

# Schools that Enable Youth to Thrive

Lessons from the Science of Learning & Development

# A Perfect Storm for Public Schools

## Recent trends:

- Declining enrollment
- Chronic absenteeism
- Learning “loss”
- Mental health challenges
- School shootings
- Students “acting out”
- Social identity threats



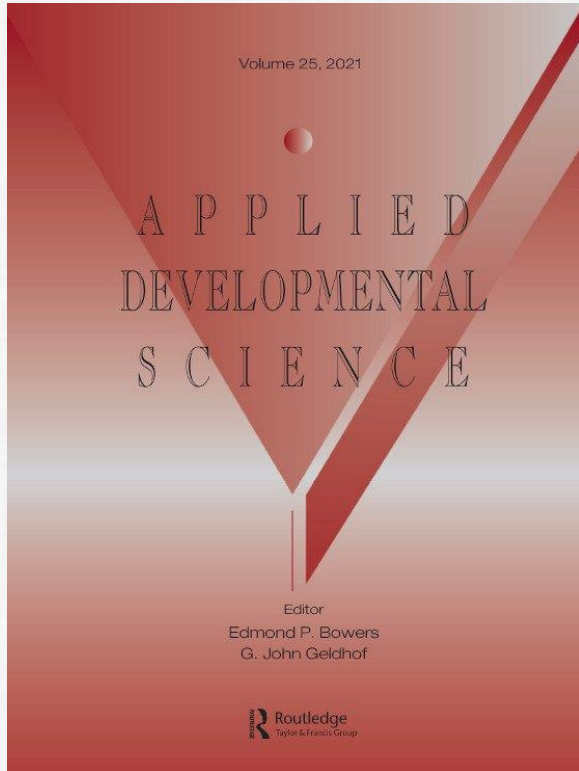
# What Some are Urging Schools to Do

- Emphasis on remediation & test-based instruction
  - “Hardening” practices
    - Zero tolerance discipline
    - Increase ‘safety’ via metal detectors, armed school staff, more school security/police officers
  - Identity-minimizing curriculum & pedagogy
- These strategies increase disaffection & dropouts and ultimately reduce safety and achievement



# Science of Learning & Development (SoLD)

# The Science of Learning & Development



Malleability, plasticity, and individuality:  
How children learn and develop in context

Pamela Cantor, David Osher, Juliette Berg, Lily Steyer & Todd Rose

Drivers of human development: How  
relationships and context shape learning  
and development

David Osher, Pamela Cantor, Juliette Berg, Lily Steyer & Todd Rose

Implications for Practice of the Science of  
Learning and Development

Linda Darling-Hammond, Lisa Flook, Channa Cook-Harvey, Brigid Barron, & David Osher

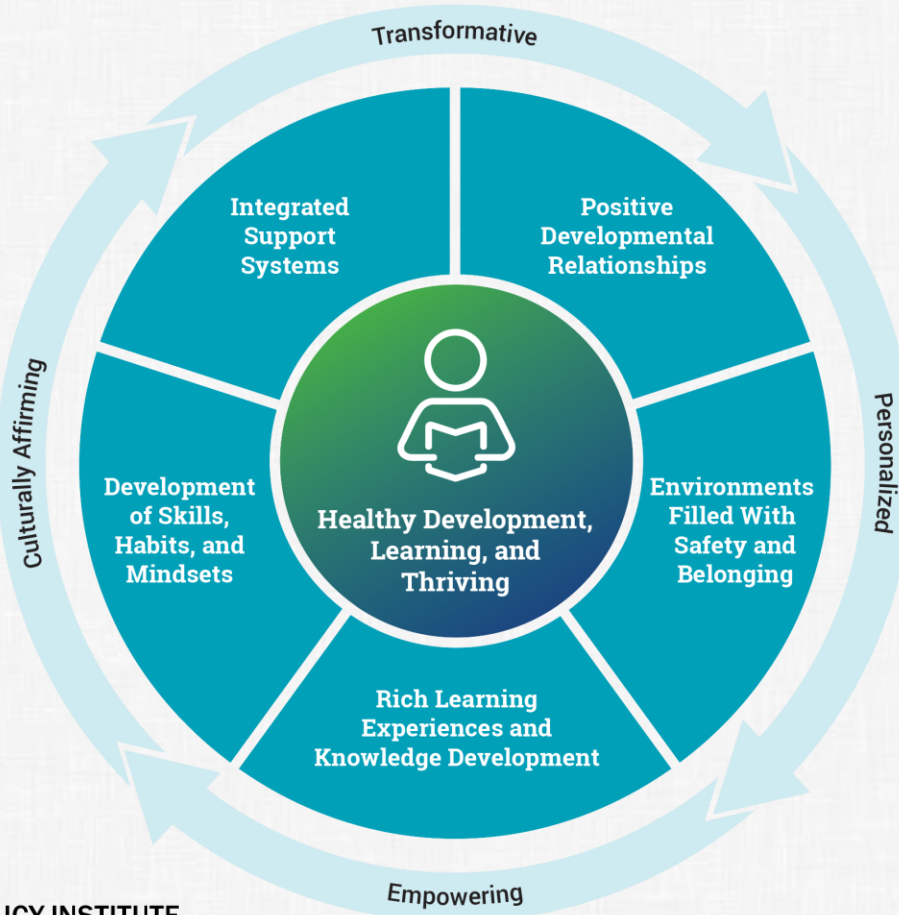
# SoLD Findings

- The brain is **malleable** and always developing.
- **Variability** in development is the norm.
- Learning is **social, emotional and academic**.
- Relationships **catalyze** development & learning.
- **Adversity** affects development and learning.
- Children **construct knowledge** based on their experiences, relationships, and social contexts.



# What Kinds of Schools are Needed?

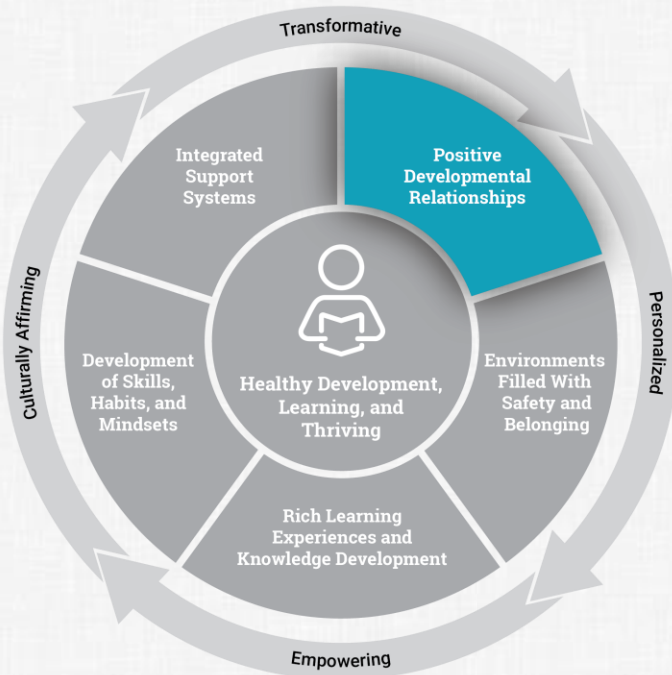
# Guiding Principles for Equitable Whole-Child Design





# What Schools Can Do:

## Relationship-Centered Schooling



### *Positive relationships:*

- Nurture healthy attachment
- Foster a sense of belonging & emotional security
- Have a protective effect
  - Increased responsiveness
  - Buffer the effects of adversity

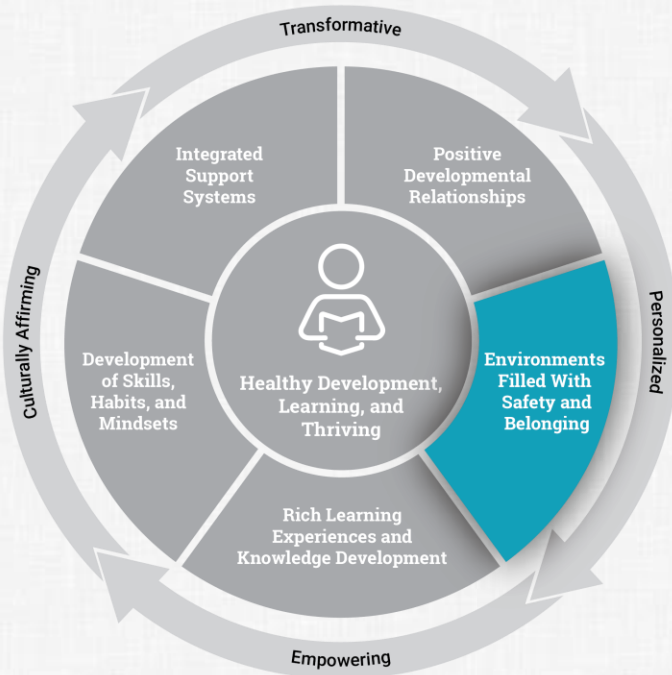
# Positive Relationships

- With students
  - Small family groups (e.g., advisories)
  - Community circles
  - Looping
- Among staff
  - Collaboration time
- With families
  - Family conferences
  - Home visits



# What Schools Can Do:

## Environments of Safety & Belonging



### *Learning contexts:*

- Communicate who or what is valued, rewarded, and trusted
- Affect conditions for learning
  - Can open the brain to learning and engagement
  - Can ameliorate identity threats
- Build pro-social orientations

# Environments Filled with Safety and Belonging

- Shared values & routines
  - Community meetings
- Restorative practices
  - Time for relationship building
  - Conflict resolution
- Culturally-responsive
- Healing oriented practices
  - Calming activities
  - Trauma-informed supports

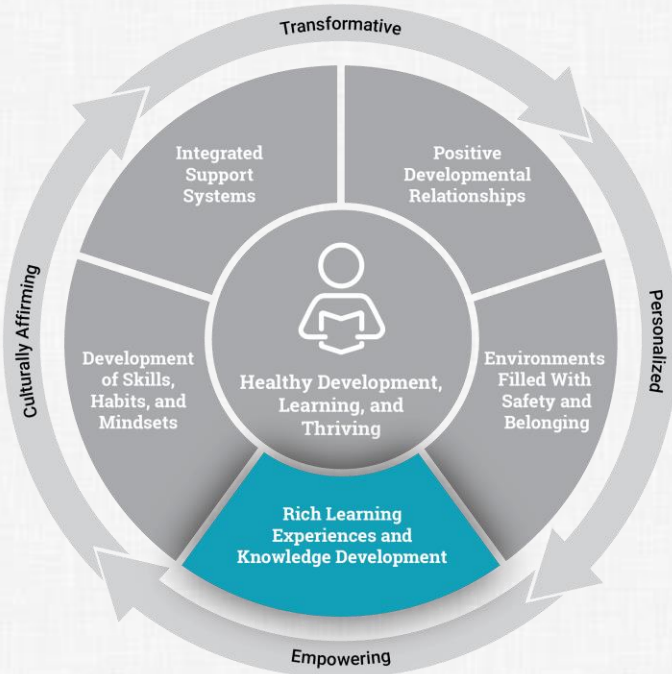






# What Schools Can Do:

## Rich Learning Experiences



### *Rich learning experiences:*

- Are relevant to students' lives
- Pique student curiosity
- Include meaningful applications of knowledge
- Well-scaffolded

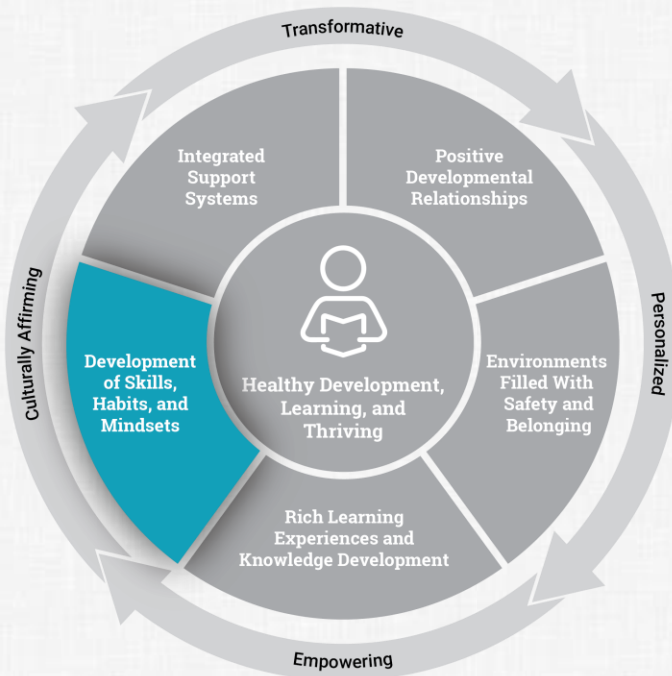
# Rich Learning Experiences

- Inquiry-based learning
  - Project-based learning
  - Hands-on learning
- Scaffolding for Success
- Building on student knowledge and culture
- Feedback and revision
  - Formative assessments



# What Schools Can Do:

## Developing Skills, Habits, & Mindsets



### *Developing skills, habits, and mindsets:*

- Enables students to engage in rich learning experiences
- Enhances students' ability to manage cognitive, social, and emotional demands

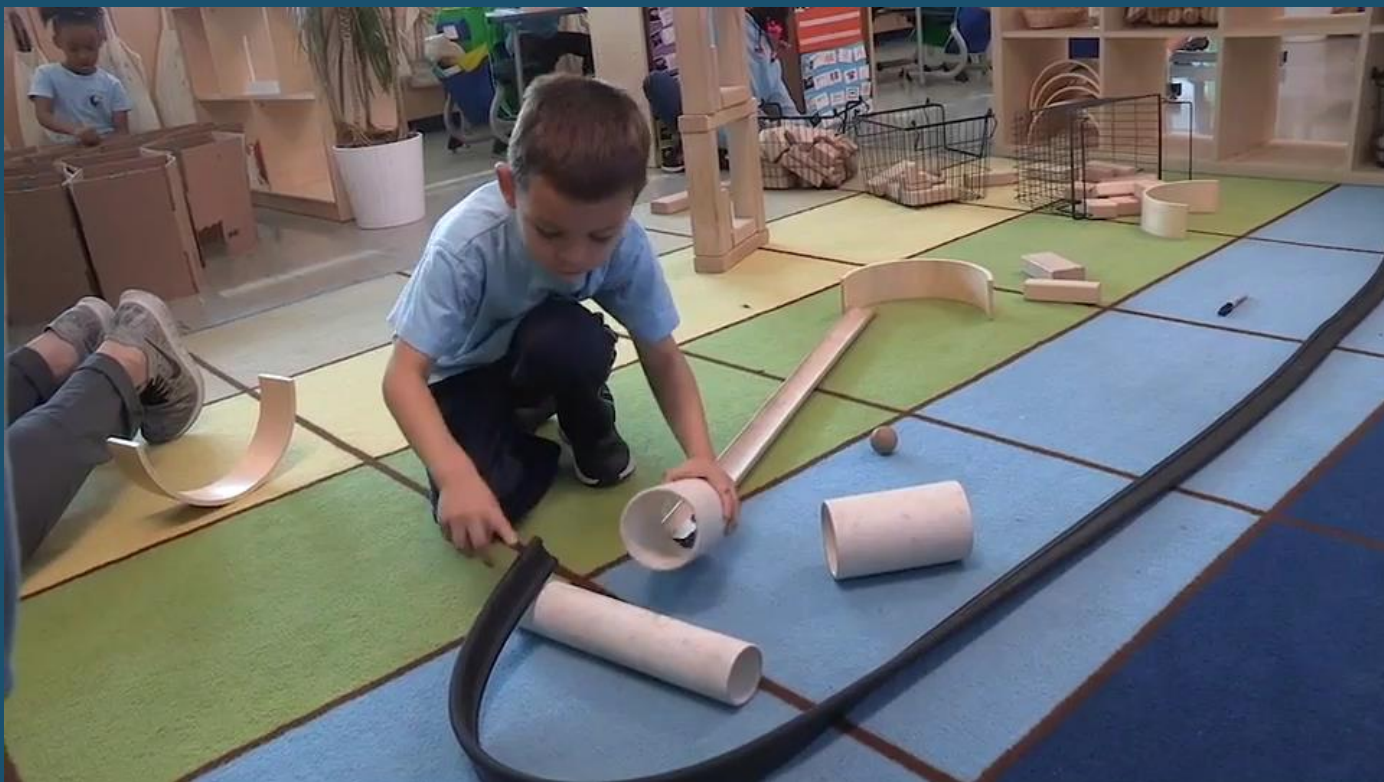


# Developing Skills, Habits, and Mindsets

Integrating opportunities for building:

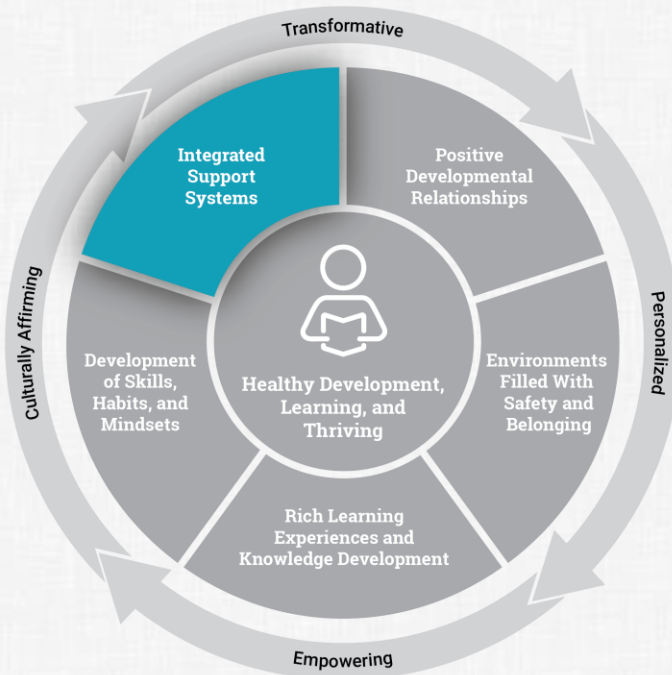
- Self awareness and empathy
- Interpersonal skills
- Resilience & perseverance
- Sense of agency and
- Growth mindset





# What Schools Can Do:

## Integrated Support Systems



*Coordinated and readily available systems can:*

- Mitigate the effects of adversity and prolonged stress
- Meet personalized needs and struggles

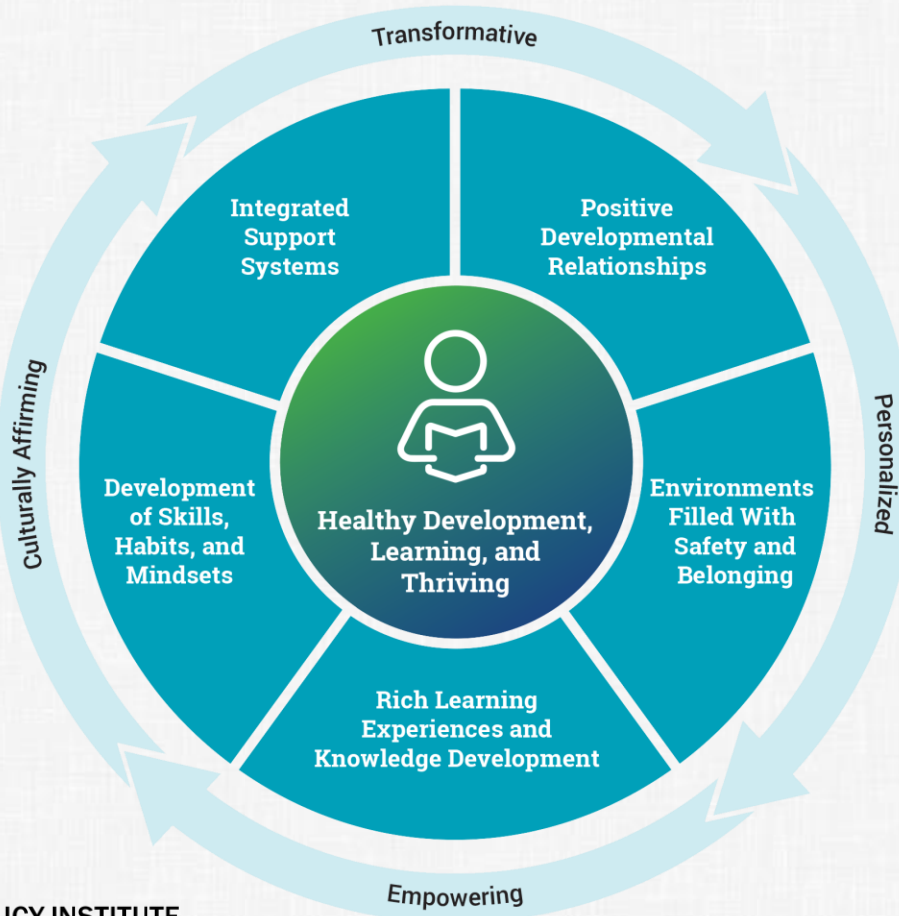
# Integrated Support Systems


Build a multi-tiered system of support to enable:

- Universal supports
  - Relationship-building & collaboration structures
- Supplemental supports (Tier 2)
  - Specialists
  - Tutoring & extended learning
- Intensive interventions (Tier 3)
  - Service coordination
  - Partnerships



# Guiding Principles for Equitable Whole-Child Design





How can SoLD-aligned  
schools be built and  
sustained?

