

# Ohio's *Whole Child Framework*

A collaborative approach to learning and wellness



Mike DeWine, Governor  
Paolo DeMaria, Superintendent of Public Instruction

Dear Ohio Parents, Families, Caregivers, Educators and Community Partners:

Ohio's strategic plan for education, *Each Child, Our Future*, is the foundational guide for the work of the Ohio Department of Education and State Board of Education. Its language and shared vision shape our daily actions and inform the ways we strive to serve Ohio's education community. The mission is bold, yet unifying and, together, we share a common vision for our children — *that they are challenged to discover and learn, prepared to pursue a fulfilling post-high school path and empowered to become resilient, lifelong learners who contribute to society.*

Among the strategies in *Each Child, Our Future* is Strategy 7, which reads, “*Work together with parents, caregivers and community partners to help schools meet the needs of the **whole child**.*” This strategy emerged from a deep recognition that, “*Unless the whole child is considered and supported, the conditions for learning are less than optimal.*”

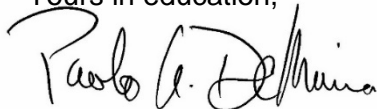
In furtherance of Strategy 7, I am pleased to announce the release of Ohio's **Whole Child Framework**. Carefully crafted over a 10-month period by Ohio educators, counselors and content experts in mental and behavioral health, family engagement, social-emotional learning, nutrition and services for vulnerable youth, the framework provides a blueprint to address the needs most central to a child's holistic development.

A whole child approach to education is grounded in research and ensures students are healthy, safe, engaged, supported and challenged. Ohio's 1.7 million students arrive to school each day with the opportunity to achieve their personal goals, pursue their passions and aspirations, gain new and diverse perspectives, discover new knowledge and understanding, and interact with peers and caring adults. To ensure students are set up for success and ready to effectively engage in learning, their basic needs — including access to nutritious food, health care services and a safe, warm environment — must first be met.

In *Each Child, Our Future*, a core principle is the important role of partnerships and how they transform the education experience. The Department recognizes that parents, families and caregivers are a child's first teacher and the education community's most trusted partners. The entire community, including local nonprofits, businesses, faith-based organizations and other service providers surround the framework to represent the various assets that impact all our children, families and schools. Educating students is everyone's business. Ohio's *Whole Child Framework* gives school leaders, educators and community partners a collaborative model to deliver wraparound services and supports that reach all students and include processes that enhance coordination of existing policy and practice, cultural competency, equity and inclusion and continuous improvement.

I am excited and hopeful about the impact the *Whole Child Framework* will have on Ohio's students. The Department is committed to partnering with schools and districts that are interested in using the framework to guide policy and practice to advance their goals and desired outcomes. We believe our state's collective focus on the *whole child* will enable *each child* greater access to health, safety, security and prosperity through deep learning and personal growth. Thank you for your continued partnership.

Yours in education,



Paolo DeMaria  
Superintendent of Public Instruction

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

OHIO’S WHOLE CHILD FRAMEWORK ..... 2

SUPPORTING THE WHOLE CHILD ..... 3

THE FIVE TENETS OF OHIO’S WHOLE CHILD FRAMEWORK ..... 3

    Healthy ..... 4

    Safe ..... 4

    Supported ..... 5

    Challenged ..... 6

    Engaged ..... 6

SYSTEMIC PRACTICES FOR LEARNING AND HEALTH ..... 7

    Equity ..... 7

    Cultural Responsiveness ..... 7

    Coordination of Policies, Processes and Practices ..... 8

    Continuous Improvement ..... 8

COMPONENTS OF SCHOOL AND HEALTH SUPPORT SYSTEMS ..... 9

    Supporting Students in Developing Healthy Behaviors ..... 9

    Services to Students and Families ..... 10

    Engaging Others to Support Student Wellness and Success ..... 11

    Components of a Safe and Supportive School Environment ..... 12

    Partnerships ..... 13

CALL TO ACTION ..... 14

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ..... 15

# Ohio's Whole Child Framework

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## SUPPORTING THE WHOLE CHILD

[Each Child, Our Future](#), Ohio's strategic plan for education, puts the whole child at the center of the plan, where each component of the plan works harmoniously to support a whole-child approach. Likewise, *Ohio's Whole Child Framework* also places the whole child at the center, with considerations for districts, supports and partnerships surrounding the child through a comprehensive approach. A whole child approach broadens district and school focus beyond academics to include meeting students social-emotional, physical and safety needs. The *Whole Child Framework* provides a blueprint to meet these whole child needs which are foundational to a child's intellectual and social development and necessary for students to fully engage in learning and school. Together, schools, families and community partners can provide the conditions essential for children to learn, thrive and achieve their greatest potential.



In addition to supporting the needs of each child, Ohio's Whole Child Framework supports the integration of student voices in the decisions schools and districts make. Throughout implementation of the framework, districts and schools are encouraged to welcome "a range of student opinions in decisions about academic content, discipline, school culture, free time, the physical space of the school, and family partnerships" as described by [Harvard Graduate School of Education's "Giving Students a Voice: Five ways to welcome student input and bolster your school's success."](#)

## THE FIVE TENETS OF OHIO'S WHOLE CHILD FRAMEWORK

The five tenets of Ohio's Whole Child Framework are five commonly held beliefs reflecting optimally desired student conditions leading to success in life and learning. In the infographic, the tenets are shown in green surrounding the star that represents the whole child. These tenets recognize that students' basic physiological and psychological needs must be met before they can fully engage in complex learning and social activities. **When students are healthy, feel safe, have strong supportive relationships, are challenged and experience success, and are engaged in learning that is relevant and meaningful, they are more likely to enjoy learning, develop positive social skills and achieve greater academic success.** Schools, families and communities must work together to ensure students' safety and security needs are met first.



For each of the five tenets, there are 10 key school indicators. These are listed in the sections below. Each indicator is phrased beginning with "Our school...." to signify their representation of school attributes to which each school should aspire. The five tenets and related school indicators were adapted from [ASCD's Whole Child Framework](#) and [School Improvement Tool](#). Schools can use the related indicators to define goals and outcomes for each tenet. They can serve as a whole child needs assessment within the school improvement process. The tenets and indicators should be shared and discussed with staff, parents and community members to create a common understanding and vision for supporting the needs of the whole child.

## Healthy

Each student enters school [healthy](#) and learns about and practices a healthy lifestyle.

1. **Equitable Access to Health Services.** Our school collaborates with community partners to facilitate equitable access to physical health, mental health, and vision and dental services, with respect to culturally responsive care for students, staff and families.
2. **School Culture.** Our school culture is inclusive. It supports and reinforces the physical, mental and social-emotional health and well-being of each student and staff member.
3. **Health Education.** Our school's health education curriculum and instruction support and reinforce the health and well-being of each student by addressing the physical, mental and social-emotional dimensions of health.
4. **Physical Education.** Our school's physical education schedule, curriculum and instruction support and reinforce the health and well-being of each student by addressing lifetime fitness knowledge, attitudes, behaviors and skills.
5. **Physical Environment.** Our school's facility and environment support and reinforce the safety, health and well-being of each student and staff member.
6. **Families and Caregivers.** Our school collaborates with families and caregivers to promote the health and well-being of each student.
7. **Community Partners.** Our school collaborates with local community partners to promote the health and well-being of each student.
8. **Health Integration.** Our school integrates health and well-being into the school's ongoing activities, professional development, curriculum and assessment practices.
9. **Goal Setting for Health.** Our school sets realistic goals for student and staff health that are built on accurate data and sound science.
10. **Child Nutrition.** Our school supports, promotes and reinforces healthy eating patterns and food safety in routine food services and special programming and events for students and staff.

## Safe

Each student learns in an environment that is physically and emotionally [safe](#) for students and adults.

1. **Social Justice and Equity.** Our school upholds and models social justice and equity concepts and practices mutual respect for individual differences at all levels of school interactions: adult to adult, adult to student, student to adult and student to student.
2. **Trauma-informed.** Our school is [trauma-informed](#), where the impact of trauma on the student is addressed at the center of the educational mission. To create nurturing environments, our school creates school policies, practices and cultures that are sensitive to the needs of students who have experienced trauma.
3. **Secure.** Our school building, grounds, playground equipment and vehicles are secure and meet all established safety and environmental standards. School buildings are attractive, free of defects and structurally sound, with good internal (hallways) and external (pedestrian, bicycle and motor vehicle) traffic flow, including for those with special needs.
4. **School Climate.** Our physical, emotional, academic and social school climate is student-centered and safe and friendly for all.
5. **Student Centered and Connected.** Our students feel valued, respected and cared for and are motivated to learn.
6. **Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports.** Our school staff, students and family members use the [Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports \(PBIS\)](#) framework to establish and maintain school

and classroom behavioral expectations, create rules and routines that teach students appropriate behavior and help students improve challenging behavior. Staff and family members are given regular opportunities and support for learning about PBIS.

7. **Social-emotional Learning.** Our school teaches, models and provides opportunities to practice social-emotional learning.
8. **Supporting High Expectations.** Our school climate, curriculum and instruction reflect both high expectations and an understanding of child and adolescent growth and development. Teachers scaffold new and challenging academic and social-emotional content and skills and create an environment where students feel supported during the learning process.
9. **Developmentally Appropriate Interventions.** Our teachers and staff develop and implement behavioral interventions based on an understanding of child and adolescent development and learning theories.
10. **Empowering Students.** Our school empowers its students to ensure a physically and emotionally safe environment, and students are encouraged to share concerns with a trusted adult.

## Supported

Each student is [supported](#) by qualified, caring adults in ways that address each student's individual needs and circumstances.

1. **Personalized Learning.** Our school personalizes learning using multiple means of representation, action and expression, engagement, including the flexible use of time and scheduling to meet developmental, academic, future career and social goals for each student.
2. **Student Progress.** Our teachers use a range of diagnostic, formative and summative assessment tasks to assess strengths, monitor student progress, provide timely feedback and adjust teaching and learning activities to maximize student progress.
3. **Relationships.** Our school ensures appropriate adult-student and peer-peer relationships support and encourage each student's academic and personal growth.
4. **Multi-Tiered System of Support.** Each student has access to a multi-tiered academic, social, emotional, physical and behavioral support system through aligned school-based and community-based services. Students are supported during transitions into and out of school and community-based programs.
5. **Developmentally Appropriate Decisions.** Our school staff understands and makes curricular, instructional and school improvement decisions based on child and adolescent development and student performance information.
6. **Families as Partners.** Our school personnel welcome and include all families, caregivers, and significant members of the school community as partners in education.
7. **Family Supports.** Our school uses a strengths-based approach to support families' needs. Our school helps families be aware of, understand and connect to both school-based and community-based services and to advocate for their children's needs.
8. **Equitable Communication.** Our school uses a variety of methods across languages and cultures to engage and communicate with all families and community members about the school's vision, mission, goals, activities and opportunities for students.
9. **Qualified Staff and Partners.** Every member of our school staff, as well as each community partner serving students or families in the school setting is well qualified and appropriately licensed where applicable.
10. **Adult Modeling.** All adults who interact with students, both within the school and through extracurricular, cocurricular and community-based experiences, teach and model empathy, care, and respect for others.

## Challenged

Each student is challenged academically and prepared for success.

1. **Challenging Learning Opportunities.** Each student in our school has access to a challenging, standards aligned curriculum and differentiated opportunities.
2. **Learning Competencies.** Our school's curriculum and instruction provide opportunities for students to develop critical thinking and reasoning skills, problem-solving competencies and technology proficiency for all age groups served.
3. **Use of Data.** Our school collects and uses qualitative and quantitative data to support student academic and personal growth.
4. **High Academic Expectations.** Our curriculum, instruction and assessment demonstrate our school's high expectations for each student's individual development aligned to Ohio's Learning Standards.
5. **Lifelong Success.** Our school helps all students understand the connection between education and lifelong success.
6. **Evidence-based** Our evidence-based curriculum and instruction prepare students for further education, careers and contributions to society.
7. **Real-world Experiences.** Our extracurricular, cocurricular and community-based programs provide students with experiences relevant to career-technical education, higher education, careers and citizenship.
8. **Global Awareness.** Our curriculum and instruction challenges students to think about language and culture beyond their own individual experiences.
9. **Continuous Improvement.** Our school monitors and assesses extracurricular, cocurricular and community-based experiences to ensure students' academic and personal growth.
10. **Technology.** Our school provides opportunities for learning with and through technology.

## Engaged

Each student is actively [engaged](#) in learning and connected to the school and broader community.

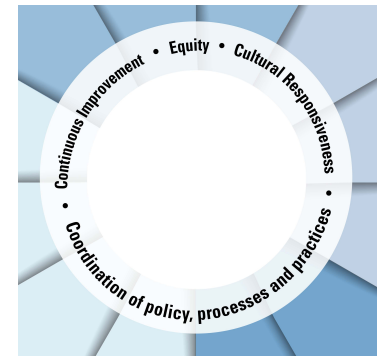
1. **Active Learning.** Our teachers use active learning strategies, such as cooperative learning, personalized learning, peer connection and project-based learning, using multiple means of representation, action and expression, and engagement.
2. **Students in the Community.** Our school offers a range of opportunities for students to contribute to and learn within the community at large, including service learning, internships, apprenticeships and volunteer projects.
3. **Citizenship.** Our school reinforces citizenship and civic behaviors by students, family members and staff, through meaningful participation in decision-making.
4. **Experiential Learning.** Our school uses curriculum-related experiences, such as field trips and outreach projects, to complement and extend our curriculum and instruction.
5. **Access to Areas of Interest.** Each student in our school has access to a range of options for extracurricular and cocurricular activities that reflect students' interests, goals and learning profiles.
6. **Global Awareness.** Our curriculum and instruction engage students in meaningful examination of world cultures and their interdependence.
7. **Relevance.** Our teachers use a range of inquiry-based, experiential learning tasks and activities to help all students deepen their understanding of what they are learning and why they are learning it.
8. **Student Self-direction and Monitoring.** Our staff works proactively with students in a respectful, unbiased manner to help them monitor and direct their own progress and activities and works with families to share updates about their children's progress.



9. **Student Responsibility.** Our school expects and prepares students to assume developmentally and age-appropriate responsibility for learning through effective decision-making, goal setting and time management.
10. **Environmental Awareness.** Our school supports, promotes and reinforces responsible environmental habits through recycling, trash management, sustainable energy and other efforts.

## SYSTEMIC PRACTICES FOR LEARNING AND HEALTH

Students thrive in schools and districts committed to aligning their work with the needs of the populations they serve through a thoughtful, systemic approach. To best coordinate resources, districts should coordinate policy, processes and practices, be sensitive to the cultures that make up the fabric of their communities, ensure equitable access to challenging academics and whole child supports, and dedicate time and resources to a structured continuous improvement cycle. These practices are shown in the infographic in a white band surrounding the tenets. They represent systemic approaches that districts and schools employ to strengthen the tenets and support students and families.



### Equity

In Ohio, equity in education is defined as each child having access to relevant and challenging academic experiences and educational resources necessary for success across race, gender, ethnicity, language, disability, family background and/or income. Equity means designing an education system that ensures all children can achieve their academic potential despite personal and social circumstances. To create an equitable education system, districts and schools need to understand the unique challenges and barriers students face and implement policies, practices and programs to overcome those barriers.

Districts and schools can start by asking the following questions to determine if their current policies, practices and programs address and strive for equity for all students.

1. How is data collected on students' race, ethnicity and native language? How is this information used to identify areas of need?
2. What are the effects of current policies, programs and practices on racial/ethnic and underserved students and families?
3. What mechanisms are used to ensure the district and school's policies, practices and programs are informed by families and students representing their student population?
4. How are all students held to high performance standards, including academic, social-emotional learning and behavioral established at the district or school level? What supports are in place to ensure each child is successful at reaching the standards?
5. How do all students have access to high-quality academic, social-emotional learning and behavioral content and instruction aligned to their developmental needs?
6. How do all students have access to school and community health, behavioral health and social services resources and supports?

### Cultural Responsiveness

Culturally responsive pedagogy and practices are integral in meeting the needs of the whole child. These practices increase students' safety, connectedness, confidence and engagement in learning and their overall health and well-being. Culturally responsive practice is an approach that respectfully encompasses and recognizes both students' and educators' lived experiences, cultures and languages. Culturally responsive educators reflect on their students' as well as their own lived experiences, cultures and languages to inform

and support their instruction. Educators reflect on their own implicit biases and match instruction to their students' cultural norms for social interaction. They use instructional materials that represent and value their students' diverse cultures and history.

Educators have high expectations for all students and provide additional supports to close equity gaps. Administrators and teachers use culturally responsive approaches in teaching social-emotional skills, and behavior and in school discipline practices. The ongoing commitment to reflect and engage in this kind of exemplary practice to inform, support and ensure high-quality instruction lies at the core of culturally responsive practice.

## Coordination of Policies, Processes and Practices

Implementation of Ohio's Whole Child Framework requires the coordination of policies, processes and practices at the state and local levels. Policies are the guidelines and rules that drive the processes and practices. Processes are the high-level approaches that describe how the work will be completed. Practices are the actions performed. State and local agencies, school districts and schools need to create and coordinate policies, processes and practices that align and support students' health, safety and engagement and help them feel supported and challenged.

To fully realize the potential of Ohio's Whole Child Framework, local school boards, districts and schools should review and analyze policies and processes across all aspects of the district and school to ensure coordination and alignment. Schools can consider questions such as:

- Are policies governing student behavior aligned across all settings: classroom, school, transportation, extracurricular?
- Is there consistency across all divisions within the district?
- Do policies in one division create barriers for another division?
- Are we considering the coordination of services among adults to meet the needs of each child to improve student outcomes?
- Are there ways to align funding and resources?
- Do policies, procedures and practices embrace diversity and address equity?
- Do some of our procedures and practices include students in their development?

Additionally, school boards, districts and schools must engage teachers, families and the community in creating an inclusive vision that reimagines schools as places where the whole child is the focus and academics is one part of the whole child. District and school policies, processes and practices need to support the five whole child tenets and their associated indicators.

## Continuous Improvement

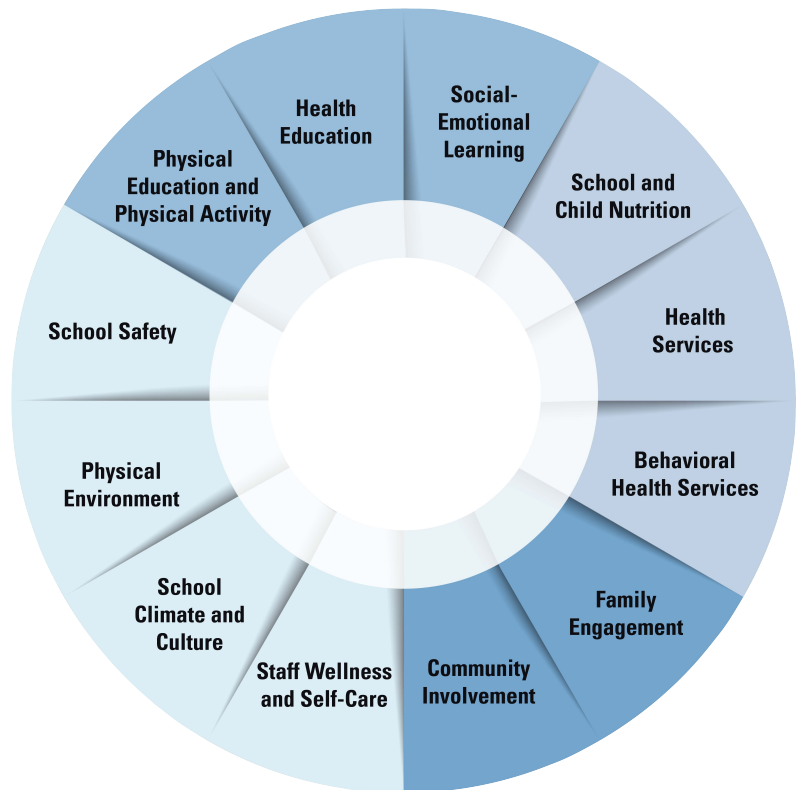
Districts and schools regularly utilize a continuous improvement process to analyze data, identify and implement strategies toward established goals and outcomes, and determine impact of implementation. In Ohio, many districts use the [Ohio Improvement Process](#) — one of many effective improvement processes — which gives districts a template through which focused and intentional action can take place. Improvement processes are driven with collaborative team structures inclusive of students, families and communities.

Collaborative teams learn from each other and facilitate communication and decision-making between and across all levels of the educational system and community (classroom, content area, grade level, school, central office/district, collaborative partners, regional and state levels). Feedback loops and data collection and analysis are a key part of the improvement process. District administrators participate on community planning teams to integrate, coordinate and maximize community supports and services for students and their families. Implementation and application of all aspects of the whole child framework are important areas to address within a continuous improvement process.

# COMPONENTS OF SCHOOL AND HEALTH SUPPORT SYSTEMS

The components of school and health support systems serve two main functions. First, schools provide **structures** that give students knowledge and skills to make decisions that positively impact their health and social-emotional well-being. Schools engage students in health, physical education and social-emotional lessons and activities from prekindergarten through high school. Second, schools provide **services** to meet students' nutrition, physical and behavioral health needs. Services are tiered and support the needs of individual students and the student body as a whole. They are provided in partnership with families and in collaboration with community organizations. These components, circling around the whole child, tenets and practices in 12 blue equally distributed segments, describe structures to build lifelong healthy skills and provide services to meet whole child needs. The four shades of blue identify four categories into which the components are clustered:

- Developing Healthy Behaviors
- Services to Students and Families
- Engaging Others
- Safe and Supportive School Environment



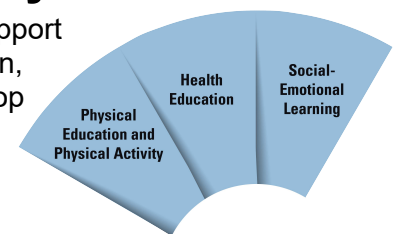
## Supporting Students in Developing Healthy Behaviors

The following components demonstrate specific skills students can acquire to support their own health and well-being. Through dedicated health and physical education, structured physical activities and social-emotional competencies, students develop lifelong skills to maintain healthy bodies and minds.

### Physical Education and Physical Activity

Schools can create environments that offer many opportunities for students to be physically active throughout the school day. A comprehensive school physical activity program reflects strong coordination across five components: physical education, physical activity during school, physical activity before and after school, staff involvement, and family and community engagement.

Physical education serves as the foundation of a comprehensive school physical activity program and is an academic subject characterized by a planned, sequential prekindergarten through grade 12 curriculum that is based on the national standards for physical education, [Ohio's Learning Standards for Physical Education](#) and [Ohio's Early Learning and Development Standards: Physical Well-Being and Motor Development](#). Physical education provides instruction designed to develop motor skills, knowledge and



behaviors for healthy, active living, physical fitness, sportsmanship, self-efficacy and emotional intelligence. A well-designed physical education program provides the opportunity for students to become physically literate, learn key concepts and practice the critical skills needed to establish and maintain physically active lifestyles throughout early childhood, childhood, adolescence and into adulthood.

## Health Education

Formal, structured health education consists of any combination of planned learning experiences that provide opportunities for students to acquire the information and skills they need to make quality health decisions. [Ohio law](#) provides clarification about the content to be addressed in Ohio's health education classroom settings. When provided by qualified, trained teachers, health education helps students acquire the knowledge, attitudes and skills they need for making health-promoting decisions, achieving health literacy, adopting health-enhancing behaviors and promoting the health of others. Health education based on assessment of students' health needs and planned in collaboration with families and the local community ensures reinforcement of health messages that are relevant for students and meet community needs.

## Social-Emotional Learning

An environment supporting the whole child incorporates the important work of [social-emotional learning](#). Like academic subject areas such as science and mathematics, social-emotional learning is a key ingredient to challenging and preparing Ohio's students to become resilient, persistent, lifelong learners. Students with strong social and emotional foundations are better able to interact with others in their schools, communities and homes and later in their workplaces.

Social-emotional learning already has had a positive effect on students. Ohio introduced [Kindergarten through Grade 12 \(K-12\) Social and Emotional Learning Standards](#) to further enrich this learning and build on the good work Ohio schools are doing already. These standards join Ohio's [Early Learning and Development Standards: Social and Emotional Development](#). Ohio's social-emotional learning standards include five competencies: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills and responsible decision-making. Social-emotional skills can be taught to students through direct instruction using a social-emotional learning curriculum and integration of social-emotional learning into existing lesson plans.

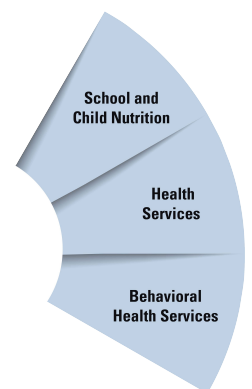
## Services to Students and Families

Meeting the needs of the whole child means providing nutrition, and physical and behavioral health services to students and families. Schools offer child nutrition programs, including breakfast, lunch and healthy snacks. Physical and mental health services are provided by licensed school personnel and through community partnerships with health service organizations.

### School and Child Nutrition

School nutrition services provide meals and, optionally, a la carte items that meet federal nutrition standards for the National School Lunch and Breakfast Programs and Smart Snacks program. The school nutrition environment also provides students with opportunities to learn about and practice healthy eating through available foods and beverages, nutrition education and messages in the cafeteria and throughout the school campus. Schools may work with community partners to address food insecurities of families.

All individuals in the school community support a healthy school nutrition environment by marketing and promoting healthier foods and beverages, encouraging participation in the school meal programs, role





modeling healthy eating behaviors and ensuring students have access to clean drinking water throughout the school day. Schools participating in the National School Lunch Program must have a [student wellness policy](#) that includes goals for [nutrition promotion and education](#), [physical activity](#) and other school-based activities that promote students' well-being.

## Health Services

As defined by the World Health Organization (WHO), health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being. School health services help ensure students' physical, mental and social-emotional health needs are met to best support the whole child.

School health services include, but are not limited to, first aid, management of chronic conditions (such as asthma or diabetes), acute illness care, care coordination, primary care, mental and behavioral health care, vision screening and care, dental services, preventive services, health promotion activities and student, caregiver and staff education. These services also may help address the social determinants of health and improve health literacy and advocacy skills among students, caregivers and staff.

School health services are delivered by Ohio Department of Education-licensed providers employed by districts and health care providers and community organizations that partner with districts.

## Behavioral Health Services

The school provides a range of mental health promotion, prevention, counseling and psychological services to support the behavioral health of students and promote success in the learning process. School personnel serve as liaisons who can help students and their caregivers identify the supports and services available to improve their academic success and well-being. These services can be a part of a framework, like Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) or a Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS). These frameworks build positive mental and behavioral health for all students (Tier I, universal supports); provide early interventions to small groups of students who need additional supports (Tier II); and individual interventions provided to students demonstrating persistent challenges (Tier III).

Multidisciplinary school teams can collaborate with community-based behavioral health and social services agencies to review systemwide assessments and plan a comprehensive approach for services and supports, including effective policies and practices. Along with providing comprehensive services to students, the school mental and behavioral health team and community-based partners offer regular learning opportunities on mental health promotion and behavioral health topics, such as how to recognize, respond to and refer students who are experiencing mental health challenges.

## Engaging Others to Support Student Wellness and Success

Students benefit from knowing they are surrounded by caring adults in school, at home and within the community at large. Schools engage families and communities to best align efforts to support students' needs.

### Family Engagement

Family engagement is a school's explicit inclusion of families in their children's learning and educational experiences. Schools create systematic and multiple ways for families to engage and contribute to their children's education and school. Schools design family engagement activities that build strong relationships, increase two-way communication between home and school, give families information needed to support learning at home, involve families in decision-making, provide opportunities for them to volunteer and support families through partnerships with community organizations.



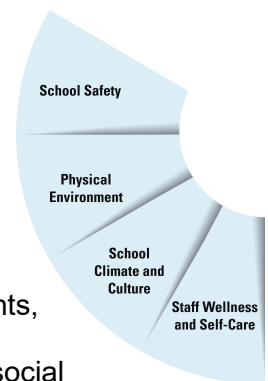
Family engagement is a shared responsibility between school staff members, community partners and families and should be proactive and reciprocal in nature. Families provide valuable insights, identify priorities and provide perspectives and cultural considerations. All families should have the opportunity to provide feedback on the school's whole-child practices and programs each year.

## Community Involvement

Community groups, organizations and local businesses create partnerships with schools through community planning to share resources and support students' learning, development and well-being. Schools, students and families benefit when leaders and staff at the district or school solicit and coordinate information, resources and services available from community-based organizations, businesses, cultural and civic organizations, social services agencies, faith-based organizations, health clinics, and colleges and universities. Collaborating to ensure community resources are accessible and available to all is essential to effective community partnerships between schools and organizations. Community organizations have a wealth of knowledge, resources and services that can ensure families and students are connected with supports to address their health, safety, college and career readiness, learning and development.

## Components of a Safe and Supportive School Environment

Students learn best and thrive in safe and supportive learning environments. The components of a safe and supportive learning environment include creating a positive school climate, addressing students' emotional and physical safety, and ensuring the school's physical environment and grounds are safe.



### School Climate and Culture

School climate and culture refer to the quality and character of school life for students, staff and families. School climate includes the beliefs, values, attitudes and norms routinely demonstrated in the school, including a commitment to equity, racial and social justice. A positive school climate helps everyone feel safe, engaged, supported and connected to the school, which is critical for student success. Districts determine school climate through implementation of policies and practices that prevent challenging issues, address the impact of trauma on a student and help adults respond more effectively when issues arise.

To ensure nurturing environments, schools create practices and cultures that are sensitive to the needs of each student. School buildings use data assessments including student surveys to define their strengths and challenges, drive key decisions for improvement and build the capacity of school staff with trauma-informed practices. This results in schools that are sensitive to the needs of each student and create a positive school culture for everyone.

### School Safety

A safe school addresses the emotional and physical safety of students and staff by using a comprehensive approach that engages the school's staff, students, families and community. The school establishes emotional safety by creating a climate that is inclusive and supportive and builds positive relationships among students and staff. The school implements strategies to prevent emotional harm and builds resiliency, including teaching students social and emotional skills, supporting students' behavioral health needs, addressing bullying of various forms (physical, verbal, social, cyber) and reducing risky behaviors such as drug and alcohol use. The school uses threat assessments to determine the severity of threats and resolves conflicts or problems early.

The school's physical environment plays a critical role in keeping students safe. The school ensures the physical safety of its students, staff and visitors through strategic facility design, maintenance, effective security policies and procedures, and emergency planning and preparedness efforts. A healthy and safe physical school environment promotes learning by ensuring the health and safety of students and staff.

## Physical Environment

The physical school environment encompasses the school building and its contents, land on which the school is located and the area surrounding it. A healthy school environment will address a school's physical condition during normal operation, as well as during renovation (for example, ventilation, moisture, temperature, noise, and natural and artificial lighting, lead abatement, accessibility, mobility). It protects occupants from physical threats (such as crime, violence, traffic and injuries) and biological and chemical agents in the air, water or soil (such as pollution, radon and mold), as well as those that may be brought into the school or on the school grounds (such as pesticides, cleaning agents and other hazardous materials).

## Staff Wellness and Self-Care

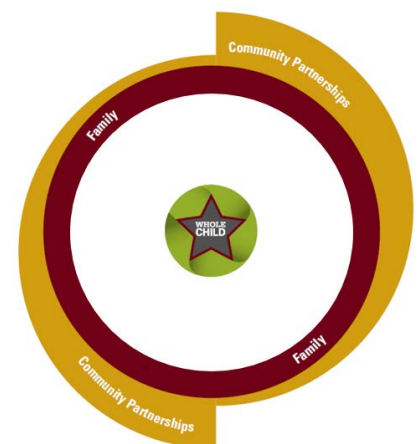
Schools are much more than places of learning for students. These teaching and learning communities also are work sites that employ individuals collectively working on behalf of students. In addition to educators and administrators, there are support staff and other professionals who transport and provide nutritious meals and snacks to students, provide for students' physical and mental health needs and ensure the buildings and grounds where students spend their days are safe and well maintained. Meeting the health and safety needs of this workforce is integral to promoting and protecting the health of students and ensuring their academic success and overall well-being.

A school employee wellness program can influence staff on multiple levels, including the individual employee and school district or community. Programs have the potential to decrease absenteeism, reduce staff turnover, lower health care and insurance costs, increase employee retention, improve employee morale and provide healthy role models for students. Partnerships between school districts and their health insurance providers can help offer resources for employees.

Self-care practices are a crucial component of a comprehensive school employee wellness approach. Self-care is any action used to improve individual health and well-being and may include partaking in physical fitness, getting plenty of sleep and rest, engaging in creative activities or taking time for centering and solitude, among others. Schools and districts should encourage employees to monitor their own physical and mental health needs in a supportive environment and workplace culture. By prioritizing employee wellness and self-care, schools and districts can empower staff to feel their best while further supporting students' well-being.

## Partnerships

Challenging, preparing and empowering students is a communitywide effort. Partners represent the collective action needed to support each child and increase the likelihood of student success. Everyone, not just those in schools, shares the responsibility of preparing children for a successful future. Partnerships transform the educational experience. Addressing the needs of each child starts with parents and caregivers and extends to schools and other government and community organizations that serve children. Everybody benefits when community partners come together to invest in students.



## Families as Partners

Families are represented by the outer maroon circle of the framework. Families are the most critical support system for children and encompass the whole range of supports. When families are supported, parents and caregivers, students, school staff and the community benefit. When schools and the community partner with families, parents and caregivers have increased confidence engaging with their children's schools, are empowered to support learning at home and have engaging conversations with their children about learning.

Ensuring families are partners leads to better outcomes for students, including higher academic achievement, better attendance and a positive school experience. Teachers, educational leaders and school staff are more effective when they have a better understanding of strengths and challenges of their families and students. Finally, as part of the community, families can help form networks with community agencies to inform service delivery and workforce development and reach citizens in a meaningful way.

## Community Partnerships

Represented by the gold band and wrapping around the entire framework, collaborative partnerships between schools, community organizations and the business community are foundational to meeting the needs of the whole child. Schools are logical environments for addressing the health, social, emotional and behavioral needs of children in the interest of learning readiness, but schools and districts cannot support this work alone.

Community partners support districts by providing critical resources, such as experience, content expertise, data sources, joint planning, and human, financial and organizational capital. Partnerships are not just for the success of the children but also success of the schools and communities. Collaborative partnerships involve two or more organizations working together to achieve common goals and mutually beneficial outcomes. These partnerships are built on communication and trust and involve shared decision-making.

Schools and districts may develop collaborative partnerships with local organizations, businesses, agencies and health care providers to best serve and support the needs of their students and families. Schools and districts may choose community partners based on several factors, including district and community needs, attitudes, cultural competencies, experience, availability and readiness to enter collaborative partnerships. Schools and districts should seek input and feedback regularly from families as they begin new partnerships or assess existing partnerships. Community partners can reach the children and families they are designed to serve, form networks of business partners and have greater confidence their outreach is developing and growing the local workforce through strong partnerships with schools and districts.

## CALL TO ACTION

*Each Child, Our Future*, calls for a *whole child* approach to education and recognizes that “*unless the whole child is considered and supported, the conditions for learning are less than optimal.*” Students will thrive in school and life if they are healthy, safe, supported, challenged and engaged. Ohio’s *Whole Child Framework* gives school leaders, educators, families and community partners a collaborative model to deliver wraparound services and supports that reach all students and include processes that enhance coordination of existing policy and practice, cultural competency, equity and inclusion and continuous improvement. Together schools, families and communities can create a comprehensive education system where *each child* is supported, challenged and encouraged to reach their full potential.



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