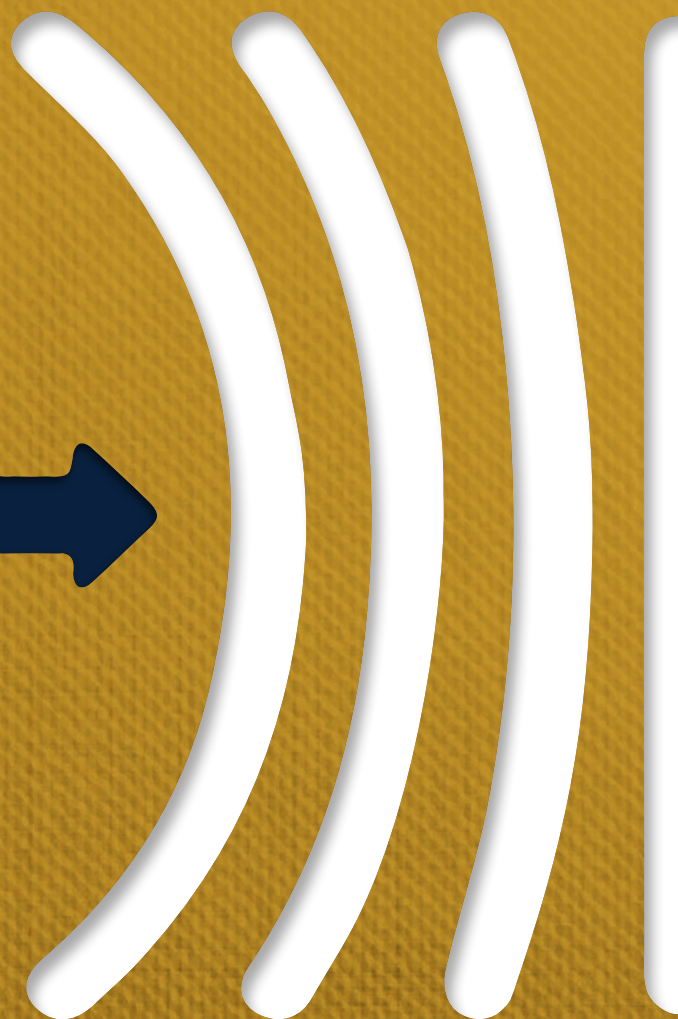




**GLOBAL CENTER**  
for the Development of *the Whole Child*

# FOSTERING RESILIENCE for CHILDREN in ADVERSITY:

A Guide to Whole Child School-Community Approaches





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# Introduction

## Education and resilience

### have a strong reciprocal relationship:

participation in education promotes children's resilience, and resilient children are more likely to participate in, and to benefit from, education. For example, strong cognitive competencies are key components of resilience that are strengthened by quality education. Conversely, children's social and emotional competence informs what and how much children are able to learn in education settings as well as their risks of low performance and dropping out of school (Noam & Hermann, 2002; Peth-Pierce, 2000). In other words, education is a key enabler of resilience, and resilience is a key enabler of a child's ability to learn.



Using school-based programs as a point of entry, this guide describes how to improve children's resilience by fostering positive, nurturing relationships, meeting children's basic needs, and developing their core capabilities and values across three of a child's primary socio-ecological domains: the home, school, and community.



# [ school-community: *all actors who play an active role in ensuring the welfare and success of children at school.* ]

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This guide presents evidence for a school-community approach to fostering resilience. The school-community is defined as all actors who play an active role in ensuring the welfare and success of children at school. The term encompasses two constructs: the “school as community” and the “school in and with the community.” Schools are communities to which students belong, and at the same time, they are institutions central to communities.

## Objectives

This guide brings together research on resilience and intervention effectiveness to:

- **Define resilience** as it relates to children’s developmental health and academic performance capacities in contexts of adversity
  - **Identify how** children’s resilience in the context of education can be strengthened in adverse environments through the home, school, and community
  - **Provide concrete examples** of programs that promote whole child school-community approaches to fostering resilience for children in adversity
  - **Propose outcomes** that can be measured to assess children’s resilience in educational contexts
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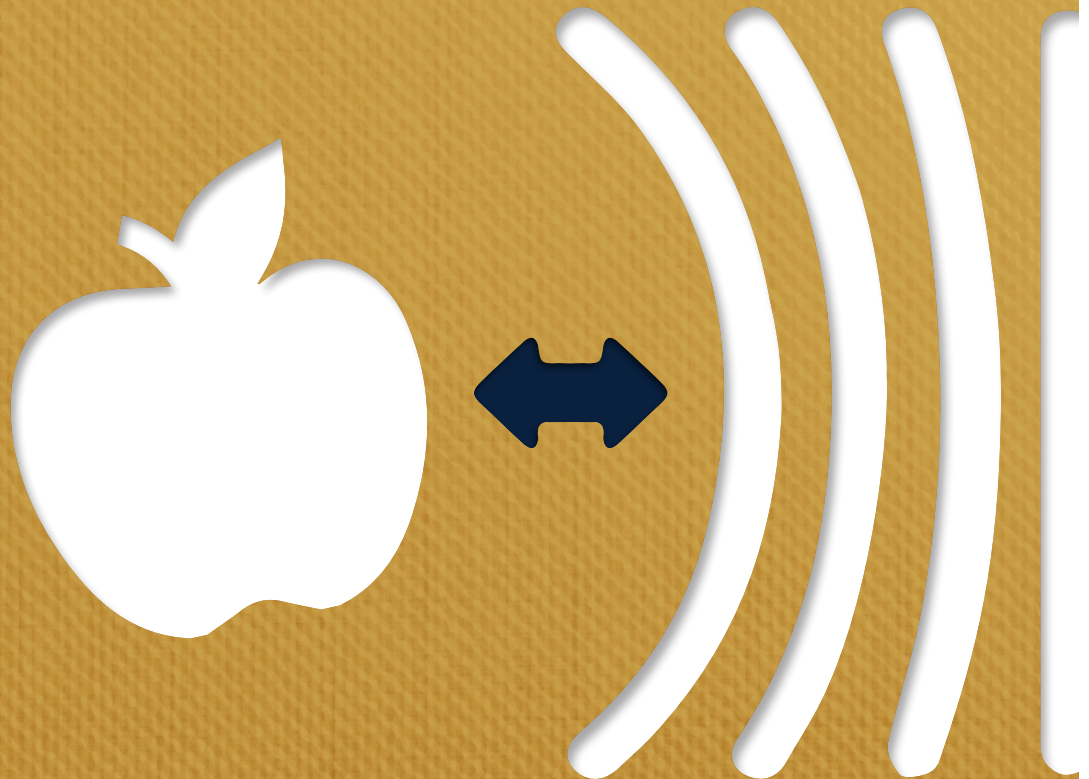
## Audience

This guide is intended to support educational actors in their design and implementation of programs to foster resilience in children growing-up in adversity. Non-education actors may also find the guide useful to encourage collaboration with school-based actors.



## SECTION 1

# RESILIENCE AND ADVERSITY



The environments in which children live critically influence their growth and development. In nurturing environments where children's material needs are met and they are provided with responsive social care, safety, and encouragement to learn and explore, children thrive as they develop.

Alternatively, environments that are deprived of material supports and that are unsafe, unpredictable, and unsupportive present threats to children's normative growth and development (Garmezy & Rutter, 1983; Garmezy, 1974; A. S. Masten, Powell, & Luthar, 2003; Nsamenang, 1992; Phillips & Shonkoff, 2000; Rutter, 2012; Motti-Stefanidi & Masten, 2020).

- **Adversity** refers to both life experiences and circumstances, which may combine to threaten healthy development (Daniel, Wassell, & Gilligan, 2011). This includes both experiencing traumatic life events such as violence and abuse, as well as chronic exposure to negative circumstances such as discrimination, extreme poverty and/or socio-economic disadvantage, and structural inequalities (Luthar & Cicchetti, 2000). However, not all children exposed to adversity have poor outcomes. Children who are able to navigate adverse environments and leverage resources to help them cope are often described as resilient, or having the ability to successfully cope and function well (Masten, 2014; Hudcovská & Schwanhaeuser, 2020).
- **Resilience** refers to the capacity of a child to cope with, or successfully adapt to, acute and/or chronic adversity that is seen as a major threat to their development (Martin, 2013, p. 488). From an educational perspective, resilience influences a child's ability to acquire knowledge (Parker, 2013) and is about

students achieving educational outcomes despite experiencing life threatening experiences or negative living circumstances. Resilience can increase or decrease over time based on positive or negative changes in the environment and changes in the developmental needs of a growing child (Williams, Bryan, Morrison, & Scott, 2017; Van Geel & Mazzucato, 2020; Hölte et al, 2020).

## What Creates Risk? What Promotes Resilience?

Longitudinal and life course studies have identified factors that are statistically associated with negative and positive outcomes for children growing up in adverse environments (Garmezy, 1974; Rutter, 1979; Werner, 1993). The body of evidence suggests that risk and resilience promoting factors exist at all levels of a child's social ecology: the child, the family, the school, or other community entities (Cefai, 2008; Garmezy and Rutter, 1983), and it is through children's interactions in key relationships, which comprise their social ecologies, that their resilience develops. Research further suggests that resilience in children develops when key relationships are able to *offset* the effects of adversity at different stages of children's developmental processes (Rutter, 2012; Liebenberg, 2020; Doğan & Strohmeier, 2020; Masten & Motti-Stefanidi, 2020).



**Table 1:** Risk and Protective Factors for Children in Adversity (Corcoran & Nichols-Casebolt, 2004)

Level	Risk factors	Protective factors
Child	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unmet basic needs (Yinger, 2001)</li> <li>• Poor attachment (Erickson, Egeland, &amp; Pianta, 1989)</li> <li>• Poor self-regulation<sup>1</sup> skills (A. S. Masten &amp; Coatsworth, 1998)</li> <li>• Low educational aspirations (Tiet et al., 1998)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Basic needs are met (Yinger, 2001)</li> <li>• Secure attachment (Erickson et al., 1989)</li> <li>• Sense of self-efficacy (Wachs, 2000)</li> <li>• Self-regulation and emotional regulation skills (A. S. Masten &amp; Coatsworth, 1998)</li> <li>• High educational aspirations (Tiet et al., 1998)</li> </ul>
Family	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of supportive caregivers, neglectful care (Steinberg, 2000)</li> <li>• Parental mental health disorders (Tiet et al., 1998)</li> <li>• Family violence (Herrenkohl, Herrenkohl, Rupert, Egolf, &amp; Lutz, 1995)</li> <li>• Poverty (McBride Murry, Berkel, Gaylord-Harden, Copeland-Linder, &amp; Nation, 2011)</li> <li>• Parental substance abuse (Phares, 1997)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supportive caregivers (Steinberg, 2000)</li> <li>• Safety and stability in the home (Richters &amp; Martinez, 1993)</li> <li>• Parental involvement in schooling (Steinberg, 2000)</li> <li>• Income supports for family (Garfinkel, Heintze, &amp; Huang, 2001)</li> <li>• Parental monitoring and limit setting (Schneider, Cavell, &amp; Hughes, 2003)</li> <li>• Good parental mental health (Tiet et al., 1998)</li> </ul>
School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poor teacher-student relationships (Durlak, 1998)</li> <li>• Poor quality learning environment (non-demanding curriculum, ineffective leadership) (Durlak, 1998)</li> <li>• Negative teacher attitude towards students (Montague &amp; Rinaldi, 2001)</li> <li>• Low level of support from teacher (Baker, 1999)</li> <li>• Lack of safety in schools (Bowen, Richman, Brewster, &amp; Bowen, 1998)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Positive teacher-student relationships (Durlak, 1998)</li> <li>• Good quality learning environment (Durlak, 1998)</li> <li>• Positive teacher attitude towards students (Montague &amp; Rinaldi, 2001)</li> <li>• High levels of support from teacher to students (Baker, 1999)</li> <li>• Safe environments in schools (Bowen et al., 1998)</li> <li>• High expectations for students (Cefai, 2008)</li> </ul>
Peers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bullying and peer victimisation (Ye et al., 2016)</li> <li>• Lack of peer support (Stewart &amp; Sun, 2004)</li> <li>• Peer influence on substance abuse</li> <li>• Peer influence on dropping out of school</li> <li>• Peer sexual violence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Positive peer relationships (Stewart &amp; Sun, 2004)</li> <li>• Involvement in after-school activities with peers (Ward, Martin, Theron, &amp; Distiller, 2007)</li> </ul>
Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of safety (McDonald, Deatrick, Kassam-Adams, &amp; Richmond, 2011)</li> <li>• Disadvantaged neighborhoods (McBride Murry et al., 2011)</li> <li>• Discrimination and social exclusion (Riina, Martin, Gardner, &amp; Brooks-Gunn, 2013)</li> <li>• Inequitable social &amp; gender norms (Landrine &amp; Klonoff, 1997)</li> <li>• Deprivation</li> <li>• Oppression</li> <li>• Humiliation</li> <li>• Gangs and violence</li> <li>• Community tensions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Safety in the community (DiClemente et al., 2016)</li> <li>• Neighborhood cohesion (Riina et al., 2013)</li> <li>• Neighbors who role model positive behavior (Wilson, 2012)</li> <li>• Social justice</li> <li>• Collective planning and action to promote children's well-being</li> <li>• Activation or use of traditional practices and processes that enable children's well being</li> <li>• Natural helpers and active bystanders (Staub, 2012)</li> <li>• Equitable social and gender norms</li> </ul>

1 A. S. Masten & Coatsworth (1998) define self-regulation as a set of skills for "gain[ing] increasing control over attention, emotions and behavior" (p. 208).

# Building Blocks of Children's Resilience

An analysis of risk and protective factors demonstrates that children's participation in school, their motivation to learn, and their academic achievements are not solely a result of their individual capacities but are also influenced by factors in their social and physical environment. Taken together, these risk and protective factors can be grouped

into three essential resilience "building blocks" that operate at all levels of a child's social ecology: basic needs, nurturing relationships, and core capabilities and values. These three building blocks are an adaptation of the five pillar framework developed by Hart, Blincow, & Thomas (2007).

## Building Blocks for Children's Resilience



**Basic Needs:** The core requirements for children's healthy development include appropriate housing, nutritious food, clean water, personal hygiene, health care, and physical safety and security. Students can only focus on higher-order tasks such as learning when their basic needs are met.



**Nurturing Relationships:** Children develop, grow, and thrive through relationships that exist across all social ecological levels in a child's environment. (Yates, Egeland, & Sroufe, 2003). It is the nature and quality of these relationships that can mediate the effects of adversity and build resilience (Shonkoff, 2003).



### Core Capabilities and Values:

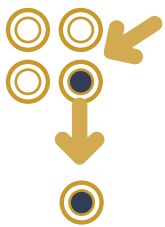
Children's ability to succeed in school is not limited to their knowledge of content or academic skills. Research suggests that children's ability to learn in school and succeed in life is also contingent on a set of capabilities and values, often referred to as social emotional skills or social emotional learning (SEL) (Jones & Doolittle, 2017).



## Basic Needs Highlight

The risks to healthy child development from a basic needs standpoint are numerous and complex. Poor or inadequate nutrition, limited access to proper water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH), inappropriate housing, limited healthcare such as a lack of access to life-saving vaccines, and threats to personal safety all limit children and adolescents' ability to thrive. Further, siloed interventions, which

siloed  
interventions



siloed  
outcomes

address only one risk factor, are ineffective in combating the cumulative ill-effects of these risks as research continues to show that “siloed interventions lead to siloed outcomes” (Singer, 2014; Huebner et al, 2016). When practitioners choose to focus on only one risk, the overall impact of an intervention diminishes; therefore, “coordinated, multifaceted, and evidence-based action” (Huebner et al, 2016) is needed to

enable children in adversity to overcome any risks to their development and flourish (Boothby et al, 2012). While it is unlikely that a practitioner will be able to address all components of a child's basic needs through a single intervention, he or she can seek out partnerships with the private and public sector to ensure that inadequate attention to basic needs does not undermine the efficacy of an intervention.

### Housing

There are many aspects of housing that can impact a child or adolescent's healthy development. For one, crowding in a household can limit the amount of time children play and increase the amount of time they spend unoccupied or as onlookers (Liddell & Kruger, 1989). Studies also show an adverse relationship between household crowding

and children's physical development and academic achievement. The latter of which can be linked to obstacles like inadequate space to do homework (Ferguson et al, 2013).

Poor housing often leads to increased residential mobility (Bartlett et al, 1999), which threatens children's feelings of safety and security by disrupting or not allowing for the development of routines. Additionally, children and adolescents living in informal housing are less likely to attend formal school due to not having a permanent address (Wegelin & Borgman, 1995). Finally, the stress that unsafe or unstable housing places on parents and caregivers cannot be overlooked as these stressors can limit parents and caregivers' ability to provide their children with nurturing and responsive relationships. All of these factors have adverse effects on all components of children and adolescent's development: physical, cognitive, and social and emotional (Ferguson et al, 2013).

### Nutritious Food

Good nutrition extends beyond ensuring survival for children: the negative links between undernutrition (stunting, wasting, and micronutrient deficiencies) and early cognitive development is well established (Black & Dewey, 2014). In particular, stunting has been shown to have a drastic, negative impact on children and adolescent's development, affecting both brain development and causing permanent cognitive impairment. These ill-effects threaten equity throughout a child's life and have even been shown to lead to poor school performance and early termination as well as reduced work capacity and future earning potential (Huebner et al 2016). These ill-effects not only threaten the life-trajectories of individuals but have a substantial impact on communities, limiting their access to human capital

and development. Therefore, the threats that poor nutrition poses for the health, stability, and productivity of both individuals and communities must factor into interventions for children and adolescents in order for the interventions to be effective and sustainable.

## Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH)

It has long been understood and recognized that safe WASH practices have a significant impact on human health, and the absence of safe WASH protocols leads to a range of infectious diseases and deaths (Bartram, 2010). However, in addition to mitigating disease and disease-related deaths, recent interventions show that improvements to WASH are strongly associated with improved growth and cognitive outcomes (Spears, 2011).

WASH programs have also been shown to directly contribute to the following for children and adolescents:

*From Save the Children (2019),  
Global Humanitarian WASH Guidance*

- Reduced undernutrition
- Increased school attendance, especially for adolescent girls
- Protection from violence and exploitation
- Increased dignity



...improvements to WASH  
are strongly associated with  
improved growth and  
cognitive outcomes

Despite their measured impact and importance, the efficacy of many WASH programs for children and adolescents suffers from minimal attention to gender needs and preferences within the interventions; low numbers of skilled WASH staff who have experience working with children; poor knowledge of age-appropriate activities; and limited involvement from humanitarian childhood experts (D' Mello-Guyett et al., 2018). When possible, the most successful WASH programs for children and adolescents are child-centered and may embed game-based learning strategies or elevate children as the key organizers of WASH events for schools or communities (Save the Children, 2019).

## Health care

Not only does healthcare provide families with access to life saving treatments such as vaccines, but the provision of healthcare services (e.g., appointments for immunizations and growth monitoring) creates opportunities for healthcare providers to introduce parents and children to healthy behaviors and practices to support healthy child development (Huebner et al, 2016). Research further reveals connections between improved health and improved school attendance with studies showing that health-related absenteeism can be mitigated and even reversed with increased access to health services as well as increased physical activity (Basch, 2010). Finally, healthy students (emotionally and physically) are also less likely to engage in risky or antisocial behavior and have been shown to concentrate more in class and even achieve higher test scores (Lund, 2010).



## Physical safety and security

Physical safety and security are paramount to children and adolescent well-being. Not only do violence and maltreatment impact children and adolescents' immediate health, but studies show that violence, maltreatment, and neglect can have long term impacts on how children learn, solve problems, and relate to others (Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University, 2012). Ultimately, children who experience threats to their safety and security, especially in the early stages of development, are more likely to experience attachment problems, regressive or aggressive behavior, depression, and anxiety (Huebner et al, 2016). Unfortunately, violence and neglect have been shown to pass from one generation to the next, creating a negative cycle of health and well-being, which impacts not only individuals but also communities' overall health and productivity (Huebner et al, 2016).

Not only do threats to physical safety and security, such as violence, maltreatment, and neglect, impact health and productivity, but research shows they have direct impact on academic achievement as well. When children do not feel safe in their school environment, they cannot concentrate on their work and do not connect as easily with their classmates: "feeling safe at school translates into higher academic achievement, increased student well-being, and greater engagement" (Lund, 2010). Further, children and adolescents who experience crime or violence at school are more prone to loneliness and depression and are more likely to experience truancy, poor academic performance, violent behaviors, or drop out of school (Roberts et al, 2010).

Fortunately, research has revealed several strategies to help safeguard children from threats to their physical safety and security.

### Practitioners should consider how their interventions can embed these approaches:

- Teach positive parenting skills
- Economically empower households
- Improve health, child protection, and support services
- Alter social norms that support violence
- Teach children and adolescents social, emotional, and life skills

*(As appears in Huebner et al 2016, originally adapted from the CDC's core package THRIVES, Hillis 2015).*

## Nurturing Relationships Highlight

### Parents and Caregivers

The impact of healthy relationships on children begins with the first relationships children have with their caregivers. These relationships form early brain architecture, and their impact extends across a child's entire life: "young children experience their world as an environment of relationships, and these relationships affect virtually all aspects of their development – intellectual, social, emotional, physical, behavioral, and moral" (National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2004).

The healthy development of these behaviors hinges on the quality and reliability of relationships present in a young child's life and ultimately lay the foundation for key development outcomes later in life. Some of these outcomes include:

*From the National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2004*

- self-confidence and sound mental health
- motivation to learn
- achievement in school and later in life
- the ability to control aggressive impulses and resolve conflict nonviolently
- knowing the difference between right and wrong
- having the capacity to develop and sustain casual friendships and intimate relationships
- being a successful parent oneself

## Teachers

Nurturing relationships at school are also crucial for a successful transition to an academic environment. Research shows that students who develop positive relationships with their teachers as early as kindergarten are more likely to be excited to learn and develop a more positive attitude towards school. This translates to greater self-confidence and greater achievement within the classroom (Pianta, 1999; Birch & Ladd, 1997; Ladd et al, 1999; Ladd et al, 1996; Ladd et al, 1997; Pianta & Steinberg, 1992). Further, "learning environments that focus on caring student-teacher relationships, students' social and emotional needs, and high expectations result in students who perform better

academically; are more likely to attend school; and have significantly lower rates of emotional distress, violence, delinquency, substance abuse, and sexual activity" (Lund, 2010).

## Peers

Not only are relationships with caregivers and teachers vital to positive developmental and life outcomes, but so too are the relationships children and adolescents establish with their peers. Children who experience greater peer acceptance and friendship tend to do better in the classroom and have a more positive school experience (Pianta, 1999; Birch & Ladd, 1997; Ladd et al, 1999; Ladd et al, 1996; Ladd et al, 1997; Pianta & Steinberg, 1992).

## Core Capabilities and Values: Social and Emotional Learning

Social and emotional competencies and skills are the bricks and mortar for cognitive development and academic achievement. They are also key to personal development and life-long success. As such, a number of frameworks have been assembled to enable educators and actors to better understand how to promote social and emotional learning (SEL).<sup>2</sup> While these frameworks are typically used as a guide for how to integrate SEL within a school context, the reality is that SEL operates across all contexts: the school, the home, and the community. In later sections, this guide will address how actors and practitioners can embed SEL at all levels of a child's social ecology. Notably, SEL frameworks from CASEL and the OECD have emerged as two popular ways to understand and organize SEL skills.

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2 Harvard University's [EASEL Lab](#) puts forth a useful tool to compare various frameworks and to understand SEL.



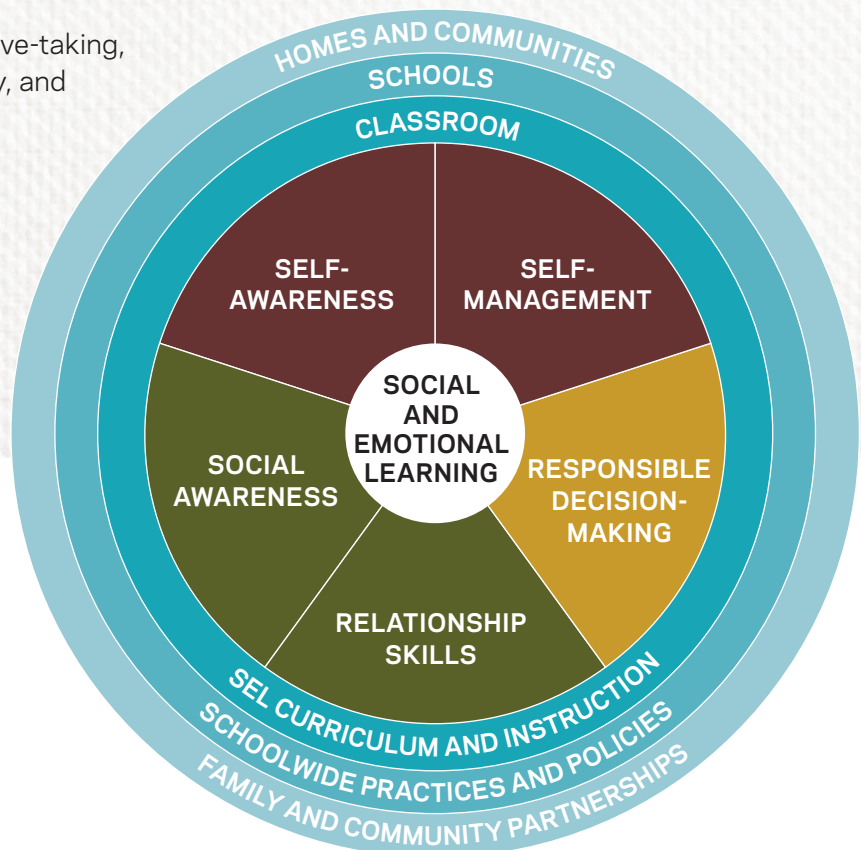


CASEL's framework focuses on promoting intrapersonal, interpersonal, and cognitive competence and organizes itself around five core competencies: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making. Each of these competencies can be further divided into specific tasks and skills (CASEL, 2017).

- 1. Self-awareness:** identifying emotions, accurate self-perception, recognizing strengths, self-confidence, and self-efficacy
- 2. Self-management:** impulse control, stress management, self-discipline, self-motivation, goal-setting, and organizational skills
- 3. Social awareness:** perspective-taking, empathy, appreciating diversity, and respect for others
- 4. Relationship skills:** communication, social engagement, relationship-building, and teamwork
- 5. Responsible decision making:** identifying problems, analyzing situations, solving problems, evaluating, reflecting, and ethical responsibility



**Learn more** about the CASEL framework [here](#).

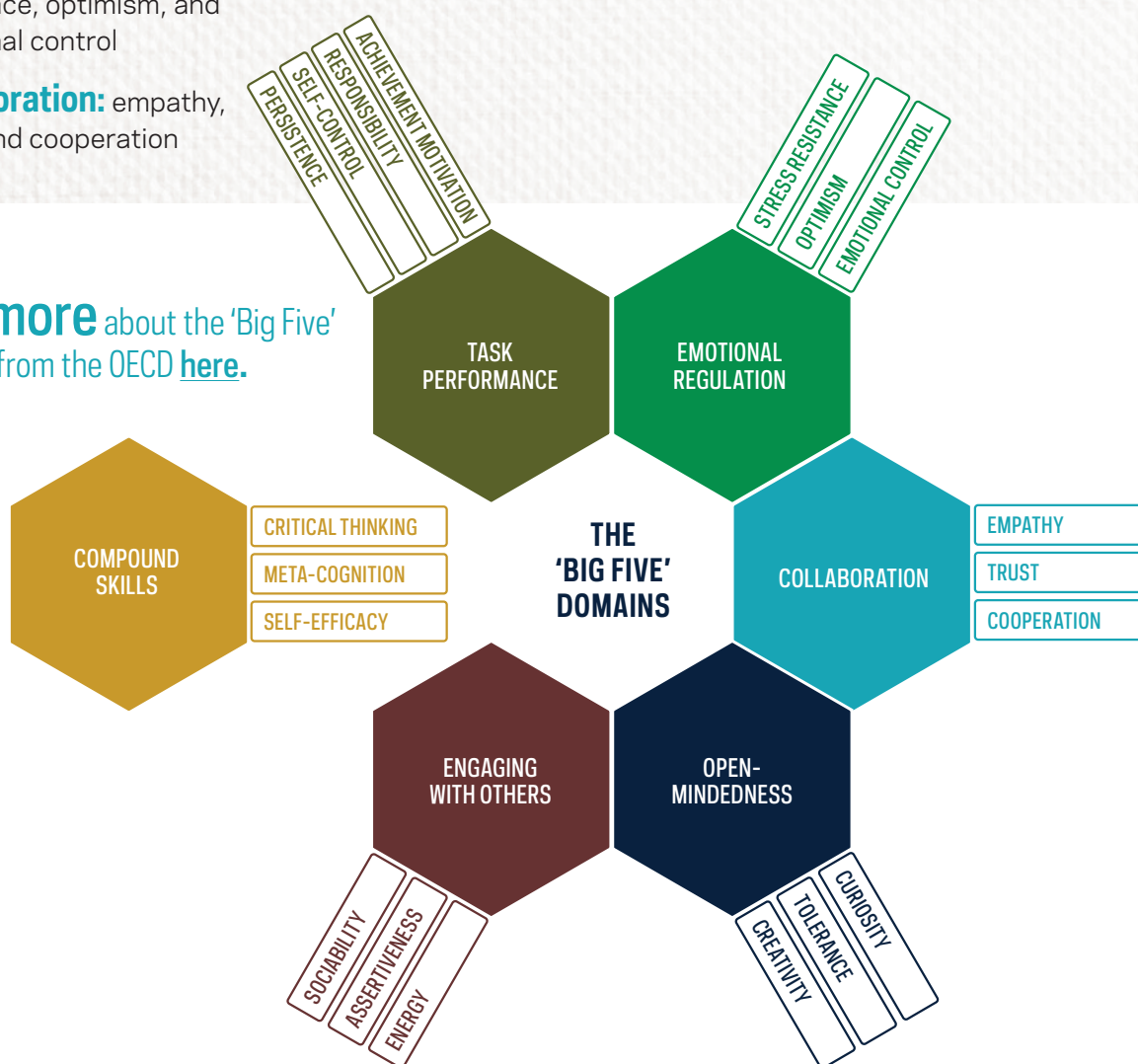




Based on the “Big Five Model” of personality traits (openness to experience, conscientiousness, emotional stability, extraversion, and agreeableness), the OECD organizes its SEL framework around the ‘Big Five’ domains of task performance, emotional regulation, collaboration, open-mindedness, and engaging with others (OECD). Similar to CASEL’s framework, the ‘Big Five’ divides each domain into specific skills and tasks.

1. **Task Performance:** achievement motivation, responsibility, self-control, and persistence
2. **Emotional Regulation:** stress resistance, optimism, and emotional control
3. **Collaboration:** empathy, trust, and cooperation
4. **Open-mindedness:** curiosity, tolerance, and creativity
5. **Engaging with others:** sociability, assertiveness, and energy

 **Learn more** about the ‘Big Five’ framework from the OECD [here](#).





## Contextualization is Key

While there is inherent value in these frameworks as a means to begin conversations around embedding SEL in programming, practitioners must resist the urge to use these frameworks in a copy and paste manner across contexts: ultimately, contextualization is at the core of implementing SEL programming successfully. A number of approaches focused on contextualization and the related assessment of SEL have emerged in response to this need.

## The Hubbard Methodology

The Hubbard methodology is a rapid ethnographic qualitative approach that uses semi-structured interviews centered around one question or topic to systematically collect information about local perceptions, beliefs, or needs. The methodology is, by design, open to change and adaptation, and when applying it to differing programs in diverse contexts and cultures, there is almost always a need to adapt to the actual skills, needs, and demands of specific programs and settings.



During the 2019-2020 school year, a research team from the University of Notre Dame's Global Center for the Development of the Whole Child (GC-DWC) conducted 136 interviews in Peru, using the Hubbard methodology to gather information on local perceptions of social and emotional skills by students, parents, and teachers in the rural communities of Piura and Cusco. Using data collected from these interviews, researchers coded and analyzed which social and emotional skills participants mentioned the most and their level of importance as well as specific behaviors attributed to the different skills. At the end of the analysis, 25 skills were identified and organized into six families that represent



**25 skills**  
identified and organized  
into **six families**

the local perceptions and understandings of SEL, which will allow for more relevant programming and assessment of SEL programs in the future.



### Asset-based Approach

An asset-based approach to development strives to identify existing assets, skills, and resources at the community level. An asset-based approach to SEL specifically allows practitioners to tap into the core values of communities and seek to understand what aspects of a culture align with or advance the work of SEL. Grounded in culturally relevant

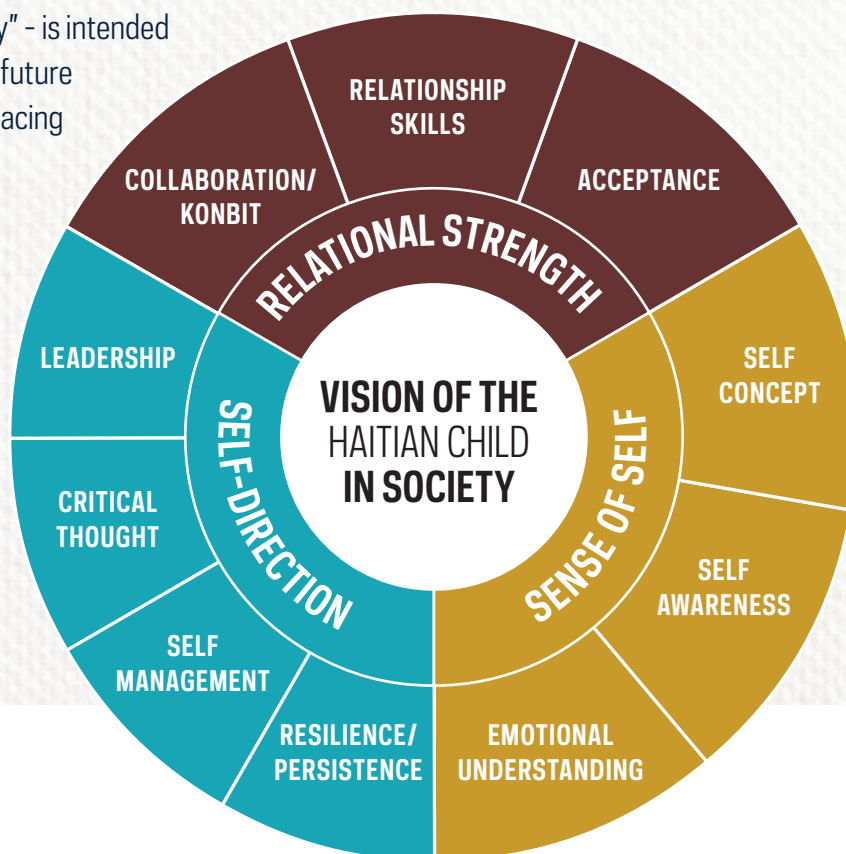
and sustaining pedagogies, an asset-based approach to SEL also enables practitioners to develop a framework and corresponding resources that create an inclusive learning environment, consider and incorporate what is culturally important given student demographics, and challenge aspects of the culture that are oppressive while educating students with high expectations and academic rigor.



In 2017, a team from the University of Notre Dame formed a task force to create a Haitian SEL framework using an asset-based approach. The task force was composed of a group of Haitian and international academics and educational leaders from NGOs, INGOs, universities, and government entities. The team of thought partners grounded their work in the experience and expertise of Haitian scholars, educational leaders, and partners familiar with the Haitian context. Additionally, members of this Task Force drew upon the extant research on SEL and SEL frameworks as well as related fields, including psychology, sociology, anthropology, and education. The resulting framework- “The Vision of the Haitian Child in Society” - is intended to inform the current and future development of student-facing content, curricula, and media, as well as, the development of adult-facing content, training, practices, and tools by actors supporting Haitian education.



**Learn more** about the framework [here](#).



## Cognitive Interviewing

A whole-child approach to measuring progress in schools must include more than just academics. It must also include the multiple layers of a child's life, such as health, family resources, and community in order to gain a more complete picture. The tools used to measure progress must also be placed in context and be culturally sensitive, so that the language is understood, and concepts reflect ideas that are meaningful to the local community.

The cognitive interview aims to make explicit a participant's typically implicit cognitive process. Information from this process is used to determine whether participants interpret questions the way researchers expect. Issues in understanding questions can help the researcher modify a survey so that it is more valid and reliable. Cognitive interviewing is based on the theory that before responding to a survey question, participants must 1) comprehend the question, 2) retrieve information from memory, 3) make a judgment about how (and if) to use this information to respond, and 4) select a response option (Tourangeau, 1984).



In May 2017, the Fostering Resilience Initiative (FRI), housed within the GC-DWC, evaluated an innovative literacy program from ACE Haiti, using cognitive interviews to better capture SEL and the local context. FRI conducted 40 cognitive interviews with grade 1-3 students on the north coast of Haiti in three parish school communities—urban, peri-urban, and rural. Ultimately, FRI's study led to 58 changes to the International Social and Emotional Learning Assessment (ISELA).

This process revealed three recommendations for practitioners and actors looking to conduct similar studies of SEL in their context using cognitive interviewing.

1. Develop a two-step cognitive interview process.
2. Use strategies to reduce fatigue and satisficing behavior.
3. Design questions that consider skill level and comprehension.



**Learn more** about this study in the [GC-DWC's brief](#) on cognitive interviewing with young children.



**FRI's study** led to **58 changes** to the International Social and Emotional Learning Assessment (ISELA)



## Resilience Building Principles

Keeping in mind the building blocks to children and adolescent resilience, this next section will provide guidance on the design and evaluation of interventions aimed at fostering resilience. While associations between interventions in education-based settings and improved performance in fostering resilience have been identified, the body of evidence is not

sufficiently robust to suggest “off-the-shelf interventions” (Walsh & Pianta, 1998). There is a need for a new generation of interventions and research to develop and test **contextualised** interventions in different settings and comprehensively evaluate them.

However, the following five key principles are put forward to guide the design and evaluation of interventions to foster children’s resilience.

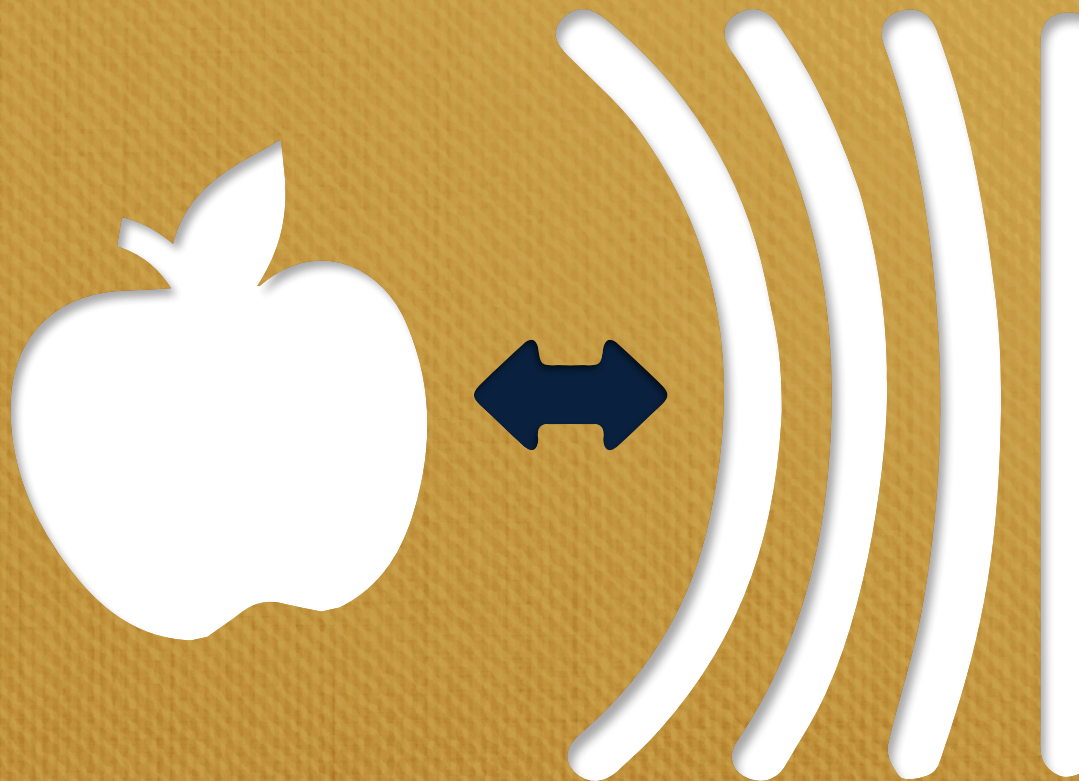
### 5 key principles

- 1 All children can be successful learners**, regardless of their background and experiences. With appropriate support, children growing up in adverse situations can become successful learners.
- 2 Positive, supportive relationships build children’s resilience**. Identifying how to engage and support children’s families, communities, and social networks is key to resilience building.
- 3 Educational goals and student achievement will improve if the school can attend to a broad array of student needs** including those present at the family and neighborhood levels (Valli, Stefanski, & Jacobson, 2016, p. 720).
- 4 Material conditions matter for fostering resilience**. Promoting access to education alone is insufficient when learning environments at the home and school are of poor quality and/or harmful to the well-being of children. Therefore, interventions to foster resilience need to identify ways to improve material conditions across the home, school, and community.
- 5 Partnerships are needed to foster resilience in adverse environments**. A narrow focus on schools alone can help individual children but will not enable large numbers of learners to complete their education in contexts where household income negatively impacts food consumption or in contexts where children are not safe. Key actors including government ministries, civil society, local communities, and donors must create resilience building partnerships in order to achieve positive outcomes for large numbers of children growing up in adversity.



## SECTION 2

# WHOLE CHILD SCHOOL-COMMUNITY APPROACHES



Multi-level approaches that engage key relationships across children's social ecologies build children's resilience and improve academic performance. This understanding necessitates identifying the ways in which families, children's social networks, community members, and children themselves can be reached and supported through relationship-focused interventions (Waxman, Gray & Padron, 2003).

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**school-community:**

*all actors who play an active role in ensuring the welfare and success of children at school.*

This section describes how school-community approaches embrace the resilience building principles outlined above and by doing so can alter households, classrooms, and communities to provide features that protect children against adversities, enhance learning, and develop children's talents and competencies.

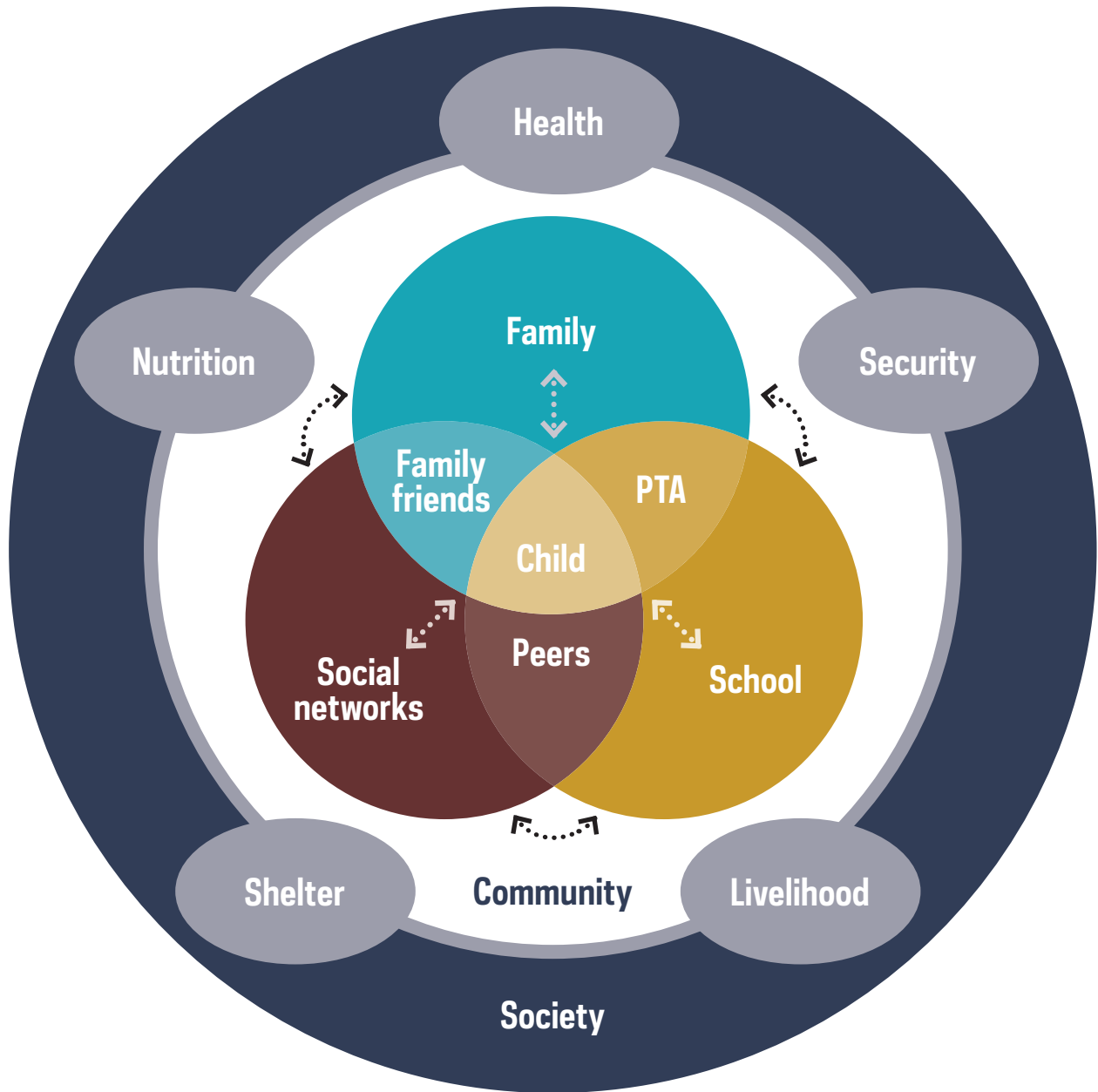
As noted above, in this guide, the school-community is defined as all actors who play an active role in ensuring the welfare and success of children at school. The term encompasses two constructs: the "school as community" and the "school in and with the community." Schools are communities to which students belong, and at the same time, they are institutions central to a community, including the household community level.

There is a vast spectrum of school-community relationships, with a plethora of partnership models that have been implemented (Sanders, 2012; Valli et al., 2016). On one end of the spectrum is what can be described as "family and interagency collaboration": the simplest form of partnership between schools and community-based organisations in which services are coordinated. At the other end of the spectrum is "community development," in which the school is seen as an institution at the heart of community, and communities have leadership roles in developing and supporting the school (Valli et al., 2016).

The partnership approach suggested in this guide sits in the middle of this spectrum. It is centered around the notion that partnerships need to be organised in order to enable teachers, families, and other members of the community to help one another support and assist children in learning and fostering resilience.

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## Engaging the school community





# Essential Players in the School-Community Approach to Fostering Resilience: the home, the school, and the community

Acknowledging that the school-community encompasses all actors who play an active role in ensuring the welfare and success of children at school, this section will take a closer look at key considerations for practitioners seeking to foster resilience at the home, school, and community levels.

## The Home

Homes are a child's first school, and parents are their first teachers (Cohen et al., 2018). Indeed, supporting early learners in the household before school even begins is essential for children's future academic success and lays the groundwork for the cultivation and development of their resilience, both now and later in life. Key areas for practitioners to consider in designing interventions that support the home in ensuring the success of children inside and outside of the classroom are 1) early childhood development, 2) adolescent development, and 3) parent support and training. While it may not be possible for a singular intervention to address all of these areas, practitioners should seek out strategic partnerships to develop holistic programs that recognize the multidimensional needs of children as outlined by the resilience building blocks.

## Early Childhood Development

### Brain Development

The fundamental construction of the brain is built through an ongoing process that begins before birth and continues into adulthood.

Brains are built over time, from the bottom up with simpler neural connections and skills forming first, followed by more complex circuits and skills. In the first few years of life, more than 1 million new neural connections form every second. After this period of rapid proliferation, connections are reduced through a process called pruning, which allows brain circuits to become more efficient. Attention to children's **basic needs**, in particular nutrition and stimulation, is paramount to healthy early brain development (Harvard University Center on the Developing Child, 2011).

...nurturing relationships  
between caregivers and children  
are essential...



Billions of connections between individual neurons across different areas of the brain enable lightning-fast communication among neurons that specialize in the different kinds of brain functions. While the early years are the most active period for establishing neural connections, new connections can form throughout life, and unused connections continue to be pruned. Because this dynamic process never stops, it is impossible to determine what percentage of brain development occurs by a certain age, but more importantly, the connections that form early in life provide either a strong or weak foundation for the connections that form later. The serve-and-return relationships

present in **nurturing relationships** between caregivers and children are essential for developing these connections (Harvard University Center on the Developing Child, 2011).

## Brain Health

Cognitive, emotional, and social capacities are inextricably intertwined throughout the life course. The brain is a highly integrated organ and its multiple functions operate in coordination with one another. Emotional well-being and social competence provide a strong foundation for emerging cognitive abilities, and together they are the bricks and mortar of brain architecture. The **core capabilities and values** such as emotional and physical health, social skills, and cognitive-linguistic capacities that emerge in the early years are all important for success and developing resilience in school, the workplace, and in the larger community.

However, chronic stress weakens the architecture of the developing brain, which can lead to lifelong problems in learning, behavior, and physical as well as mental health. It is important to note that experiencing stress is a part of normal development: activation of the stress response produces a wide range of physiological reactions that prepare the body to deal with a threat. However, toxic stress emerges when a stress response remains activated at a high level for a significant period of time. Without supportive and **nurturing relationships** within the home to help children modulate high levels of stress, chronic stress can impair the development of neural connections, especially in the areas of the brain dedicated to higher-order skills. This can have long term impacts on a child's development and resilience capacities. Moreover, adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) such as physical or sexual abuse or exposure to a substance-abusing parent have been shown to increase

an individual's risk to diseases like cancer, liver disease, heart disease, and emphysema as a result of the dysfunctional and abusive behaviors ACEs evoke in survivors (Putnam, 2006).

## Key considerations to foster resilience during early childhood:



A stable and responsive environment with healthy relationships provides young children with consistent, nurturing, and protective interactions with adults, which help them develop adaptive capacities that promote learning and well-regulated stress response systems.



Children need safe and supportive physical environments. Children are far more sensitive than adults to toxic chemicals in the environment, and reducing exposure to harmful chemicals and pollutants in childhood prevents long-term illness and disease (Landigra, P., L., Goldman, 2011; Grigg, 2004). This requires providing children with environments that are free from toxins and fear, allow active and safe exploration, and offer their families opportunities to exercise and form social connections (Lanphear, B. P., Vorhees, C. V., & Bellinger, D. C. 2005).



Appropriate nutrition is fundamental to healthy brain development. This includes encouraging good eating habits, which begins with a mother's preconception nutritional health.



## Reach Up Early Childhood Parenting Programme

Fostering resilience through parent-focused home interventions for early childhood development.

The University of West Indies's Reach Up Early Childhood Parenting Programme is based on a home visit model delivered by community health workers. Health workers teach parents strategies to intentionally engage with their young children using simple toys and materials found around the house. The program has 6 core principles (Caribbean Institute for Health Research):

1. **Work through caregivers** by building a positive relationship to support them in strengthening skills to promote child development.
2. **Use a structured curriculum** of developmentally appropriate activities.
3. **Aim to build caregivers' skills**, self-esteem, and enjoyment in helping their child play and learn.
4. **Use an interactive approach** of demonstration, modelling, and practice of activities to build skills.
5. **Train home visitors** to listen to the caregivers, seek their opinions, and ask about things they already do with their child in order to acknowledge these and give encouragement and praise.
6. **Emphasise praise** for caregiver and child.

A long-term cohort study of the Jamaica Home Visit program, out of which Reach Up was developed, shows that children who participated in the program were happier and did better in school, and as adults, they had higher IQs, experienced better mental health, demonstrated less violent behavior, and earned more money than similar children who did not participate in the programme (Grantham-

McGregor et al, 1975). Additional program evaluations in Bangladesh and Colombia have affirmed this (Attanasio et al, 2014; Hamadani et al, 2006; Nahar et al, 2012). This study showed that stimulative, nurturing care was even more impactful than nutrition in this population.



...children who participated in the program did better in school, were happier...

Although the Reach Up Programme was famously started in Jamaica, it is already being implemented in several countries such as Bangladesh, India, Brazil, Madagascar, and Peru, with plans for expansion into Guatemala, Zimbabwe, and China (The University of West Indies).



## Adolescent Development

Just as experience and environment work with genetics to shape the brains of infants so do they in adolescence (UNICEF, 2017). Between ages 10 - 25, the brain does not grow as much in size as it does in complexity, and the biggest changes occur in the areas of the brain that process cognitive and emotional information - ultimately allowing for higher cognitive thinking and emotional processing capacity (Giedd et al, 1999). Moreover, since much of brain development is established in the early years, adolescence is a key window to mitigate cognitive delays from early development.

 Between ages 10–25, the brain does not grow as much in size as it does in complexity

While there is a great opportunity to address any delays or traumas from early development during adolescence, this period also presents many challenges. Adolescents are at a key transition point developmentally, physiologically, sexually, and socially. Additionally, external environmental factors that may not have an impact on infants and young children can accumulate to negatively impact adolescents. For example, **basic need** factors that are associated with living in low-income settings, such as poverty, pose greater risks to the mental and physical health of adolescents than they do to young children and ultimately impact adolescents' abilities to cope with adversity (Noble et al, 2015).

Further, epidemiological research suggests that population stressors, including war and famine, experienced in early adolescence (10-14 years of age) are more strongly

associated with a decrease in total life span than stressors experienced at any other age of childhood. This makes early adolescence a crucial time for certain types of interventions, especially those aimed at cultivating resilience against current and/or future adversities.

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### Key considerations to foster resilience during adolescence:



A key developmental task of adolescents is to acquire the skills, competencies, and opportunities that enable them to transition into the social and economic realities of given communities and societies. Treating adolescents as vulnerable dependents is at odds with and threatens to undermine adolescent competency acquisition and social transition. This starts at the household level.

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Given the opportunities presented by the adolescent period, interventions that foster the cognitive and emotional development of adolescents and provide positive social and economic transition opportunities have the potential to produce a triple dividend on investment. These interventions can yield benefits to adolescents in the short term as well as in the long term.

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Although the world is making progress in achieving gender parity in education, girls still make up a higher percentage of out-of-school children than boys. Keeping adolescent girls in school requires the support of parents and communities.

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## Supporting Parents

Parents are a child's first teachers. Since we know child development does not happen in isolation, parents need the support of family members, early childhood program staff, neighborhoods, voluntary associations, and parent workplaces to provide their children with as many **nurturing relationships** as possible. Support for families is largely provided in two forms: 1) services and 2) the establishment or reorientation of economic support for families through methods such as cash payments. Support for parents often focuses on imparting knowledge to parents about engagement and practices. When designing interventions or programming to foster children's resilience, practitioners must consider the feasibility of these interventions at the household level and what supports need to be in place in order for parents to be successful partners (Daly et al, 2015).



Parents are a child's  
first teachers

### Key considerations for partnering with parents to foster resilience:

- Time and commitment:** This includes the current nature and quality of time caregivers spend with children and how communities assign and accept responsibility for monitoring child health and well-being. It also includes how communities pass and enforce legislation and regulations that affect child well-being.
- Financial, psychological, and institutional resources:** These include caregivers' ability to purchase goods and services, their physical and mental health, and their child-rearing skills. It is also important to assess the availability of community services and organizations that promote children's healthy development, as well as supportive structures such as parks, child care facilities, schools, and afterschool programs that can support parents.
- Skills and knowledge:** Caregivers' education, training, interactions with child-related professionals, and personal experiences affect their capacity to support children. Parents' access to these types of knowledge and resources as well as their communities' political and organizational capabilities must be taken into consideration when partnering with parents as these will affect communities' abilities to work with parents. Practitioners should make note of any limitations and develop interventions appropriately.



## Parent Engagement at Harold Lane Secondary School in England

Fostering resilience through empowering parents to support their learners.

In schooling, the role of a 'responsible parent' is often gauged by parent engagement, involvement, and partnership. It is well documented that these metrics can often be at odds with the realities of socioeconomically disadvantaged parents who balance long work hours with parenting responsibilities.

In one English case study, teachers at Harold Lane, a school in a new-resource setting, were challenged through focus groups to expand their perception of parents beyond 'responsibilities' and 'challenges' in order to create a network for parent engagement that supports and empowers parents as they, in turn, support their learners. As one teacher described it:

*"What the school tries to achieve is to become a community... Obviously as a school we have targets that we have got to meet. We have exam grades that we have got to get. But we can't focus on that because as you know, if a child can't learn in the*

*classroom, there's loads of other stuff going on in the emotional world. They just won't focus. It's just a barrier. Who wants to hear about geography when you haven't got anywhere to live that night. That's what we are sometimes up against."*  
(Individualised learning manager).

The school employed 'engagement teachers' to improve the school's connections with parents and in the process, encouraged parents to take more responsibility for their children's learning. They

worked alongside parents to tackle problems and issues that directly affected children and their families. The school also pulled in other agencies and service providers for social and mental health services and made parents the focus of every meeting and procedure. Through this ongoing intervention, teachers and parents alike self-reported more positive relationships. Additionally, teachers reported a broadened perception of student success through this process that went beyond test scores and included learners' social and emotional well-being.

**Information for this example is from (Wyness, 2020).**



...if a child **can't learn** in the classroom, there's loads of other **stuff going on** in the **emotional world**. They just won't focus.



## The School

### Academic Resilience

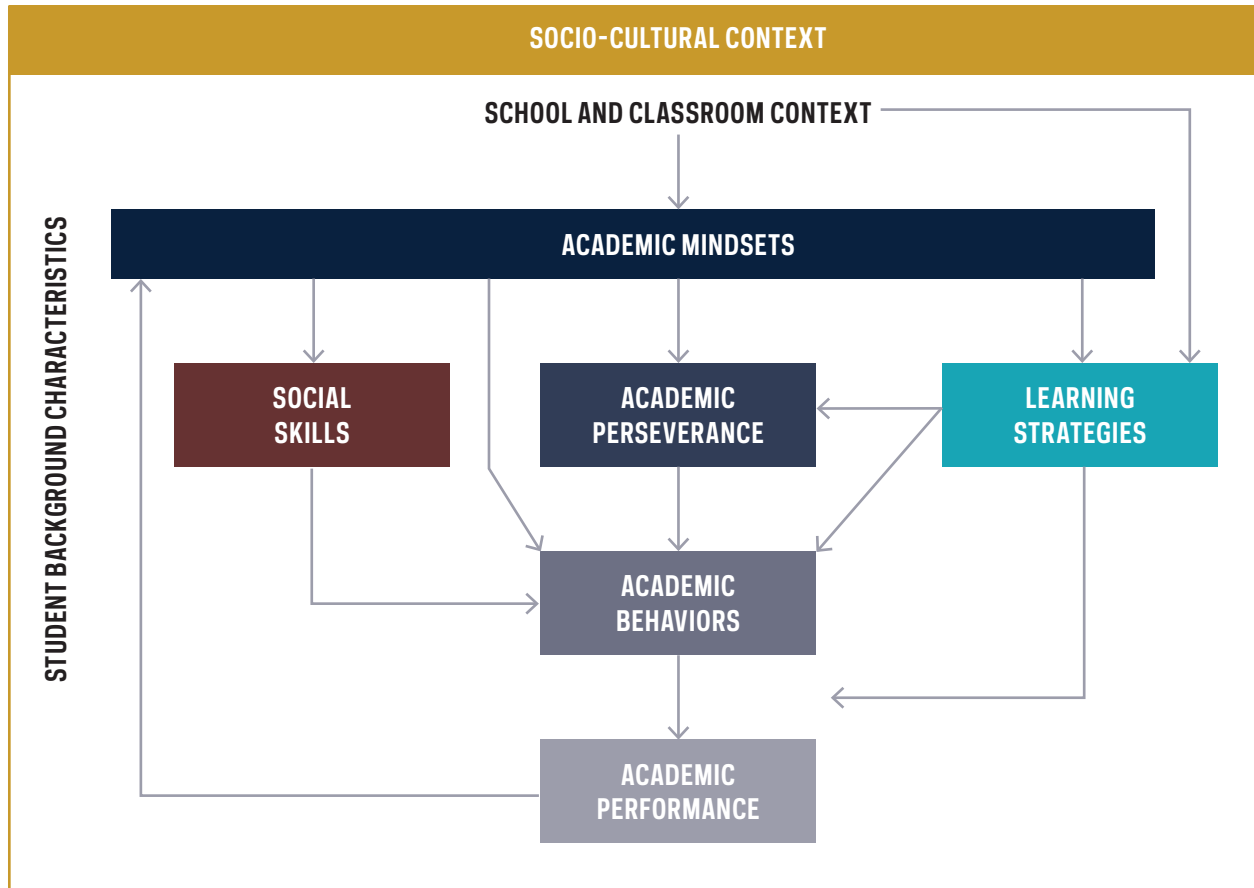
As noted above, resilience, in an educational context, is about students achieving educational outcomes despite life threatening experiences or exposure to negative living circumstances. Resilience influences a child's ability to acquire knowledge while academic performance influences child resilience beyond the classroom (Parker, 2013). Therefore, in order to foster resilience among students, schools must equip themselves to enable students to achieve academic success. Farrington et al. (2012) conducted a literature review to identify the main non-cognitive skills, behaviors, and attitudes that are critical to academic performance.

### These include:

- **Academic Behavior:** Refers to behaviors associated with “good students,” such as arriving to class on time, regularly attending classes, and maintaining focused attention and concentration during classroom instruction. These are easily observable signs that a student is trying to engage and be productive. Academic behaviors are of central importance while social-emotional skills work through these bedrock behaviors to impact students' academic performance.
- **Academic Perseverance:** Refers to the ability to stay focused on a goal despite obstacles. This involves self-control, discipline, self-regulation, and the ability to delay gratification.
- **Academic Mindset:** Includes attitudes and beliefs students have about their academic work. Positive mindsets encourage students to strive to achieve in school settings because they believe they can and believe in their capacity to do well. Positive mindsets are validated, in turn, through good academic performance. Attitudes most often linked to positive mindsets are a sense of belonging and belief in one's abilities to complete tasks and succeed academically.
- **Learning Strategies:** The “processes and tactics one employs to aid in cognitive work of thinking, remembering, or learning” (Farrington et al., 2012). These include strategies students use for recalling content, monitoring learning and comprehension, correcting oneself, and managing time.
- **Social Skills:** Refer to behaviors that improve social interactions, including cooperation, assertion, empathy, and responsibility. These skills allow students to better interact with their peers and teachers, improving their sense of connection and belonging.

## Hypothesized model of how noncognitive factors influence academic performance

(Farrington et al, 2012, p.14)



For children living in adversity, the school can provide a safe, stable environment that fosters these non-cognitive skills in tandem with cognitive skills while simultaneously supporting children's psychosocial well-being. The role that the school plays in creating or restoring a child or adolescent's sense of normalcy and dignity amidst adversity must not be overlooked when seeking to foster academic resilience (Alves, 2016).

There are numerous ways that a school can foster resilience among its students and can promote environments that nurture children's

overall well-being including but not limited to their academic success and learning, psychosocial health, and physical health. Key components for practitioners to consider in cultivating schools that foster resilience and develop the primary non-cognitive skills, behaviors, and attitudes that are critical to academic performance include 1) the establishment of the school as a safe space; 2) culturally relevant and conflict sensitive curriculum; 3) the integration of SEL; and 4) investment in comprehensive teacher training that prioritizes teachers' growth, development, and well-being.

## Safe Spaces

Schools that make certain they are a safe space for learners ensure that their students experience both physical and emotional safety. When schools do not meet such intrinsic, **basic needs**, the results can be catastrophic for a child, manifesting in toxic stress, which in turn can culminate in violence and/or insecurity (Themane 2019). Further, it is well-established that children who are hungry and/or scared will not be able to learn and reach their full developmental potential. By ensuring students' physical and emotional well-being (i.e., their basic needs) through the establishment of itself as a safe space, a school is able to promote social cohesion, reduce inequalities, and mitigate conflict.

While there are many factors that contribute to a school as a safe space for children and youth facing adversity, at its core, a safe space must be "a secure, caring and predictable place where children and adolescents living in conflict and crisis settings can learn, develop and be protected" (International Rescue Committee, 2016). Safe spaces are further characterized by providing increased access to education that is relevant and promotes social well-being for children and youth. When a school is a safe space, children are more likely to develop positive academic behaviors and mindsets.

### Key considerations to foster resilience through the school as a safe space:



A positive school culture is at the core of a school's ability to be a safe space and will consider the psychosocial and physical needs of its students as well as faculty and staff.



Psychosocially supportive learning environments have been shown to positively impact students' self-esteem and self-efficacy, which in turn have positive effects on students' mastery of academic skills. As students master academic skills, educators are likely to see positive increases in student confidence, ultimately creating a positive feedback loop in schools with psychosocially supportive learning environments (McNatt, Boothby, Wessells, Lo, 2018).



Teachers and school personnel can cultivate psychosocially supportive learning environments by highlighting the strengths and the resilience of students, disciplining without violence, emphasizing and prioritizing healthy student-teacher relationships, and instilling a sense of pride and belonging for students within the school (McNatt, Boothby, Wessells, Lo, 2018; Roorda, et al, 2011; Roffey, 2012). Further, a psychosocially supportive learning environment does not tolerate any form of violence including but not limited to bullying, discrimination, or gender-based violence.





In addition to psychosocial and emotional considerations, schools must consider the physical safety of their students and school personnel. These considerations include but are not limited to “safe and accessible learning spaces; water, sanitation, and hygiene; healthy and nutrition; and school safety management” (Maranto, 2017).



In particular, school feeding programs are a crucial component to enable students to achieve academic and developmental success, especially for those students coming from low-income families where access to basic nutrition is unreliable. There are several models for successful school feeding programs including school gardens and community-based partners.



### Raising Voices and the Good School Toolkit

Fostering resilience by creating a safe space and reducing violence in schools.

In 2005, Raising Voices conducted a study that revealed over 60% of children in Uganda experienced violence in school on a regular basis. In response, Raising Voices developed a holistic and sustainable methodology, The Good School Toolkit, to support teachers and students in exploring and identifying the characteristics of a healthy and safe learning environment, free from violence. The toolkit tackles change in a manageable and natural way for all stakeholders, following six steps that walk schools through a “process of growth that mirrors the stages of behavior change.”



*The Good School Toolkit* reduced violence ...  
increased students' identity and  
sense of belonging ...

In a 2012-2014 study conducted in 42 schools in the Luwero District of Uganda, the Good School Toolkit, reduced violence by teachers and staff against students by 42% in intervention schools as well as increased students' identity and sense of belonging with their school.



**Download the Good School Toolkit:**

<https://raisingvoices.org/good-school/download-good-school-toolkit/>

**Information for this example is from (Raising Voices, n.d.).**

## Curriculum

Another component of fostering academic resilience within a school is through the curriculum and textbooks used. In providing learning materials that are diversified to support children and youth's multiple modes of learning and that are simultaneously culturally relevant and conflict-sensitive to one's specific context, schools are able to contextualize the learning process and increase student engagement. Additionally, it is important for children and adolescents to see themselves in their textbooks and curricula. Using images and content that reflect the context and culture of the students as well as the students themselves is paramount to the engagement process. Ultimately, student engagement fosters positive academic behaviors and leads to increased retention and higher graduation rates.

Curriculum also provides a space to expose students to opportunities to develop their **core capabilities and values**. For example, by integrating stories with motifs and themes that address ideas such as courage or self-efficacy, educators provide a means for children to see specific skills in action while simultaneously encouraging them to practice specific skills in their own lives. Curriculum can also be an avenue to educate students about their **basic needs** (e.g., providing coaching on the value of a healthy diet or physical activity).

### Key Considerations to foster resilience through relevant curriculum<sup>3</sup>

- Culturally relevant curriculum will draw upon civil society to incorporate conflict-sensitive content.
- Including the ideas of all stakeholders in the development process of curriculum as well as integrating indigenous knowledge, values, and skills is essential.
- Life skills, human rights, and civic education should be present in the curriculum as well as in teacher training.
- Mother-tongue education should be implemented in early childhood development.
- Curriculum should incorporate learning moments that address children and adolescents' basic needs and core capabilities and values.
- Students should see themselves and their culture reflected in their curriculum.

3 Bullets 1-4 appear as proposed by UNICEF (2015). Education and Resilience: Nine priority paths for making schools and societies more cohesive.





## Escuela Nueva

Fostering resilience through a flexible and adaptive curriculum model.

In the 1980s, the Colombian education system struggled to retain children from rural and vulnerable homes in its education system due to a lack of relevant course materials and inflexible school calendars that did not account for the commitments of students during Colombia's harvesting season.

Recognizing the increasing number of students being left behind, Escuela Nueva or "New School," was developed as an education model, geared specifically at rural schoolchildren in Colombia. Escuela Nueva leverages child-centered learning, the teacher as a facilitator rather than a lecturer, flexible calendars, relevant curricula based on daily life, and closer relationships between the school and the community in order to increase the retention of vulnerable Colombian students.

To date, Escuela Nueva has transformed the educational process in Colombia and led to increased retention of students, in particular rural students. Additionally, the

model has expanded to countries all around the world and has been adapted and contextualized to meet the needs of unique school systems.

**Information for this example is from (Fundación Escuela Nueva, 2013).**



...led to **increased retention** of students, in particular **rural students**.

## SEL

Broadly speaking, social and emotional learning (SEL) is understood as "the process of acquiring core competencies to recognize and manage emotions, set and achieve goals, appreciate the perspectives of others, establish and maintain positive relationships, make responsible decisions, and handle interpersonal situations constructively" (Elias, Zins, Weissberg et al., 1997).

When it comes to fostering resilience and building students' **core capabilities and values**, doing so through school-based SEL programs is a mainstream way to do so.

As noted earlier, while there are numerous frameworks to integrate SEL within a school, practitioners must remember that it is not which framework is used in a given context that is important; rather, the success of an SEL program will depend on how the framework has been contextualized for a specific community.

When implemented well, SEL programs have a positive impact on children and adolescents' development and learning and are an effective way to create pathways out of adversity for children and adolescents living in emergency settings by fostering academic



resilience. Additionally, not only do SEL programs enhance students' academic performance, but they "improve school attendance, engagement, and motivation; reduce negative student behavior in schools and in the community, such as bullying, violence, and juvenile crime; benefit the mental health of staff and students by lowering stress, anxiety, and depression; improve health outcomes by reducing teenage pregnancies and drug abuse; lead to better staff retention and higher morale; and generally help to improve the social and emotional skills of both students and staff" (Durlak et al., 2011; Fleming et al., 2005; Zins, Weissberg, et al., 2004; as appears in Alves, 2016). These benefits and SEL skills are invaluable for children and adolescents in adversity, providing them with the tools to cope and survive in unstable environments (Alves, 2016).

As such, SEL must not be overlooked when seeking to foster resilience in children and adolescents in the school setting. Not only does SEL equip students to manage the stress of immediate crises, but SEL skills, which are a core competency of many programs committed to social cohesion, are vital to the development of reconstruction efforts and long-term peace in areas of conflict (McNatt et al, 2018).

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### Key considerations to foster resilience through SEL:

- Research shows that the most effective SEL programs are embedded in school's academic curriculum and provide students with explicit instruction in skills as well as ample opportunity to practice these skills inside and outside of the classroom (CASEL 2013; Alves 2016).
- 



When implementing an SEL program, educators and practitioners must consider a three-tiered approach: 1) classroom and school climate; 2) teaching pedagogy and school personnel support; and 3) student skill-building (Alves, 2016).

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An SEL program is only as effective as the classroom and school climate. If a student does not feel safe and known, they will not be able to learn well. Students thrive in learning environments that offer them the stability of a predictable routine with clear, consistent expectations (Alves, 2016).

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Teachers and school personnel are a key facet of an effective school climate. Not only are SEL programs most impactful when school personnel and teachers are directly involved in their implementation, but students will also benefit from teachers' development and focus on their own personal SEL skills and knowledge (Diaz-Varela et al., 2013; Alves, 2016).

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- SEL programs and frameworks must be adapted to their specific contexts.
- 
- The importance of ample opportunities for students to practice SEL skills, in formal as well as informal environments, cannot be overstated. These skills cannot be confined to the walls of a classroom and must be exercised with peers, parents, and community members (Durlak et al., 2011; Bond & Hauf, 2004; Alves 2016).
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## The Happiness Curriculum

Fostering resilience through a locally-specific, empowering happiness curriculum in New Delhi, India.

After seeing that students in India ranked 140 out of 156 on the World Happiness scale, the Delhi Department developed a culturally-specific happiness curriculum (HC) that was piloted with over 800,000 students in all 1,030 government schools from kindergarten through grade 8 in July 2018 (Kim et al, 2019; Care et al, 2020b). To develop the curriculum, a working group of 40 teachers asked a central question: What makes a good life? They shifted the value of education from making a living to having a good life and contributing to society, ultimately developing a curriculum to produce “emotionally sound students.” Partnering with the non-profit organization Dream a Dream, the working group used the Madhyasth Darshan program, an adult-oriented philosophy for ‘co-existential thought’, to develop contextualized empathy-based pedagogies and a life skills approach for children (Kim et al, 2019).

The happiness curriculum itself creates a stimulating environment through mindfulness, critical thinking, storytelling, and experiential, play-based activities to address learners’ emotional and mental needs (Kim et al, 2019). Looking at happiness through the lens of social and emotional learning, the HC works to develop skills that enable a learner to regulate thoughts, emotions, and behaviors (Care et al, 2020a).

In a 35-minute class delivered every school day, the focus is shifted from being right or wrong to allowing students to express themselves in a safe environment. No grades are assigned, and there is no pressure on teachers to finish the curriculum: the focus is simply on giving children the space to participate and internalize and understand the concepts taught (Kim et al, 2019; Care et al, 2020b).



Participating students have reported positive changes ... **increased participation** in class, **improved** ability to **focus**...

Participating students have reported positive changes in the quality of relationships with their teacher, increased participation in classes, and improved ability to focus and feel calm. New Delhi teachers have observed increased willingness of

students to speak up in class, changes in prioritizing values over academic success, and the freedom granted by the curriculum to vary their pedagogical styles. Long term evaluations will show if the new curriculum will enable students not only to improve their scholastic skills but also their SEL skills of mindfulness, critical thinking, reflection, and inner stability (Care et al, 2020a).



## Teacher Training and Well-being

Strong and supportive teacher-student relationships can be the most powerful and effective tools in supporting the overall academic and psychosocial development of students and are thus a vital **nurturing relationship** to foster children and adolescent's resilience. Given this, meaningful and tactical teacher training and opportunities for teacher professional development must be a core priority of schools. Schools task teachers with creating safe, supportive, and engaging learning environments that not only develop students' academic learning but their physical and emotional development as well. To do this well, teachers must be supported with training that affords them the opportunity to reflect on their own teaching practices as well as those of the school community. Good professional development will be strategic in how it creates the space for doing this, equipping teachers with relevant tools for their specific contexts while recognizing the need for teacher autonomy (Tatter 2019; McNatt et al, 2018).

As discussed earlier, effective SEL interventions require a systemic approach that includes school leaders, teachers, and caregivers in the process of supporting students' social and emotional development (Jones & Doolittle, 2019). To support their students well, teachers must reflect and understand their own social and emotional development and have their own well-being supported.

Teachers' well-being is context-specific and encompasses how teachers feel and function in their role as teachers. Their overall well-being includes their affections, attitudes, and evaluations of and towards their work, all of which can be affected by a variety of challenges at the individual (e.g., gender and displacement

status), school (e.g., school leadership and available resources), and community (e.g., community violence and natural disasters) levels (Falk, Varni, Finder, & Frisoli, 2019). It is not uncommon for these challenges to cause emotional exhaustion and lower cognitive and social-emotional functioning, directly impacting teacher well-being (Jennings, 2016).

Research shows that teacher well-being affects teachers' ability to support students in developing key SEL skills; their ability to form meaningful relationships with students; their classroom management; and their capacity to create an inclusive classroom (Jennings, 2016; McCallum et al., 2017; Greenberg, Brown, & Abenavoli, 2016). Furthermore, there is a positive relationship between teacher well-being and teacher's social and emotional competence: a teacher with a higher level of well-being will generally have higher social and emotional competence. Therefore, in order to foster student well-being and SEL development, practitioners must also address teacher well-being.

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### Key considerations to foster resilience through teacher training and well-being:

- When developing teacher training programs, the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies puts forward three key principles to guide the process: teacher trainings must 1) "engage teachers in reflection on and recognition of the importance of the teacher-student relationship in promoting resilience; 2) provide examples of lessons and activities teachers can use in the classroom to promote good classroom management; and 3) recognize the stresses teachers themselves are facing and help facilitate discussion and support" (McNatt et al, 2018).
-



- How schools or organizations deliver teacher-training is just as important as the content of these trainings. Practitioners must take care that trainings are inclusive, gender sensitive, and participatory (McNatt et al, 2018).
- It is necessary to take into account the physical working conditions of teachers and how these conditions may impact their work in the classroom and with students.
- Depending on the context, practitioners should also consider the value of establishing peer-to-peer networks for teachers.



### Dream a Dream

Fostering resilience through teacher training that leverages teachers' self-reflection, empathy, creativity, and joy.

The teaching profession is in crisis in India. With a drop-out rate of 53% for students between Grades 1 and 5, teachers have large class sizes with varying degrees of ages and levels in one classroom (Dream a Dream, 2020). Some will argue that the profession has lost its sense of dignity, and there is a perception of teaching as a last-resort career for those who cannot find other jobs.

The Dream a Dream Teacher Development Programme (TDP) aims to unlock India's teachers' innate sense of empathy and care in order that their classrooms become spaces of joy, curiosity, and creativity. The programme starts with first asking teachers to explore within themselves and their stories to recognize their own growth and transformation before inviting them to explore what their relationships can look like with their students both inside and outside of the classroom and how this can ultimately impact students' learning and engagement as well as the perception of the profession (Dream a Dream, 2019; Dream a Dream, 2016).



**2,020** participants enrolled,  
impacting **50,500** students

Teachers who complete the Dream a Dream programme cite a renewed commitment to the profession and increased excitement around revamping their teaching practices

to integrate joy and creativity back into the classroom. For the 2017-2018 TDP, 2,020 participants enrolled, impacting 50,500 students. Of the 2,020 teachers enrolled, 850 completed the entire 4-series of workshops (Dream a Dream, 2019).



**Learn more** about the Dream a Dream Teacher Development Programme: [Teacher Development Strategy](#)

## Community

In addition to the vital role parents play in a child's education, the broader community has a responsibility to assure high-quality education for all children. Examples of inclusive school-family-community partnerships include **nurturing relationships** with mothers and fathers, grandparents, other relatives and caregivers, business leaders, health providers, and other community groups.

A key to activating and coordinating diverse partnerships is to focus on goal-oriented activities linked to student achievement and school success. Indeed, when schools, parents, families and communities work together to support learning through programs that address **core capabilities and values**, students tend to earn higher grades, attend school more regularly, stay in school longer, and enroll in higher level programs. Additionally, researchers cite parent-family-community involvement as key to addressing school dropout (Belfield, R. & Levin, H., 2007). Researchers have also found that strong school-family-community partnerships foster higher educational aspirations and more motivated students (Belfield, R. & Levin, H., 2007).

Finally, in situations of extreme adversity, school-family-community partnerships must address **basic needs** such as nutrition and health, in addition to academic ones, as essential components to closing achievement gaps.

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### Key considerations to leverage community-based partnerships to foster resilience:

- To promote student development and school success at every grade and age, well thought out parent-community-school partnerships, linked to school improvement

goals, are needed in every community. Successful school-parent-community partnerships are not stand-alone projects or add-on programs but are well integrated with a school's overall mission and goals.

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- Partnerships can span across all aspects of civil society including religious institutions, businesses, health agencies, civic organizations, and colleges and universities.
  - Research shows that the strongest and most sustainable programs are those that respond to a community need, are locally owned, and incorporate some form of parental or community involvement (Drake et al, 2017).
  - Community-based programs can often extend to what is already being done at the school or household level. For example, while a school may have some form of health training for its teachers, a community partner can engage with the school to provide a more robust training program.
- 



School feeding programs have been defined by the World Bank as “targeted social safety nets that provide both educational and health benefits to the most vulnerable children, thereby increasing enrollment rates, reducing absenteeism, and improving food security at the household level” (The World Bank, 2012) and can be especially effective when implemented through community-based partnerships. Beyond improvements in access to food, school feeding programs also have a positive impact on nutritional status, gender equity, and educational status, each of which contributes to improving overall levels of national and human development.

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## World Food Programme's "Home-Grown School Feeding" Program

Fostering resilience through empowering local female farmers and providing school meals.

In Guinea, 17% of primary school-aged children do not attend school, three-quarters of whom are girls. The motivation behind lack of attendance, in particular for girls, connects most readily to poverty and cultural beliefs.

In order to encourage parents to send their children to school and to combat rural poverty, the World Food Programme (WFP) implemented the "Home-Grown School Feeding" program in 2015, which aims to support local communities by providing training to female farmers in storage, packaging, and transportation of rice before the WFP purchases the rice for use in local school feeding programs.



WFP has seen an increase in retention,  
**particularly for girls**

Since beginning the programme, the WFP has been able to promote agricultural development at the local level while empowering women and simultaneously creating support systems for school children and smallholder farmers. Since the implementation of the program, WFP has seen an increase in retention, particularly for girls, as well as an increase in family spending on essential needs such as basic healthcare and school fees.

**Information for this example is from (Madjiangar, 2016).**





### The Juhudi Youth Development Initiative

Fostering resilience through community-based interventions and leadership.



1.8 million Kenyans are unemployed, 60% of whom are under the age of 30. High rates of unemployment in rural areas often result in youth emigrating to urban areas, under false pretenses of finding work; however, these youth frequently end up living in poverty.

In response, the Fostering Resilience Initiative (FRI) of the GC-DWC activated a community-based learning and action program with the Catholic Church in rural Nyeri county in Kenya to explore if community mobilization could add value to rural based poly technic efforts. As a result, in partnership with ZiziAfrique Foundation and Logos Consult, the FRI launched the Juhudi Initiative in the Mugunda ward in August 2018.

After identifying the need for expanded educational and economic opportunities for youth between the ages of 15-25 years through community meetings with different local stakeholders, the main purpose of the Juhudi Initiative is to bring the community together to identify assets, skills, and resources about what can be done to better empower and provide opportunities for youth, so their primary option is not migration to urban areas.

To date, learning activities, including community asset mapping and a household survey, have resulted in community-identified initiatives in youth mentorship, smart agriculture, and sports engagement to improve youth skills and opportunities in the area. The Juhudi Youth Initiative has engaged various community partners to provide these trainings and lead workshops for the youth.

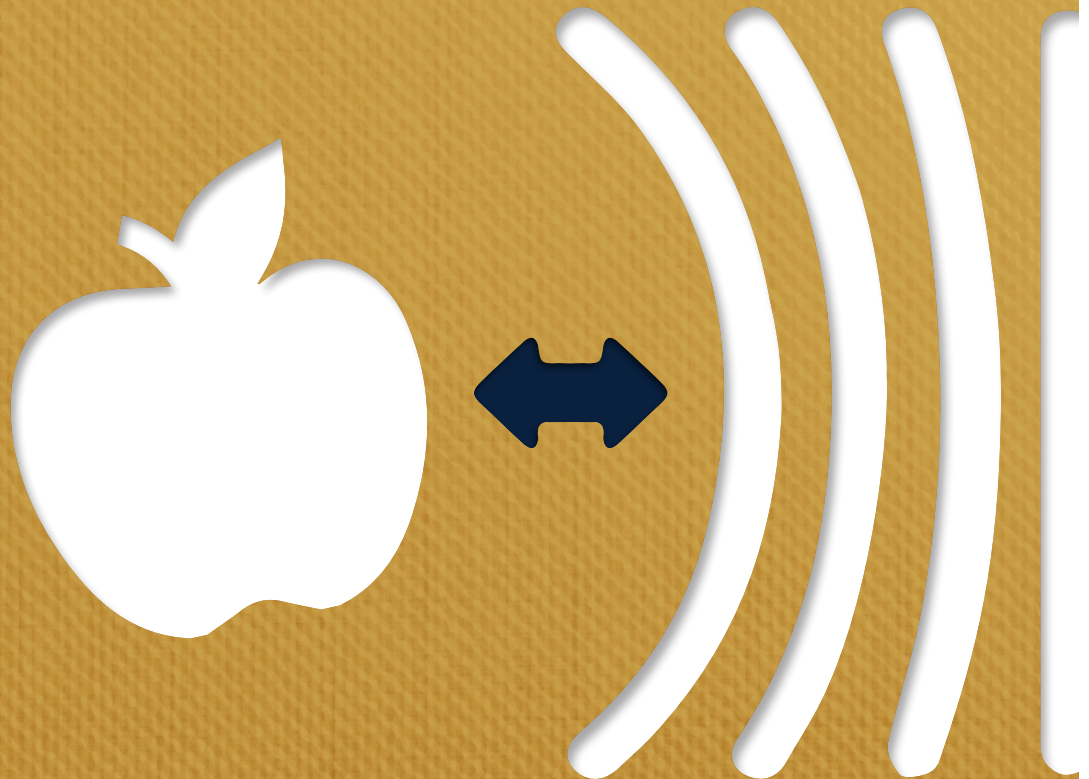


**Learn more** on the [GC-DWC website](#) and the [Juhudi Youth Development Initiative website](#).



## SECTION 3

# RESEARCH AND LEARNING



In order to foster resilience through a home-school-community approach and assess learning done across these different settings, practitioners must consider a practical plan for research. Incorporating a learning agenda into programming is vital to bolstering a program's efficacy and sustainability.

Results from a learning agenda enable practitioners to understand community and partner expectations; define what can and cannot be said; appoint individuals to champion and share learning; and set-up processes for making decisions and sharing results. Time and resources can be limiting factors in conducting the necessary evaluations, but there are several factors practitioners must keep in mind when initiating a project.

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**Key considerations to plan for and implement a research and learning agenda into programming to foster resilience:**

- Understand risk and protection across building blocks and settings
- Focus on equity as a key dimension of the matrixed needs assessment
- Measure learning and development outcomes rather than resilience

## Understand risk and protection across building blocks and settings

As practitioners consider what approaches to leverage in order to foster resilience using a school-community approach and the efficacy and impact of these approaches, it is important to think across not only the building blocks for children's resilience—basic needs, nurturing relationships, and core capabilities and values—but also the settings—home, school, and community—that support whole child development. This necessitates an understanding of not only the risk factors that exist at the intersection of these building blocks and settings but also the protective processes that can be leveraged for change.

Understanding the risk factors that exist in the matrix of the resilience building blocks and settings allows practitioners to work with partners in the different home, school, and community settings to decide on risk factors that can be addressed within a specific time period, methods to address these risk factors, and ways to track the change in these risk factors over time. Doing so also allows for more effective partnerships by creating opportunities to uncover the factors that local partners perceive as important when trying to align an approach across the different



settings. Table 2 illustrates some possible risk factors that could exist across this matrix of building blocks and settings.

Identifying the protective processes that exist in the community can allow practitioners to identify better processes to leverage when designing an alignment approach across

the different settings. This process can also help identify protective processes that exist in a small subset of the community and that show promise for application across an entire community. Table 3 illustrates some possible protective processes that could exist across this matrix of building blocks and settings.

**Table 2:** Illustrative matrix of risk factors across the building blocks of resilience and the settings surrounding children

	Basic needs	Nurturing relationships	Core capabilities & values
<b>Home</b>	Food insecurity	Domestic violence	Authoritarian parenting practices
<b>School</b>	Teacher absence	Corporal punishment	Bullying, peer victimization
<b>Community</b>	Lack of access to services for individuals with disabilities	Neighborhood violence	Gendered barriers to community access and interaction

**Table 3:** Illustrative matrix of protective processes across the building blocks of resilience and the settings surrounding children

	Basic needs	Nurturing relationships	Core capabilities & values
<b>Home</b>	Family stability and access to resources to meet basic needs	Nurturing parental care	Opportunities to safely define autonomy from parents
<b>School</b>	Safe learning environment	Trusting bi-directional relationships between administrators, teachers, and students	Opportunities to participate in classroom/school decision making
<b>Community</b>	Community services that provide overlapping care to marginalized groups	Space for socially appropriate interactions between individuals of different ages/backgrounds	Opportunities for positive risk taking

One way to understand the risk factors and protective processes across the matrix of building blocks and settings is to conduct a rapid assessment that includes partners from the different settings. There are several needs assessments and risk analysis toolkits that practitioners can use in this rapid assessment. For example, the World Bank's Resilience in Education System (RES-360 degree) is a useful rapid assessment toolkit that can be used to understand these risk factors and protective processes.

## Focus on equity as a key dimension of the matrixed needs assessment

While most rapid assessments often uncover dimensions of equity that act as either risk factors or protective processes, a focus on equity is often not an explicit focus of rapid assessments. Equity is the “reassessment and redistribution of resources (human, institutional, and financial) in education with the goal of reducing or eliminating systematic inequality in outcomes. In this sense, equity is a path to achieving equality. In the simplest terms, equity is fairness, or equal opportunity to achieve the same outcomes regardless of starting conditions and barriers” (Omoeva, 2017). Dimensions of equity affect how the risk factors and protective process manifest and can be leveraged for change. This is why a more structured focus on equity dimensions

within the matrixed needs assessment of the building blocks of resilience and the settings for a school-community approach is important. A 2016 report by FHI360 and Save the Children highlights several important equity dimensions to consider. These include sex, socioeconomic status, marginalization (based on ethnicity, race, language), disability, displacement, and orphanhood (vulnerability status) (Soares et al 2018).

equity is a path to  
achieving equality

There are two dimensions to consider in an analysis of equity factors. The first is to understand prevalence: what is the prevalence of a specific equity dimension in the context where one is working on school-community programming? Data for this prevalence may already exist in Education Management Information Systems (EMIS), national/regional social welfare data collection efforts, or through needs assessments done by partners previously. This prevalence data allows practitioners to design approaches and allocate resources to better address inequity in access, retention, or learning in education programs. The second dimension is to understand how the different equity factors interact with the matrixed risk and protective factors (discussed above). Do individuals of a specific group have a higher risk profile or

a particular set of protective processes that can be leveraged in the larger program? Do individuals of a specific group face unique challenges or barriers to their development?

The Education Equity Research Initiative (EERI) published a detailed [guidance note](#) in 2018 to help practitioners and policy-makers identify equity indicators in education settings. This is a useful resource in deciding which equity dimensions should be measured and how. Pairing a measurement of defined equity dimensions with an understanding of the matrixed risk factors and protective processes, allows one to develop WCD frameworks and programs that address the actual needs of the children, families, and communities with which one works.

The dual challenge of assessing vulnerability levels and judging the positivity of the adaptation leaves one with few reliable, valid direct measures of resilience as a construct in itself. Because these constructs are highly contextualized, there are not yet universal systems for capturing resilience. There are measures of related constructs—like grit, perseverance, hope, etc.—but direct measures of resilience even in a single setting have proven to have low psychometric rigor overall. Instead, focus measurement on the learning and development outcomes of children. These learning and development outcomes should be determined by the program that one works on and the risk factors and protective processes being addressed. Outcomes can include academic outcomes like literacy and numeracy, social and emotional development, physical development, or cognitive functioning.

## Measure learning and development outcomes rather than resilience

The definition of individual resilience as “beating the odds” is complex and requires measuring two difficult things:

1. The level of “vulnerability,” or accumulation of risk factors that an individual faces or has experienced.
2. Whether the adaptation is positive relative to the amount of risk the person faces and “substantially better than what would be expected given exposure to the risk circumstance being studied” (Luthar, 2006).



# Systems Resilience Post-COVID-19

At its peak, school closures due to COVID-19 occurred in 191 countries, affecting 1.6 billion students and 63 million teachers (UNESCO, 2020). While these numbers are unprecedented, large-scale school closures are not. Every year, natural disasters, political strife, and other emergencies disrupt education in roughly 35 countries, impacting 75 million school age children (Nicolai, 2016). While pandemics, conflict, and displacement are often unpredictable, how education systems respond to them should not be.

The answer to a more resilient education system is creating hybrid learning systems that leverage a variety of methodologies to reach students in a diversity of contexts. This involves a mixture of face-to-face instruction, play-based learning, and e-learning to give learners multiple access points to education. To do so, actors must be creative in how they confront community-specific challenges and engage the home, school, and community in order to bridge the digital divide: the sharp division between those students with reliable access to technology and the internet and those without.



**Less than 30% of home-based learners in low-income countries benefit from distance learning programs**

The digital divide has long since impacted low-resource countries' responses to crises that necessitate distance learning. Less than 30% of home-based learners in low-income countries benefit from distance learning programs (Carvalho & Hares, 2020). Access to connectivity and technology is the main culprit: globally, half of students do not have a household computer, and 43% have no internet access (UNESCO, 2020). The digital divide hits stay-at-home learners in sub-Saharan Africa the hardest, where 89% of households do not have computers, and 82% do not have access to the internet or cellular networks (UNESCO 2020). In Haiti, only 52% of households have radios, let alone smartphones, televisions, and laptops (USAID, 2018).

The rapid acceleration of inequalities and widening of the digital divide due to crises requires actors to be strategic in how they tackle the divide. They must leverage stakeholders at the home, school, and community levels to develop effective programming that does not leave learners in low-tech environments at a distinct disadvantage. For example, partnerships with private sector tech and internet companies are needed to close the access gap and restore education equity. Additionally, initiatives that engage parents in digital literacy education help to ensure the efficacy of hybrid learning programs outside of traditional learning environments. Finally, actors must consider how crises impact all components of a child's resilience building blocks—basic needs, nurturing relationships, and core capabilities and values—and form partnerships with private sector entities who are able to support or meet these needs for out-of-school children.



## Mother's Empowerment Initiative

Fostering systemic resilience through mothers' support networks.

Understanding that the opportunity for a child to succeed requires not just education, but also a safe, stimulating home environment where basic needs such as nutrition and caring relationships are provided, the University of Notre Dame (UND) began reaching out to caretakers in Haiti during COVID-19. Through UND's radio intervention and subsequent focus groups, mothers who traditionally take on the majority of child rearing in Haiti, expressed extreme concern for financial stability in light of COVID-19. Mothers stressed not only about being able to feed and care for their children but also affording tuition so that their children could catch up on missed learning when schools resumed. Mothers shared that they felt isolated, unseen,



Mothers stressed not only about being able to feed and care for their children but also affording tuition...

and unsupported and reported seeing their stress and isolation impact their home environment, their parenting, and their children.

Seeing this need and recognizing that there is no program to-date specifically supporting mothers

and their well-being during the pandemic, UND developed a maternal empowerment initiative to create a space where mothers are heard and given the resources they need while their children learn through UND's radio program. Mothers with children of pre-K and primary age were given a radio so that their children could listen to the radio-based educational programming. Simultaneously, UND partnered with Digicel, the major communications provider in Haiti, to distribute mobile phones and solar powered chargers to mothers, so they could participate in regular well-being check-ins with trained professionals and be connected with mothers' support groups.

To date, UND's partnership with Digicel has allowed actors to support mothers and provide them with the additional resources they need in uncertain times.

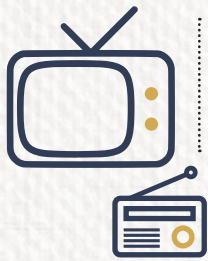




### Ubongo Network

Fostering systemic resilience through private sector engagement to enhance distance learning.

In response to the gaps in distance learning for learners in remote and rural regions of Africa, Ubongo, Africa's leading edutainment company, expanded the reach of its television and radio networks by offering content for free to broadcasters. Through the development of creative and alternative digital content, they were able to reach and engage more learners and families who were excluded from online-dependent learning programs. Additionally, Ubongo worked with partners to create learning materials and resources for high risk communities including resources on handwashing, health, and COVID-19.



...television and radio networks....  
were able to reach and engage more  
learners and families who were excluded  
from online-dependent learning programs

As of May 2020, Ubongo had developed six YouTube learning channels; launched daily lessons on Facebook and Instagram that reached over 2.6 million learners; initiated plans to produce play-based radio shows for the entire family; and created PSAs covering additional topics such as mental health and well-being, online safety, nutrition, and parenting during a pandemic.

**Information for this example is from** (Ubongo, 2020).



# Putting the Pieces Together

## How to move from a school-based to a school-community approach

The University of Notre Dame (UND) has partnered for over a decade with the Haitian Catholic Church and supported actors in Haiti to improve learning outcomes for 100,000+ students in 340 schools through its Read Haiti program. The initial program combined a robust teacher training and coaching program with a high-quality, scripted curriculum for first and second grades. Despite the measured success of this program, incoming students were woefully under-prepared to receive the intervention, with limited oral language skills, understanding of phonemes, and vocabulary knowledge.

Given this experience, the Read Haiti team recognized that in order to increase the efficacy of the program even further, Read Haiti would need to move beyond being solely literacy focused and would need to address the learning that happens before students even enter the classroom. As an initial response, Read Haiti began to integrate SEL into its program materials through morning meetings (Sek Matines) and developed an SEL framework unique to the Haitian context. However, integration at the household and community level was still missing from this approach, and in 2020, Read Haiti launched the Strong Beginnings initiative.

The goal of Strong Beginnings is to improve social and emotional learning and literacy outcomes for 25,000 children in 340 Read Haiti schools from 2020–2021. To achieve this, the initiative embeds positive parenting and school readiness activities at key access points in the parish and wider community: the church; faith-based counseling programs (i.e., pre-marital & baptism); school-based parent groups; and home-visitation programs. The program involves extensive training and asset development of parish leaders, teachers, and parents, utilizing printed, app-based, and play materials. These resources are in Haitian Creole and address a variety of topics ranging from healthy brain development, creating safe and stimulating home environments, and school readiness. Program directors and leaders are continuing to seek out partnerships to integrate nutrition and health-based supports for children as well. Sustainability will be enhanced by integrating this initiative into routine activities within the family-school-parish network.

Simultaneously, extensive training of parish pre-school staff, restructuring of classroom routines, and introduction of ECD kits will be undertaken to better achieve child development and learning objectives. The introduction of play and early routines will promote intellectual curiosity and help children connect words to action, express their feelings, and cooperate with others. While formal pre-schools are beyond the reach of most Haitian families, once improved, they can become experiential learning grounds for parents, teachers, and lay-persons participating in the wider school-readiness initiative.

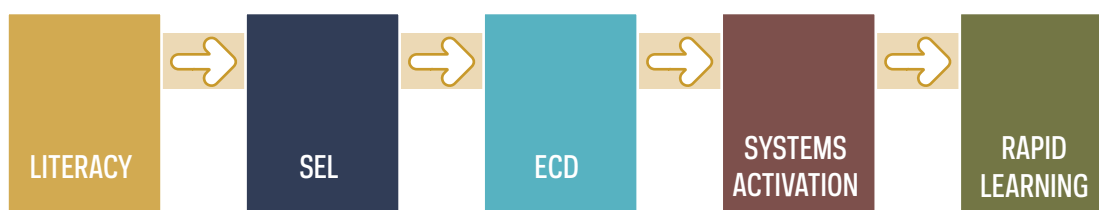
However, innovation also requires rapid learning. Therefore, Strong Beginnings promotes a rapid-learning model to build systematic learning into the early stages of project implementation. This requires early data generation and rapid feedback loops in order to identify promising practices, accelerate decision-making, and improve prospects for long-term success. Through this process, programmatic learning is generated to share with partners working in similar content areas in low-resource contexts, in contrast to traditional M&E systems, which are often considered tools for accountability, with learning occurring too late in the program cycle to influence change.



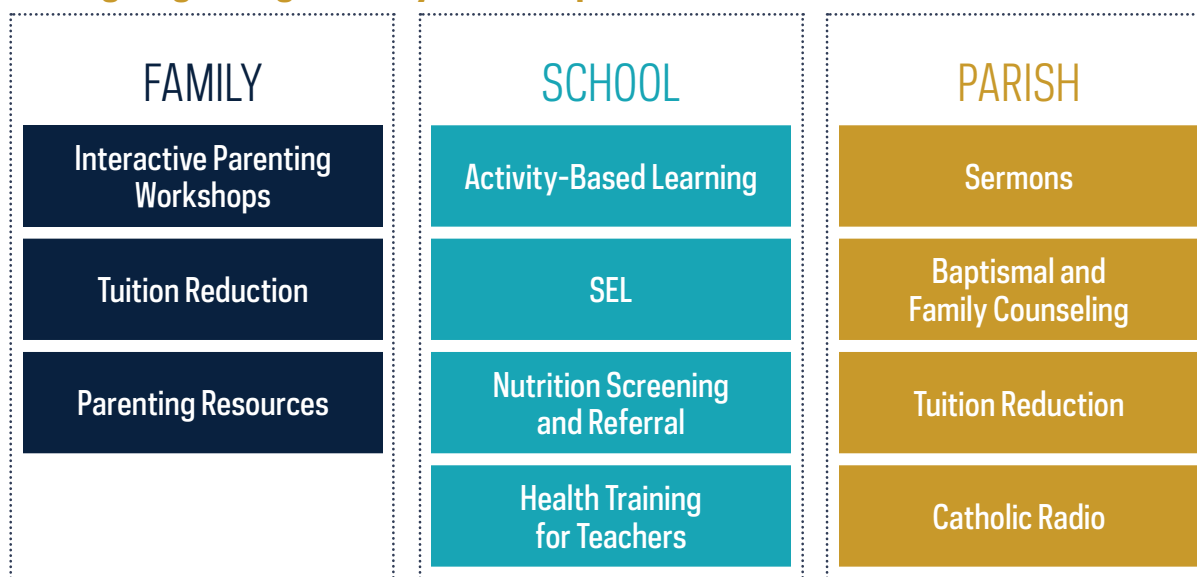
**Rapid feedback loops** identify promising practices and accelerate decision-making

Strong Beginnings' school-community approach paid dividends when COVID-19 forced school closures in Haiti in the spring of 2020. Actors were able to pivot swiftly to radio-based programming for both parents and children, utilizing community partnerships with the Catholic Church and local radio stations.

### Transformation of Literacy Program in Haiti



### Strong Beginnings' family-school-parish network



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