

# Why Whole Child Equity Matters



For some children, like children of color and those from low-income families, adverse experiences like poverty, structural racism, and chronic stress can act as barriers to success.



## Science Says

Trauma and chronic stress, often associated with poverty, race, ethnicity, and disability, can affect brain development and have huge impacts on learning and success.



**But these effects don't have to be permanent.**

During early childhood and adolescence, the brain is increasingly adapting and changing based on experiences and environments.

## Children need supportive environments in and out of school that ...



Meet unique learning and development needs



Address academic, cognitive, social, emotional, identity, and health dimensions



Develop deep, positive relationships between peers and caring adults



Foster critical thinking, collaboration, problem solving, and other life skills



Engage parents or guardians in child's academic and social development and progress



Provide access to comprehensive health services, including physical and mental health



Meet basic needs (safe places to sleep, nutrition)



Offer out-of-school activities and youth development opportunities

## Supporting students, no matter where they are, requires a **WHOLE CHILD** approach.

The Whole Child Equity Project provides an individualized, culturally responsive framework for integrated student services, supports, and learning. This approach focuses on:



State and Local Policy Design



Guidance for Educators



Integrated Services

## Whole Child Equity Systems in Action

In partnership with a small set of school districts and communities, the Whole Child Equity Project will design and support a whole child/whole school equity strategy that includes robust and meaningful family engagement, comprehensive support and capacity building for teaching staff and school leaders, and focuses explicitly on students in the greatest need of support.



# WHOLE CHILD EQUITY PROJECT

**The Whole Child Equity Project** is an initiative of the Alliance for Excellent Education (All4Ed), American Institutes for Research (AIR), Learning Policy Institute (LPI), National Urban League (NUL), Opportunity Institute, and UnidosUS. The project will demonstrate how to provide what all children and their families need to thrive — informed by the science of learning and development — at scale and in public policy.

We propose to work with a set of partnering jurisdictions — both state and district — to collaboratively develop detailed recommendations for how they can apply recent advances in child development and brain sciences to improve education outcomes — academic, social, and emotional — for those children most vulnerable to the failures of school systems. Working closely with jurisdiction partners, we will co-create a comprehensive approach to equity-focused transformation on the ground.

An equity strategy is adequate only if it includes a portfolio of effective, personalized measures to mitigate the effects of poverty.

By incorporating the proof points and wisdom from partner jurisdiction experiences, we will, together, create a set of approaches to sustainable Whole Child Equity transformation that can be shared broadly across the country.

## PROJECT GOALS

1. In and with partnering jurisdictions, collaboratively design, refine, and evaluate implementation of Whole Child Equity strategies
2. Develop a portfolio of policy and practice changes that are needed for communities across the country to adopt, adapt, and sustainably implement WCE strategies to support their children and families

## PROJECT OUTCOMES

At the end of three years, the Whole Child Equity Project will be successful if:

- We have grown our network and built meaningful engagement with stakeholders nationally and on the ground.
- We have pursued effective strategies in multiple, diverse jurisdictions.
- Our final portfolio of recommended approaches includes overlapping and interrelated strategies for state and local jurisdictions across the country.

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