficit thinking, and enacting dynamic and equitable approaches to whole-child learning.

Summer can focus on opportunities for teachers—and educators in training—to learn in powerful ways as they team together to learn and design productive approaches. Time for teacher collaboration and teacher-to-teacher learning is critically important. Expert teachers can share best practices with each other and learn from other experts about how to implement inquiry-based practices, how to facilitate two-way pedagogies that allow educators to learn about the students they are teaching, how to create classrooms focused on belonging, how to recognize trauma and locate resources to address it, how to build relationships, and how to develop cultural competence.

Also important are opportunities to learn how both to develop and teach social-emotional skills within a broader acknowledgment of systemic causes of distress, which create benefits for students and staff alike. In order to support the development of social and emotional skills in children, teachers themselves need to learn and embody skills for managing adversity, directing energy in productive ways, and interacting positively with others. As they teach these skills, the improved climate in the classroom and the school makes learning less stressful and more joyful for everyone. Among the tools available to support both educators' and students' social-emotional skills and wellness is training in mindfulness—which develops a calm attentiveness and awareness of experiences, often through attention to breathing coupled with an attitude of openness and nonjudgment. Studies find that training in mindfulness can reduce teachers' stress and emotional distress; help them regulate emotions; and aid in developing greater social-emotional

competence, a sense of self-efficacy and well-being, improved instructional practices, and emotional support for students. Training in kindness and compassion practices that build on mindfulness training for teachers can support educators in cultivating relationships with students.

Finally, informing educators about students and their needs can help them be more successful. The focus should be on assessments that provide authentic opportunities to check in with students, such as those that require adults to sit and talk with students to learn about where they are in their learning and what they feel comfortable with. For example, teachers can learn about their students' experience of class and how to improve it through exit tickets that ask students questions such as, "Did you get to share your ideas with someone else?" and "Did you feel like you were listened to?"

When educator needs and learning are prioritized, teachers engage their work themselves with less stress and more joy, which fosters their ability to create healthy and intellectually rich learning environments for their students. Utilizing assessments that provide teachers with the kinds of information they require to understand and center student needs allows educators to better attend to students. Educators with deep skill sets in social-emotional learning, stress management, and mindfulness create healthier and more developmentally appropriate classroom spaces.

Resources to Learn More

- Schools and districts can and should support professional learning for educators. Edutopia videos offer rich professional learning opportunities for successful teaching practice—for example, "5 Ways to Get to Know Your Middle and High School Students Better" and "8 Ways to Bolster Executive Function in Teens and Tweens."

- Exit tickets can help teachers communicate with students and learn how to adapt their teaching practices to better support students. There are many types of prompts teachers can use when constructing exit tickets.

- Teacher-to-teacher professional development, like that offered by the Instructional Leadership Corps (ILC) in California, can enable accomplished teachers to support job-embedded learning for their colleagues.

- It is crucial that we attend to teachers' mental health. *Educational Leadership* recently devoted an entire issue to educators' mental health from a variety of perspectives.

An Example of the Design Principles in Practice

In this section of the report, we provide one example to showcase what these design principles can look like in action, in addition to highlighting how they should be used in concert to fully support student learning, family and community engagement, and whole-child approaches to education. Of course, no example is perfect, and we could highlight many other examples of schools and districts doing incredible work in partnership with students, families, and communities. With that said, we see the power of using one example to make these design principles come alive.

The Cajon Valley Union School District in San Diego, California, is working hard to use these design principles as part of the district's and schools' policies, practices, and programming. On its website, the district notes that it "focuses on the positivity of each student's unique strengths, interests, and values." It is committed to three goals, which were jointly designed with families and communities: "Happy kids" who are "engaged in healthy relationships" and who are "on a path to gainful employment." Importantly, these three goals were constructed in collaboration with families and communities to honor what the communities and families want for their children.

What do they mean by these three commitments? With respect to "happy kids," the district is prioritizing social and emotional well-being and creating spaces for positive human connection to ensure a sense of belonging through structures such as advisory spaces (design principles 2 and 3). It celebrates student interests and personal growth in classrooms and across the district in learning environments like Launchpad, a middle school library the district has transformed into a career and interest center that works in partnership with the district's World of Work program (design principle 3). The district is affiliated with the TEDxKids site called TEDxKids@ElCajon, which provides a space for children and youth in the community to share their ideas and their experiences as seen here in this PBS coverage of TEDxKids@ElCajon (design principles 1–3). Related to classroom learning, teachers spend the first several days of school focused on building relationships with students and creating a space where all students feel they belong (design principles 1 and 2). Students are asked to bring in items from home and to share why those items are special to them as a way to open up space for their full selves to be welcomed into the classroom. Creating spaces for students to share about themselves and their families results in students finding unanticipated connections across differences and feeling comfortable being their full selves in school.

With respect to supporting students in engaging in healthy relationships, the district and its schools work hard to get to know every child and their families, and they have structures in place to open and sustain dialogue with families and community members (design principles 1–3). They host co-design sessions with community stakeholders to ensure that family and community partners have a chance to offer their ideas and suggestions to best support students (design principles 1–4). They are committed to remaining flexible with respect to strategies and programs that will help them work toward these goals (for example, exploring learning spaces out in the community and collaborating with community members to offer internships so that students have opportunities to engage in work-related learning; design principles 1, 4, and 5). The district has a myriad of practices in place to support student and staff wellness and well-being, including their physical and mental health, and the district supports programs and activities driven by teacher and student interest (design principles 1–3 and 6). Furthermore, the district goes beyond the use of typical assessments, measuring constructs like hope, engagement, and well-being so it can monitor its healthy relationships goals and make sure it is fully supporting all students and adults in the district (design principles

1–3 and 6). To do this, it uses tools like the Gallup Student Engagement Poll and Beable World of Work Assessments (read more about Cajon Valley Union School District's partnership with Beable World of Work).

How does the Cajon Valley Union School District support students on their path toward gainful employment? The district offers career education and development (watch a video about its partnership with World of Work related to empowering students with respect to financial aid; design principles 4 and 5). It identifies student needs by using pre- and postdiagnostics that help monitor student progress. And it hosts a summer reading challenge (see this video that explains more; design principles 4 and 5).

With respect to summer learning, the Cajon Valley Union School District has created Camp Cajon, fun and engaging summer programming with a camp-like feel that includes a focus on continued growth in English language arts and mathematics and also includes outdoor activities and field trips (design principles 3–5). Camp Cajon will build upon lessons learned from its Summer Learning Program in 2020. The district has partnered with community organizations that offer programs and events for children and youth that are aligned with their interests, including theater, music, dance, sports, science, and more (design principles 1–3). The district asks families for their feedback on Camp Cajon and works to incorporate what it learns from families (e.g., families help the district to understand children and youths' wants and needs; design principles 1 and 4). For teachers, the district offers workday flexibility and creates autonomy in part by allowing staff to be part of programming that speaks to their own interests. It is hoped that this will contribute to positive well-being and avoidance of burnout (design principle 6). The district has structured compensation using what it calls a *pandemic rate* (a significantly higher rate than is usual for contracted extra hours; design principle 6).

Camp Cajon is designed to promote and utilize positive psychology. The district understands that using terms and referencing concepts like learning loss, *pandemic learning*, and *deficits and recovery* can have a negative impact on all camp participants and their families. Instead, it seeks to reframe using images of growth, hope, goals, the future, aspirations (career and in life more generally), relationships, and connections (design principles 1, 2, 3, and 4). The district provides wraparound services, as well as additional enrichment opportunities for students, to support working families (design principles 1 and 3). Last, the camp is designed to promote risk-taking and professional learning as part of the summer process in preparation for the 2021–22 school year.

Conclusion

Districts and schools face many potential challenges and barriers to developing the kind of teaching and learning approaches we outline in this report. These approaches require teachers and school administrators to work with families and communities in potentially new ways: as true partners in the design and implementation of learning experiences for youth. There may be additional barriers to starting and continuing in-person learning this summer, and we may again encounter bouts of disruption and adjustment as the pandemic continues to unfold. We will need assessments to better understand what students have been learning at home with their families, what students have experienced in class, and what gaps and areas of remediation must be addressed. The approach we have outlined requires more nuanced assessments than have been the norm in many places, particularly for learners from marginalized communities. Finally, these approaches require a different conception of instructional time and a recognition that building community and connection takes time but pays off in the dividends of greater learning. That means understanding that more and faster do not necessarily mean better or deeper or more learning.

Despite these challenges, there is considerable promise in leaning into this moment as a time to enrich the way we design learning settings. Beginning with designing summer learning experiences rooted in creating opportunities for connection, joy, and discovery, we can create ways of teaching that inspire and support young people to reach their full potential and to be thinkers, learners, and critically engaged community members.

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Following is a list of research examples that relate to the six principles.

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