WSCC **Practice** Blueprint

Session 3

Purpose: To understand the rationale behind the blueprinting process and begin to think about WSCC policies and practices in your setting

Review

❑ What do we mean by Whole Child?

❑ What do we mean by Whole School?

❑ What do we mean by Whole Community?

❑ More about Policy

❑ Setting Up for Success Using the 3Es

Do Together

❑ Activity 3: Mapping Your System

What do we mean by Whole Child?

Whole child refers to the child being placed at the center of the WSCC model (Chafouleas & Iovino, 2021). This means that the primary focus of our interventions and systems is to support healthy child development. But what is healthy child development, and how do we support it?

Healthy child development considers the whole child – that is, all the pathways that lead to the full picture of child success. Different frameworks have been developed to describe these pathways. A common thread across each is that **positive developmental relationships** are key to supporting positive developmental pathways.

> For additional context and information about whole child, whole school, and whole community, we recommend reading our article, Engaging a Whole Child, School, and Community Lens in Positive Education to Advance Equity in Schools.

A whole child lens is rooted in developmental pathways, meaning that our goal is to foster opportunities for all children to reach their potential. We do this through supportive interactions with those adults who can help them along different paths and across developmental domains (Chafouleas & Iovino, 2021). For example, this might include family members, school staff, coaches, enrichment teachers, and neighbors in a child's life.

We dive into this in greater detail in our discussion of whole community next; however, the key message here is that **developmental relationships are a key driver of sustained implementation of whole child initiatives and positive child outcomes**. As positive developmental relationships are the foundation of all positive child outcomes, they need to be centered in all whole child work. Without positive developmental relationships at the center of the work, initiatives that seek to promote healthy child development in different domains of functioning are unlikely to result in desired outcomes.

REFLECT

1. What does "whole child" mean to you?
2. Which pathways of student development (e.g., academic, social, emotional, behavioral, physical) does your setting prioritize most / least?
3. In your setting, what does "whole child" look like? Are shifts needed to enable a "whole child" definition?
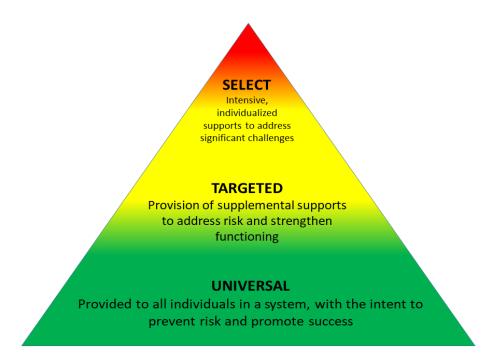
What do we mean by Whole School?

Whole school refers to the systems and programs that organize WSCC work in schools. Whole school also includes support for adults within the school system to choose, implement, and evaluate services that are evidence-informed and culturally and developmentally appropriate (Chafouleas & Iovino, 2021).

The multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS) model is frequently referenced in education as a way to organize the types of services available to support students with different needs. Conceptualized as a triangle, the model organizes supports into levels of intensity based on student need. In Figure 1, a visual of an MTSS model is shown, which illustrates organization of services at universal (provided to all), targeted (provided to some), and select (provided to a few) levels of intensity. Most schools have likely seen MTSS used for academic supports, and many others may be incorporating behavioral supports into MTSS. However, as we share next, MTSS provides an overarching framework for organizing services across all domains of child development.

Figure 1. MTSS model.

As schools and districts face what can seem like an endless list of demands, it might feel overwhelming to think about incorporating the WSCC model into your setting. To help organize the work, we suggest using the familiar MTSS model. As we demonstrate next, the WSCC model can be integrated with the MTSS framework that is already familiar as a way to organize the services being delivered in your setting. The WSCC model represents a comprehensive model, organized in a compelling visual, of the many influences on student outcomes. The MTSS triangle represents a way to work through matching services to varied levels of service intensity.

Drawing on the content of the WSCC model (the *what)* and the service delivery focus of MTSS (the *how*), we merged these models and have named this model Whole Child Integrated MTSS, or Whole Child I-MTSS. The key concepts of Whole Child I-MTSS listed next explain how we conceptualize the integration of WSCC and MTSS.
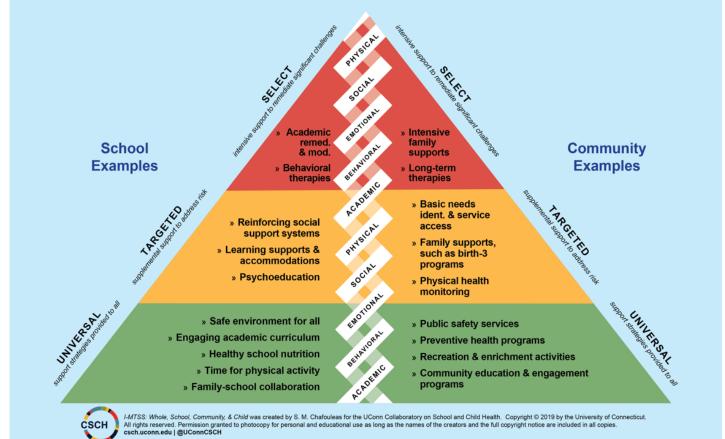
Whole Child I-MTSS: Key Concepts

- Integration of learning and health efforts to support the **whole child** is embraced as school role and responsibility
- School, community, and family **collaboration is foundational** to successful whole child work
- The WSCC model serves as the umbrella to **align initiatives** to support positive developmental pathways (academic, social, emotional, behavioral, physical)
- The MTSS framework facilitates **integration of service delivery** across levels of intensity (core, targeted, select)
- Service delivery systems are **contextually relevant** – efforts should look different across districts and even within schools in the same district
- Coordinated leadership works to facilitate **congruence across policy, process, and practice**

The first key concept is pivotal to WSCC work, and thus warrants some additional discussion. Embracing WSCC work means taking an expanded view of school role and responsibility (Comer et al., 2004; Maier et al., 2017). A traditional view that school systems are charged with two primary functions—instruction and administrative functions (i.e., governance/management)—does not address barriers to student learning (Adelman & Taylor, n.d.). An expanded view, one that incorporates WSCC key concepts, recognizes that health and learning are interconnected in providing the supports that enhance whole child well-being. In other words, school system functions include (1) academic instruction, (2) administration functions, and (3) health & wellness.

Whole Child I-MTSS weaves together efforts, meaning that schools purposefully attend to academic, social, emotional, behavioral, and physical developmental pathways. Schools do so, in part, by engaging in community partnerships that support the work of addressing the diversity of needs of every child. This weaving of efforts across settings is depicted in Figure 2. As shown, there is acknowledgement of multiple tiers (or levels) to service delivery in that all students and families receive appropriate intensity of strategies to support positive development. Universal supports include, for example, facilitating safe environments and ensuring a solid core academic curriculum to establish the foundation for success. For those that need additional supports to be their best, progressively more intensive strategies designed to address risk and remediate existing challenges may be put in place – with both school and community working together to determine how best to effectively provide necessary supports for students and families. At the targeted level, for example, those students struggling to reach reading goals might be provided with additional instruction, in small group format, led a school reading specialist. At the select level, community providers might provide intensive family supports to assist in meeting the physical health goals for a student experiencing complex health needs.

Figure 2.

Integrated Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (I-MTSS): Whole School, Community, & Child

What do we mean by Whole Community?

Whole community refers to connecting student-centered, or whole child, goals across settings and ecological contexts. Doing so facilitates positive outcomes at each level and for each individual, and enhances sustainability of systems, programs, and initiatives (Chafouleas & Iovino, 2021). Although positive developmental relationships serve as the foundation to decisions, high quality and sustained implementation of supports must guide decisions about whole child policies, processes, and practices – which requires the whole community.

A danger with a model as detailed as WSCC is that multiple initiatives could be adopted that each address a specific issue, leaving implementation fragmented rather than interconnected. This can lead to inefficient use of resources, difficulty sustaining any initiatives over the long-term, and missed opportunity to capitalize on the synergistic effects of coordinated efforts. But how do we organize our work in a way that supports whole child development throughout our initiatives? How do we avoid the trap of adding on "one more thing" to address a specific issue?

To promote effective sustained implementation, coordination and integration must be considered. Here we draw upon a framework often adopted in curriculum design to place intended outcomes in the decision-making process: **backwards design**. Using backward design (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005), we identify that the goal of positive whole child development will guide all our efforts. Next, before jumping to implementation, we decide how we will evaluate whether our goal of positive whole child development has been met. Identifying indicators of positive whole child development allows us to envision what success looks like. Then, we design practices that (a) lead to our goal and (b) enable synergistic effects through coordination and integration of work across WSCC domains. This roadmap is shown in Figure 3, where we start with focus on the destination (or goal), decide how to assess whether indicators of whole child development have been met, and then land at the beginning of our route to design practices that facilitate whole child development.
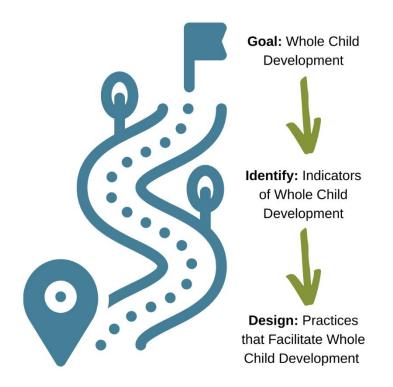
Figure 3. Using backwards design to create a roadmap to whole child development.

Goal: Whole Child Development

Identify: Indicators of Whole Child Development

Design: Practices that Facilitate Whole Child Development

Using backwards design helps us keep focus on our goal and selected indicators of positive whole child development. Now we can turn to the practical aspects of implementation, such as securing buy-in and resource allocation. Coordination and integration of efforts occurs through a lens of ecological implementation, meaning considering implementation facilitators and barriers both within our system and within the context of surrounding systems.

Congruence theory can offer a useful visual of the considerations in ecological implementation. Shown in Figure 4, congruence refers to the goodness-of-fit between the *work* that needs to be done, the *people* who do the work, the formal *structure* of a system, and the *culture* of a system (Nadler & Tushman, 1980).
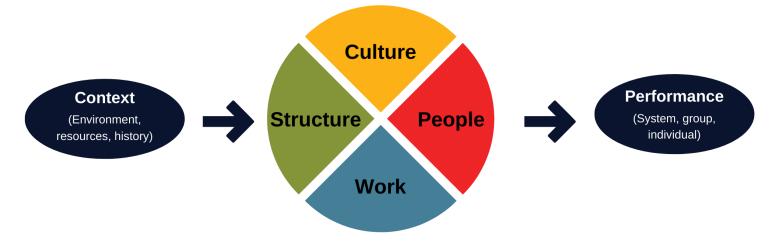
Figure 4. Congruence Model (Adapted from Nadler & Tushman, 1980).

Applying the congruence model to school settings, we define the components of the model in the following ways:

- The *work* refers to the instructional, curricular, and related support tasks.
- The *structure* (school, district, state) assigns the work.
- The *people* include the personnel tasked with the responsibilities for doing the work.
- The *culture* refers to the informal structures in place, such as willingness to adapt current work, or attitudes and skills about new work.

Without congruence, practices can stall or be fragmented – leaving schools challenged with decisions about what and how to implement. Think of the game Chutes and Ladders® – when there is strong congruence, you are positioning yourself to land on ladders, leading to more efficient and successful implementation. However, when there is weak congruence, you can face setbacks – or chutes – that hinder your efforts towards positive whole child outcomes. Evaluating congruence helps us to better anticipate potential challenges and set up for success.

As an example, many schools are considering implementing restorative practices. Although this could lead to many positive outcomes, if a setting does not have the necessary buy-in from staff and families, resources to train staff, or structures in place to facilitate these practices (e.g., restorative circles), efforts are likely to stall. In addition, if school discipline policy is not examined and updated to reflect these practice changes, policy and practice may be uncoordinated and even contradictory. Congruence provides a structure for considering whether the work, structure, people, and culture of a setting are aligned to support implementation. In addition, congruence encourages us to coordinate our policies and practices to further support student health.

> To learn more about implementing and sustaining school-based practices, we recommend visiting resources available through the Sustain Collaborative.

Now that you have built foundational knowledge of the WSCC model and background information guiding this blueprinting process, it is time to apply that information to your setting!

Activity 3 – Mapping Your System

Anticipated time needed to complete this activity: 20 minutes

Your blueprinting journey begins with making a map of your system's current practices and polices aligned with WSCC. The purpose of this activity is to create a 10,000 foot view of what is already happening in your setting related to the whole child initiatives and resources. Although the majority of your work in this blueprint is focused on practices, as introduced above, coordination of practices and policies is key to optimizing WSCC efforts and supporting student health. Therefore, in this activity, we ask you to reflect on both the WSCC-related practices and policies that are present in your setting.
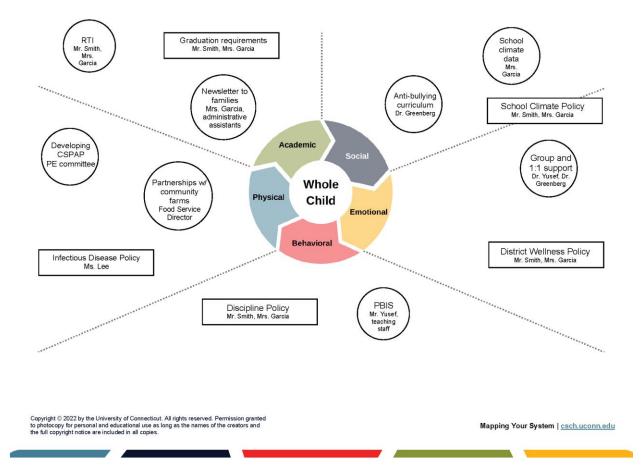
In this activity, we suggest that you:

1. Begin by defining what "whole child" means in your setting. You can use what you learned in the section above to jot down thoughts/definitions/values, etc. Record this in the center of your map.

2. For each area of student development (i.e., academic, social, emotional, behavioral, and physical), list out some practices your setting is currently using. Draw/create circles around each practice, leaving enough room to add or write additional text.

3. Then, using rectangles, do the same thing for policies. For each area of student development (i.e., academic, social, emotional, behavioral, and physical), note

relevant policies that are currently in place in your setting. Draw/create rectangles around each policy, leaving enough room to add or write additional text.

4. Finally, next to each policy and practice, write the names of people or groups (e.g., committees, departments) that have knowledge and expertise about the policy or practice.

Activity 3 - Mapping Your System activity can be found in Appendix B. A completed example is shown below.

Case Study:

Insights from Hillside's Mapping Process

At their next SST meeting, Hillside's team works together to create a map of the WSCC-related policies and practices at their school. They identify many existing WSCC-aligned initiatives that support student wellness, including behavioral supports (PBIS), school climate initiatives (anti-bullying programming), and nutrition environment/education initiatives (the Hillside Farm-to-School program). The team is excited by the many practices at Hillside that already align with the WSCC framework. They also identify and note the people responsible for facilitating each policy and practice so that they have a record of who to contact for more information during WSCC planning.

In addition, the team revisits their conversation from the previous meeting about how to solicit staff, family, and community voice before making any major decisions about their priorities related to WSCC practice changes. Team members share ideas, which are recorded visually for everyone to see. Once all of the ideas are recorded, they identify those that would generate the most input from each group and are most feasible. Based on this discussion, they decide that briefly sharing their work at the next faculty meeting would help staff to feel informed about the effort and allow the team to follow up with brief surveys soliciting input from their colleagues. Mr. Smith feels that he can give the team 5-10 minutes to briefly introduce their work at the next faculty meeting.

The team decides that using the school's messaging platform (ParentSquare) would be the best way to introduce the work to families and solicit their input. The platform allows families to receive information in their desired format (e.g., text, email) and translates the material into each family's preferred language. The team agrees that they should craft a 1-page description of their work to share with families and later follow up with brief surveys when they are ready for family input.

Lastly, the team feels that they can discuss potential directions with their existing community partners (e.g., behavioral health providers, pediatricians, after-school programs) and would be interested in presenting their work to the School Committee later in the year. School Committee meetings are public events in the community that, depending on the agenda items, have decent attendance and participation. Although not comprehensive, the team feels that this would be a starting place for soliciting community feedback on their work and agrees that they can explore additional avenues as they might arise or be relevant to specific decision points. Mr. Smith offers to contact the Superintendent to schedule a time later in the year to present at a School Committee meeting.

More About Policy

As part of Mapping Your System, you took stock of many of your whole child policies. Moving forward in this blueprint, we will focus on WSCC **practices.**

That said, we strongly recommended school and district leaders complete the blueprinting process for both practice and policy, as this will help paint a picture of the level of coordination (i.e., congruence) across what you are doing (practice) and supposed to be doing (policy). Administrators should complete this process as they are typically the key personnel responsible for creating, revising, or evaluating school policy.

Ideally, practice and policy changes will occur in parallel – that is, when changes are made to practices in schools, policies should be reviewed and updated as needed to ensure that the messaging is coordinated with what is happening. For example, if a school has decided to update their discipline practices in favor of a positive, restorative approach, they will want to ensure that their school discipline policy is not encouraging zero tolerance or exclusionary discipline practices, such as suspensions or expulsions. Documenting these practice changes in policy can also help to encourage use of the new practice, as there is now some accountability behind it via school policy. Finally, it enhances sustainability of practices as new school personnel come into the system.

Setting Up for Success Using the 3Es

These 3Es of Whole Child I-MTSS, briefly introduced here and described in the next section, are grounded in implementation science, and are designed to effectively guide your system through *exploration* and *planning* activities that seamlessly transition to *implementation* and, ultimately, *sustainment* of Whole Child I-MTSS initiatives. Taking these steps can help to ensure that initiatives don't fall by the wayside, and that we avoid the aforementioned trap of adding on "one more thing" or ending up with multiple siloed efforts.

Exploring Context

Identifying strengths and needs related to educating the whole child

Goal: to recognize existing areas of strength and need and how existing work aligns with the WSCC model

Evaluating Directions

Examining opportunities to strengthen whole child initiatives by implementing, refining, or de-implementing

Goal: to prioritize areas of focus and identify potential directions

Establishing Actions

Planning for success by identifying action steps, addressing anticipated barriers, and creating plans for monitoring implementation

Goal: to define specific project goals, plan action steps, consider potential barriers, and monitor progress

ACTIVITY 3 – MAPPING YOUR SYSTEM

Time to Complete: 20 minutes

Goal of Activity: To begin to think about WSCC policies and practices in your setting

The purpose of this activity is to create a map of the whole child initiatives and resources that you currently have in your setting. This activity is intended to get you thinking about what you are already doing to support the whole child. As you proceed through the Blueprint, you will return to this mind map to add pieces and identify areas for growth!
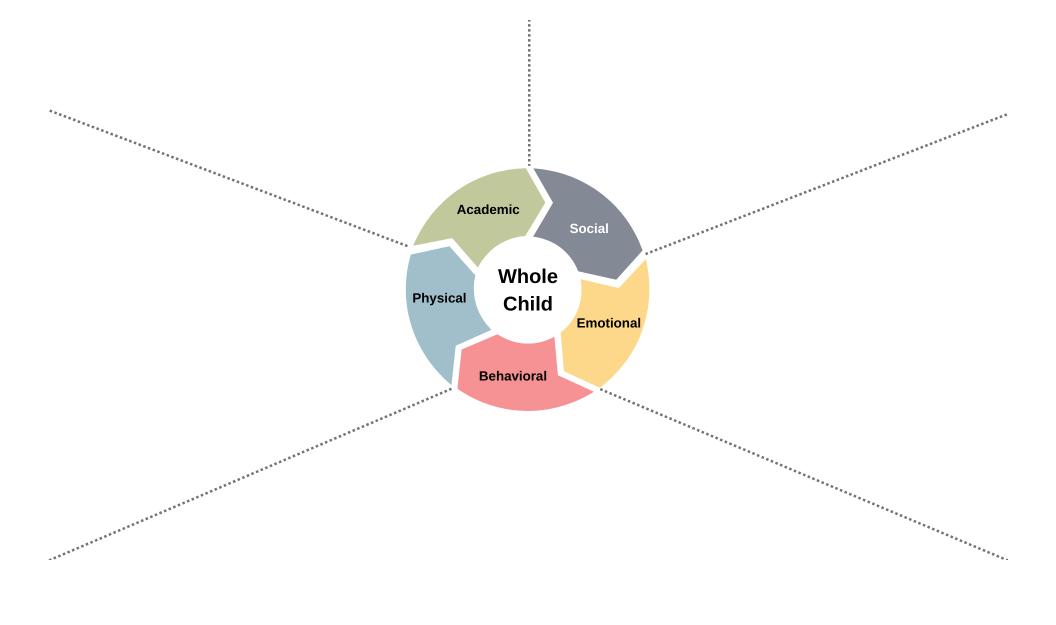
Important! There is not a right or wrong way to complete this map – it is a tool intended to support you in better understanding and refining the whole child work that you are doing.

Instructions

Working individually or in a team, complete the following steps for creating your initial map:

1. Begin by defining what "whole child" means in your setting. You can use what you learned in the section above to jot down thoughts/definitions/values, etc. Record this in the center of your map.

2. For each area of student development (i.e., academic, social, emotional, behavioral, and physical), list out some **practices** your setting is currently using. Draw/create **circles** around each **practice**, leaving enough room to add or write additional text.

3. Now, using **rectangles**, do the same thing for **policies**. For each area of student development (i.e., academic, social, emotional, behavioral, and physical), note relevant **policies** that are currently in place in your setting. Draw/create **rectangles** around each policy, leaving enough room to add or write additional text.

4. Finally, next to each policy and practice, write the names of people or groups (e.g., committees, departments) that have knowledge and expertise about the policy or practice.

Whole Child

Academic

Social

Emotional

Behavioral

Physical

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