Healthy Schools Research

Presentation of Findings from Multiple Phases of Message Research, September 2017
# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Goals</th>
<th>Slide 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Methodology: A 360° View</td>
<td>Slide 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Message Research: A Phased Approach</td>
<td>Slide 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highlights From All Phases:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Overview of Findings</td>
<td>Slide 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Mindset on “Healthy Schools”</td>
<td>Slides 7-11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Priorities and Barriers to Healthy Schools</td>
<td>Slides 12-20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Positioning the Topic and Message Themes</td>
<td>Slides 21-31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Roles and Activation</td>
<td>Slides 32-39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Implications</td>
<td>Slides 40-43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 1: Qualitative Research with Stakeholders</td>
<td>Slides 44-66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 2: Qualitative Research with Parents &amp; Teachers</td>
<td>Slides 67-90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 3: Quantitative Research with Parents &amp; Teachers</td>
<td>Slides 91-119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 4: Qualitative Research with Business Leaders</td>
<td>Slides 120-132</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Research Goals

- Explore how audiences think about the topic of healthy schools
- Learn about the perceived roles and responsibilities for different players
- Understand motivations and barriers to creating and maintaining healthy schools
- Develop and test messages to describe a multidimensional concept of healthy schools
- Understand terminology and language currently in use and preferred
Methodology: A 360° View

Healthy Schools

- **Students**
  - 4 focus groups
  - High school/college
  - Engaged
  - Less engaged

- **Parents**
  - 6 focus groups
  - N=1015 online non-probability survey
  - N=200 oversample Spanish speakers

- **Stakeholders**
  - 28 interviews
  - K-12 state & district leaders
  - OST leaders

- **Teachers**
  - 20 interviews
  - Small, medium and large businesses

- **Business Leaders**
  - 20 interviews
  - State & district leaders

**Note:** Survey results are not projectable to the larger population of parents or teachers.

The icons on this page are used throughout the report to denote audience.
Message Research: A Phased Approach

Phase I: In-Depth Interviews with Stakeholders
- Fall 2016

Phase II: Focus Groups with Teachers & Parents
- Winter 2016

Phase III: National Online Survey of Teachers & Parents
- Spring 2017

Phase IV: IDIs with Business Leaders, Focus Groups with Students
- Summer 2017

Note: Survey results are not projectable to the larger population of parents or teachers

Throughout this report, arrows ↑↓ indicate statistically significant differences between audiences
Pictures are from focus group participants
Overview of Findings

**Mindset:** All audiences engage on the topic and see healthy schools as multidimensional.

**Priorities and Barriers:** Many say healthy schools are important and ideal, but not always seen as realistic; barriers vary by audience.

**Message Themes:** Focus on equity and student success are most compelling.

**Roles and Activation:** Each audience understands they have a role to play in healthy schools. Students, teachers, and parents see themselves as the core players.
Mindset on Healthy Schools
“Healthy Schools” is Multidimensional

- All audiences agree that there are multiple dimensions to creating a healthy school environment, and these elements are interconnected.

"There are a lot of puzzle pieces to make a healthy school. This trifecta of teachers, students and parents is really important. We can either push our puzzle pieces together, or we can do our own thing and never match up. When we push all of our puzzle pieces together with security and high expectations and communications and relationships, you get a completed puzzle."

Columbus, MS, Teachers

Feedback from Columbus Middle School parent group
Healthy School Components

- This issue is large and complex – audiences bring up Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs in explaining the key components of any healthy school.

**Physical**
- Nutrition: healthy lunches and snacks, farm fresh programs, positive modeling
- Exercise: importance of recess, mind-body connection, students talked about sports as de-stressor

**Safety**
- School as a physical and emotional refuge – sometimes the only place kids feel safe
- Teachers as “protectors” – hear this with students too

**Social & Emotional**
- Includes myriad skills and attitudes: teamwork, acceptance, confidence, learning from mistakes
- Some talk about mental health issues; teachers need more training (overwhelmed)

**Academic**
- “Healthy mind”
- Not just reading and math skills and scores
- Too much emphasis on testing
- Alternative, project based, hands-on experiences

**Discipline**
- Came up more with students
- Heard both sides – frustration that not all students “respect” the rules
- But also lack of “freedom”

**School Support**
- All stakeholders must work together – partnership key theme
- A healthy school is difficult to achieve with limited time and resources
Healthy School Narrative Themes

• Among K-12 state/district leaders and out-of-school time providers, five common narratives emerge when they describe healthy school environments.

  Better Learners Story – healthy schools allow learning to thrive

  Social-Emotional Story – positive behaviors/interactions among students & adults

  Environmental Story – a bright, welcoming environment that can be observed and felt

  Equity Story – the inequity between under- and well-resourced schools

  Partnership Story – multiple players working collaboratively
Importance of Healthy Schools

- The vast majority of parents and teachers surveyed think a healthy school should be the top or an important priority. Some audiences are more enthusiastic than others.

Q: Thinking about your child’s school, how big a priority should a healthy school be?

Hispanic, African American
Urban
Free/Reduced Lunch
Rate School A

More likely to say priority

Hispanic
Northeast
Urban
Liberal Ideology
Rate School A
Priorities and Barriers to Healthy Schools
# Identifying Priorities for Healthy Schools

To better understand priorities, parents and teachers evaluated the following statements:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SAFETY Physical</th>
<th>I want my school to be a place where students are physically safe, secure, and protected.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SAFETY Emotional</td>
<td>I want my school to be a place where students feel emotionally safe, accepted, and able to express themselves.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DISCIPLINE Suspend</td>
<td>I want my school to be able to suspend or expel students who are disruptive or threaten the safety of other students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DISCIPLINE Managing Conflict</td>
<td>I want my school to have discipline policies that keep students in school by effectively managing conflicts and building a positive learning environment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEL Mental Health</td>
<td>I want my school to support the mental health needs of students, particularly those exposed to trauma and violence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEL Life Skills</td>
<td>I want my school to teach students life skills like self-control, kindness, teamwork, and problem solving to help them become well-rounded adults.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACADEMICS Core</td>
<td>I want my school to focus on teaching academics like reading, writing, math, and science.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACADEMICS Creativity</td>
<td>I want my school to nurture creativity and imagination as part of achieving academic excellence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENVIRONMENT PD</td>
<td>I want my school to offer teachers more support and training to meet the complex demands of students and families today.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENVIRONMENT Partners</td>
<td>I want my school to be a place where parents and teachers work in partnership with one another to provide the best environment for their students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENVIRONMENT Building</td>
<td>I want my school to have clean, bright, welcoming buildings and grounds that motivate students and staff to learn.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHYSICAL HEALTH Diet</td>
<td>I want my school to provide healthy, nutritious food options so students have the energy they need to focus on learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHYSICAL HEALTH Exercise</td>
<td>I want my school to provide time and space for physical activity and movement throughout the day.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Identifying Priorities: Methodology

- Qualitative research informed the statements developed for testing.
- Because all of these statements are considered important, a tradeoff analysis (called Max-Diff) was used to get a rank order of importance and determine the magnitude of preference.
- 13 statements were tested. Statements were shown in randomized groups of 5, and each respondent went through several sets of statements.
- Aggregated data and modeling yields a “utility score” for each item.

**Example from Survey:**

On the next few screens, you will see 5 statements about schools. For each list, please select the ONE statement that is **most important** to you when you think about what you want for YOUR school/YOUR child’s school (on the left), and the ONE statement that is **least important** to you.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MOST Important</th>
<th>LEAST Important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I want my school to be a place where students are physically safe, secure, and protected.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I want my school to be a place where parents and teachers work in partnership with one another to provide the best environment for their students.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I want my school to focus on teaching academics like reading, writing, math, and science.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I want my school to teach students life skills like self-control, kindness, teamwork, and problem solving to help them become well-rounded adults.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I want my school to provide time and space for physical activity and movement throughout the day.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Parents Surveyed Identify Most Important Aspects

The trade-off highlights:
- A healthy school is multi-faceted
- Positioning makes a difference
- Teaching “life skills” is seen as most important, almost 2x more important than mental health supports
- Physical and emotional safety are priorities
- Teaching core subjects is critical, more so than “nurturing creativity”
- Nutrition and physical activity are seen as less important

Parents: Results From Trade-off Exercise

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspect</th>
<th>Utility Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SEL (Life Skills)</td>
<td>13.307</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAFETY (Physical)</td>
<td>11.941</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACADEMICS (Core)</td>
<td>11.726</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAFETY (Emotional)</td>
<td>10.287</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENVIRO (Partners)</td>
<td>8.399</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DISCIPLINE (Managing Conflict)</td>
<td>7.936</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACADEMICS (Creativity)</td>
<td>6.982</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEL (Mental Health)</td>
<td>6.141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENVIRO (PD)</td>
<td>5.912</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DISCIPLINE (Suspend)</td>
<td>5.674</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HEALTH (Diet)</td>
<td>4.856</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HEALTH (Physical)</td>
<td>3.423</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENVIRO (Building)</td>
<td>3.416</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7.69 average

Utility score indicates degree of preference with higher and lower than average scores indicated.
Surveyed Teacher Priorities Are Similar, But ...

Teachers surveyed prioritize life skills even more than parents surveyed.

“Emotional safety, acceptance and expression” are just as important as physical safety.

Physical activity and nutrition are lower priorities for teachers than parents surveyed.

Utility score indicates degree of preference with higher and lower than average scores indicated.
**Students Add Their Perspectives**

**Students Were More Focused on Academic Engagement**
- Adapting to different learning styles, personalized attention
- More experiential, “hands-on,” project-based learning
- More focus on “real world skills” - i.e., CTE, financial planning, time management, internships

“Actually doing things, a project instead of an essay or a test. In my internship I learned about what goes behind a business, paperwork, taxes, bills, equipment costs, real-life stuff.”

NY, Disengaged HS

**They Talked of “Protection”: Physical and Emotional Safety**
- Not only physical safety, but a teacher/adult who takes an interest in students’ well-being
- Staff is proactive rather than reactive
- Bullying and interpersonal conflict are managed
- School is safe and clean

“A tree represents a healthy school because it is strong, healthy, protective, and provides what you need. This could be teachers that you’re comfortable with that people go to for help or protection from a bully.”

NY, Disengaged HS

**“Freedom” Was a Key Word and Theme**
- Freedom to get outside school walls
- Freedom to make decisions: students have more control over what they learn, how they learn, how they are assessed; learn from mistakes
- Freedom of expression: opinions, creativity, conflict resolution

“A healthy school has freedom, creativity. At a progressive school you get to explain how you feel. I didn’t always have a chance to do that.”

NY, Engaged Grad

**Students Also Spoke of the Importance of Social, Emotional, Mental Health**
- Opportunities to de-stress from academic and social pressures (sports mentioned a lot)
- Encourages acceptance and belonging
- Teaches social and communication skills
- “Communication, respect, acceptance, conflict resolution, diversity, confidence, teamwork” (language)

“Acceptance. A relationship with teacher or classmates affects your work. So being able to come to the teacher...if there are personal problems.”

NM, Engaged HS
A Description Resonates, but a Gap Exists Between the Real & Ideal

Healthy Schools Description

A healthy school is one that nurtures and supports every aspect of a student’s health - physical, social, emotional, and cognitive health. This means getting kids active and eating healthy foods. School buildings and grounds that make kids and staff feel motivated and ready to learn. Teachers who support students and serve as positive role models. A welcoming place for parents and families to learn about how they can help their kids succeed. And working with a community that promotes learning and resilience - inside and outside of school walls.

Your Experience vs. What You’d Like to See at Your School

- Parents-Reality: 22%
- Parents-Ideal: 37% (13 pt gap)
- Teachers-Reality: 9%
- Teachers-Ideal: 32% (32 pt gap)

Perfectly:
- Healthy Schools Description: 13 pt gap
- Parents-Reality: 22%
- Teachers-Reality: 9%

Very well:
- Healthy Schools Description: 72%
- Parents-Ideal: 37%
- Teachers-Ideal: 32%
Parent and Teacher Participants Identify Some Barriers

- There are no barriers presented that a majority strongly agree with, but there are a few that generate some concern.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(Strongly Agree or Somewhat Agree)</th>
<th>Parents</th>
<th>Teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teachers need more support/training</td>
<td>#1 77%</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficult to get parents actively involved</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>#1 80%↑</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too many urgent priorities; limited resources to go beyond academics</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>69%↑</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers are already overworked, overburdened</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>65%↑</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Many public schools in troubled areas; idea is not realistic</td>
<td>47%↑</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schools/teachers should only be accountable for academics</td>
<td>44%↑</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not the school’s place; that’s the role of family</td>
<td>44%↑</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sounds like gov’t intervention</td>
<td>43%↑</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Only possible in high-income districts</td>
<td>39%↑</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Stakeholders Comment on Opportunities and Challenges

Opportunities

- **ESSA** – provides a timely opening to conversations about this
- **Research** – there are proven links between physical and emotional health and academic achievement that help make the case for a focus on healthy schools
- **Obesity rates** – rising rates of childhood obesity and diabetes are a rallying point
- **Mental health focus** – the federal government’s greater attention to mental health needs has trickled down to the state and district levels
- **Attention to workforce skills** – long-term outcomes for students – employability, college – are top priority

Challenges

- **Urgent is the enemy of important** – investing in healthy schools is often seen as a long-term goal, but gets superseded by more “urgent” priorities and limited resources
- **Relevance** – many leaders are too far removed or working in well-resourced areas where students are getting the physical and social-emotional supports they need
- **Measurement** – so much emphasis on data and accountability, and social and emotional dimensions are harder to measure

Note: Interviews were conducted in September and October 2016.
Positioning the Topic and Message Themes
A healthy school is one that nurtures and supports every aspect of a student’s health – physical, social, emotional, and cognitive health. This means getting kids active and eating healthy foods. School buildings and grounds that make kids and staff feel energized motivated and ready to learn. Teachers who support students and serve as healthy examples positive role models. A safe space welcoming place for parents and families to learn about how they can help their kids succeed. And working with a community that promotes learning and resilience – inside and outside of school walls.

Blue=Positive  Aqua=Questions/mixed  Red=Negative
Additional Perspectives on Description

• Generally positive, similar words popped
• Some students found the definition “too perfect,” lacking authenticity (important to teenagers)
• “Every aspect of a student’s health and well-being” possibly oversteps the boundaries of what a school can do
• The word “emotional” got mixed feedback:
  - Some said grown-ups are supposed to learn to control their emotions
  - Schools can create negative “emotions,” and thus did not like word
  - Others said that emotions are valid: when teachers treat you like your emotions don’t matter, they fail their students
• They want their teachers to be “positive role models” (though some are and some are not)

• Business leaders found the definition comprehensive and ideal, but cast doubt over whether it can be realistically achieved
• Appreciate addressing every aspect of a student’s health, whether or not these aspects came up unaided
• Liked the idea of creating role models
• Including parents and “working with the community” in the definition was crucial, to be more explicit about how they might have a role
Message Themes Tested

- Message themes were revised/improved over the course of research
- Four were tested in the parent/teacher survey

**Equity:** Every student deserves a chance to succeed, no matter who they are, where they’re from, or how much money their family makes. More than half of our nation’s public school students live in poverty. Schools can help kids overcome challenges and give them the skills they need to succeed in life. But schools need resources, and families and communities need to be involved so all students have a supportive network at school, at home, and in between.

**Success:** In order to graduate ready to succeed in [Split Sample A: an increasingly competitive workforce]/[Split Sample B: in life], young people need a well-rounded set of skills - not just book smarts, but strong interpersonal relationships, social skills, and self-confidence, as well as the ability to work effectively in teams. Students need to learn these skills at home and during the school day.

**Ready to Learn:** Healthy, safe, and nurturing school environments ensure that all our children are ready to learn. When children are healthy - physically and emotionally - and are surrounded by caring teachers and adults who support them, they’re able to focus on what they’re learning.

**Whole Child:** Academic achievement is important, but it’s only one piece of the puzzle. In order to help all students succeed in life, we should support an approach in schools that nurtures a student’s health and well-being to help them grow into successful, well-rounded adults.
Q: Of all the statements that you have just read, which is the most convincing reason for your/your child’s school to devote time, attention, and resources to this topic?

This rank order is consistent across subgroups.

Scores for all messages are higher among parents surveyed who rate their schools an A, parents who prioritize healthy schools, mothers, parents of color, and urban parents.
Evolution of the Equity Theme

• A key concern, but a complex issue to message. The frame was refined over the course of the research to bring the core principle to the front (for all students), and acknowledge that this goal takes resources.

From the Qualitative

More than half of our nation’s public school students live in poverty. Schools have an important role to play, particularly in neighborhoods where students face poverty, family instability, and violence.

In the Survey

Every student deserves a chance to succeed, no matter who they are, where they’re from, or how much money their family makes. More than half of our nation’s public school students live in poverty. Schools can help kids overcome challenges and give them the skills they need to succeed in life. But schools need resources, and families and communities need to be involved so all students have a supportive network at school, at home, and in between.
Equity Theme

- “Every student deserves a chance to succeed” resonates
- Speaks to some on a personal level
- Agreement that this is a shared responsibility between home, school, and communities
- Teachers surveyed, in particular, highlight the need for “resources” and parental engagement

Even More Convincing:
- Younger parents
- African Americans
- Less educated
- Incomes under $100k
- Free and reduced lunch

Even More Convincing:
- <10 years tenure
- Midwest, South
- Urban, Rural
- Healthy schools a higher priority
- Title I

RATINGS

- Personally Motivating (top box)
  - 57%
  - 43%

- Convincing to Make Priority (top box)
  - 53%
  - 39%

- Most Convincing (pick 1)
  - 41%
  - 45%

★ = top choice in category
Equity Theme Feedback

Equity

Every student deserves a chance to succeed, no matter who they are, where they’re from, or how much money their family makes. More than half of our nation’s public school students live in poverty. Schools can help kids overcome challenges and give them the skills they need to succeed in life. But schools need resources, and families and communities need to be involved so all students have a supportive network at school, at home, and in between.

Highlighter Tool Findings Among Parents and Teachers Surveyed: 30-39% liked, 40% or more liked

“More than half of kids in public school live in poverty. That to me is heartbreaking.”

“This is the reason that I became a teacher. When you know that education is the one thing that can change the world, it becomes really important.”

“It speaks to diversity of children and schools. How do you teach people you have the right to the same things?”

“When you are in marginalized communities…the school culture becomes a space of refuge. But it also provides additional services to young people whether that be social workers or adults that support children and their families.”
Success Theme

- Tested two versions after feedback that the “workforce” language might not resonate for younger students
- No sub-group differences by age of child nor grade-band of teacher – either option works (though “workforce” resonates with stakeholders and business leaders)
- Spelling out specific skills for success stands out (this is consistent with other studies)
- “Working in teams” is particularly important to teachers

Version A (Increasing Competitive Workforce)

- Motivating, Personally Convincing to Make Priority (top box)
  - 54% ↑
  - 37%

- Convincing to Make Priority (top box)
  - 52% ↑
  - 35%

- Most Convincing (pick 1)
  - 25%
  - 26%

Version B (In Life)

- Motivating, Personally Convincing to Make Priority (top box)
  - 53% ↑
  - 40%

- Convincing to Make Priority (top box)
  - 55% ↑
  - 36%

- Most Convincing (pick 1)
  - 23%
  - 26%

★ = top choice in category
Success

In order to graduate ready to **succeed** in [an increasingly competitive workforce/life], young people need a **well-rounded set of skills** - not just book smarts, but **strong interpersonal relationships, social skills, and self-confidence**, as well as the ability to **work effectively in teams**. Students need to learn these skills at home and during the school day.

Highlighter Tool Findings Among Parents and Teachers Surveyed: 30-39% liked, 40% or more liked

“**I think social skills, self-confidence is huge, working in teams is important.**”

“I thought if I can help that kid who can’t get above 50% with interpersonal skills, maybe he’ll be the top ranking salesman anyone’s ever seen. Let’s look at different measures of success.”

“When I’m hiring or when we meet with students, their ability for interpersonal and the skillset required for that is appalling today. You have 4.0 students from ‘good’ schools but put them in front of a client and forget about it.”

“Workforce is really the focus of our state right now...kids walking out of high school able to get a job.”
Messages for Business Leaders

- All of these messages were viewed positively with potential to influence business leaders
- Mentoring, internships, and specific skills resonate. These also allow businesses to share their expertise rather than just write a check.
- Most agree that education of young people will shape the future and acknowledge the importance of preparing the next generation of our country
- The poverty statistic lifts heads
- However, a few cautioned against explicitly calling on businesses to financially support schools or bridge the resource gap. Their taxes do that, and this is not a primary role for business.

Additional messages were presented to business leaders to better gauge their priorities and how they viewed their role

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employability Skills</th>
<th>Strong interpersonal relationships, social skills, and self-confidence are important skills in order to succeed in the workplace.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Workforce Prep</td>
<td>Hands-on training, mentoring and internships provide students opportunities to build skills like problem-solving and teamwork that prepare them for success both in the classroom and the workforce.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Return on Investment 1</td>
<td>Local businesses can help schools and communities thrive by mentoring students, volunteering time at the school, and/or donating resources.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Return on Investment 2</td>
<td>Investing in healthy schools helps to increase and diversify the available talent pool.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Investment</td>
<td>A business is an integral part of its community and can play an important role to help shape and create an environment that is better for everyone – including students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resource Gap</td>
<td>It’s on all of us to support schools so that they can provide healthy learning environments for our students—that includes financial support from businesses to expand access to opportunities for students and bridge the resource gap. An investment in our schools is an investment in the future.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expertise</td>
<td>Businesses that lend their expertise — whether through training and mentoring or in an advisory capacity — advance their mission while also contributing to the development of the future workforce.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equity</td>
<td>More than half of our nation’s public school students live in poverty. The business community can play a vital role in providing resources — time, expertise, and monetarily — to schools to help kids overcome challenges and give them the skills they need to succeed in the workforce and life.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Roles and Activation
Students, teachers and parents see themselves as the core players and interdependent
They believe other audiences in the community play a role, but feel they are less influential
Activating Parents and Teachers

Parents surveyed are interested in a number of activities, face-to-face and virtual

- Visit a website to learn more: 33% extremely likely, 63% very likely
- Volunteer project at school: 33% extremely likely, 62% very likely
- Attend an event to learn more: 30% extremely likely, 59% very likely
- Sign a pledge demanding healthy schools: 30% extremely likely, 58% very likely
- Forward information to your school/district: 26% extremely likely, 55% very likely
- Promote the issue on social media: 26% extremely likely, 52% very likely
- Participate in PD/training: 23% extremely likely, 50% very likely
- Discuss at PTA/School Board meeting: 22% extremely likely, 49% very likely
- Make a financial donation: 21% extremely likely, 44% very likely
- Write an elected official: 19% extremely likely, 41% very likely

Professional development is the key way the Teachers surveyed say they will get involved

- Participate in PD/training: 28% extremely likely, 61% very likely
- Visit a website to learn more: 19% extremely likely, 48% very likely
- Volunteer project at school: 19% extremely likely, 49% very likely
- Attend an event to learn more: 16% extremely likely, 44% very likely
- Sign a pledge demanding healthy schools: 15% extremely likely, 38% very likely
- Forward information to your school/district: 13% extremely likely, 38% very likely
- Promote the issue on social media: 11% extremely likely, 31% very likely
- Write an elected official: 8% extremely likely, 25% very likely
- Discuss at PTA/School Board meeting: 8% extremely likely, 24% very likely
- Make a financial donation: 5% extremely likely, 17% very likely

Q: Here are different ways YOU could get involved in supporting a healthy school. How likely to take action?
Students on the Role of School Staff

Caring adults are critical to a healthy school

• If you have one staff person who takes an interest in you outside of the classroom, then you are more likely to succeed
• Teachers who are role models “get to know you as a person”
• Role model teachers encourage different learning styles, creativity, build your confidence and show they care
• Some felt a connection with a caring adult should be a best practice, more proactive than reactive
• College students went so far as to say that teachers should be evaluated the way students evaluate their professors in college

“I got caught doing something I shouldn’t be doing. I told my friend who told my teacher who told my parents. My teacher did a good thing, helping me through it.”

“My principal is my best friend. I transferred and he took me under his wing. I got in trouble a lot at my last school.”

“There are specific things about certain teachers. One is a role model in academics. Then another one with her personality and how she handles life. And I want to be like that when I’m older. You spend a whole year with them and see them every day and their experience will affect you as well.”
Stakeholders Talk About Their Roles

- Local control is key, as most look to schools as the focal point – principals at the helm, ideally partnering with parents and the larger community. State and district leaders can offer support and guidance, or be seen as obstacles to “get around” or to “get out of the way.”

State

“We put guidance out...we have cross-sector conversations at the state level, for example engaging with the Department of Health...State grants can help incentivize and encourage schools.” State

District

“The district office should be a source of support to the principal.” District

Community

“It takes a village to raise a child...the community has to take a larger role. They have to be willing to step in and fill in the gaps.” State

School

“When they’re with us, they’re our responsibility.” District (Principal)

“If the school principal gets it, then we see effective policies and programs throughout the school.” State

Home

“Parents and relatives need to set the stage for how a child shows up in the morning, they set the stage for the day.” State
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus on concrete steps to achieve a healthy school</th>
<th>Emphasize positive outcomes and skills gained</th>
<th>Include school as part of a larger ecosystem of support</th>
<th>Stress greater opportunities and success for all students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“It’s action-oriented. I know what social skills are.”</td>
<td>“There is increased desire to have kids walking out of high school able to get a job.”</td>
<td>“Schools should not be a one-stop location for everything.”</td>
<td>“Equitable, greater opportunities for students.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“It gives a framework for what we do and why we do it.”</td>
<td>“That's one of the local arguments we’re making - that soft skills are also important for keeping a job too.”</td>
<td>“It can't just be family and communities responsibility. School has to play a part.”</td>
<td>“All students’ achievement.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Healthy living provides strategies to succeed.”</td>
<td>“You need to be book smart, have social skills, interpersonal skills, all of those things to succeed.”</td>
<td>“We need to understand that it takes all of us. We need to provide this as a society.”</td>
<td>“Kids are not getting the same opportunities.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Safe. It’s a starting point.”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“Optimizing learning for all of our kids to be successful.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Action-oriented**

**Skills-based**

**Partnership-focused**

**Equal-opportunity**
Mindset on Corporate Responsibility

- They want to be engaged and build good will with the community.
- Their philanthropic missions are often aligned with their industries, especially among small businesses.
- Business leaders have a lot of priorities. Activities that affect their bottom line are most important.

Getting Involved on this Topic

- They need and want partners to help them with this effort. They typically look to NGOs to bridge the gap to working with schools.
- Helping in this area does not come naturally - they want a proven program they can follow to be most effective.

“**We go to corporate responsibility and community investment conferences. We’re looking for subject matter experts who can share best practices for companies investing in education, where we can have the most impact, and places to support the mission.**” Senior Director, Corporate Responsibility, Large Biz

“**Mine is a small business. Developing the future workforce seems like something Microsoft or Boeing is doing, not a small shop.**” President/Owner, Small Biz

“**Participation in this type of thing is not a natural part of business. We need a blueprint to get involved, not just to send a check. We need a model of success.**” Senior Dir. Communications and External Affairs, Large Biz
## Activating Business Leaders

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Clearly articulate the needs of schools</th>
<th>Tap into the expertise of the business</th>
<th>NGOs as the Conduit</th>
<th>Rally employees as parents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Ask the schools what they most need from a company like ours. Ask what the experts need, what challenges they’re trying to solve. Then we can see if we’re equipped to help solve those problems.” Large Business</td>
<td>“Everyone wants to be asked about what they do—you feel valued that way. Tap into self-value and hook them with that one thing. Inspire them. Find out what their expertise is and match that to skills people need.” Small Business</td>
<td>“It’s hard for private companies to partner with public schools, to manage time and learning objectives. It’s easier to work with wraparound services than directly with schools. We need non-profits as an intermediary.” Large Business</td>
<td>“Employees have kids in schools so they will support you in this effort. Business is switching from home and work being totally divorced.” Large Business</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Partners mentioned: Afterschool All Stars, 4-H, Boys and Girls Clubs, Junior Achievement, DECA

---

### Meet business leaders where they are

“You need to be where these people are congregating, the Chamber of Commerce, Community Leader meetings—the meetings and organizations where leaders participate.” Small Business
Implications
Implications

**Mindset:** How audiences think about healthy schools

- Complex, interconnected: teaching life skills, physical and emotional safety, core academics, managing conflict, and parent/teacher partnership are **all priorities**
- **Less emphasis** on physical health and disciplinary measures
- The issue is **BIG** - consider an angle or area of focus

**Priorities:** Barriers to creating and maintaining healthy schools

- **Parents/Teachers:** teacher training, parent engagement, competing priorities
- **Students:** academic engagement, lack of support from caring adults
- **Stakeholders:** long-term problem, measurement difficult
- **Business:** clarity on their role, right program to align with mission/bottom line
Implications

**Message Themes:** Focus on equity and student success are most compelling

- **Equity** message is effective, but tricky: cannot put too much burden on schools nor call out certain groups; this is about ALL students deserving a chance to succeed, and partnership is needed to make it happen
- **Success** message resonates overall, but particularly with Stakeholders and Business. Highlighting life and employability skills is key

**Roles & Activation:** Perceived roles & ways to activate

- **Stakeholders** see the big picture: “it takes a village”
- **Parents & Teachers** surveyed see themselves and students as key players, partnership critical (but complex), others further removed
- **Students** stress the importance of a caring adult at school
- Partnerships with community/businesses make a difference, but are not top of mind – **business** wants prescriptive proven programs
## Implications for Language

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Multidimensional:</th>
<th>• Schools cannot do it all (i.e., “every aspect,” “the greatest chance”)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Physical, social, emotional &amp; academic health”</td>
<td>• Get too touchy-feely (i.e., “safe space,” “hearts and minds”)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Well-rounded set of skills”</td>
<td>• Use academic jargon (i.e., “Culture of health,” “Healthy school climates,” “Whole child” on its own)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Healthy, safe, and nurturing school”</td>
<td>• Be careful about the Equity argument (i.e., “particularly in neighborhoods where students face poverty, family instability, and violence”)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Nurtures a student’s health and well-being”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Partnership:</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Caring teachers”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Positive role models”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Supportive network”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skills for Success:</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Interpersonal relationships, social skills, and self confidence”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Teach students life skills like self-control, kindness, teamwork, and problem solving”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Work effectively in teams”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Successful, well-rounded adults”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Academic achievement”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Equity:</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Every student deserves a chance to succeed”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Overcome challenges”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 1: Qualitative Research with Stakeholders

Findings from In-depth Interviews with Stakeholders, October 2016
Methodology

28 In-Depth Interviews

- Education stakeholders including:
  - ✓ K-5 state-level leaders (9): State Boards, Departments of Education
  - ✓ K-5 district-level leaders (9): Superintendents, Principals, County Boards
  - ✓ Out-of-school time decision makers (10): Large OST providers

- Sources targeted by title with the goal of getting a good sample across the US. Contact information obtained through online research/cold calling, and then invited to participate by a professional recruiter

- Interviews approx. 45 minutes in length

- Most conducted over virtual platform, using webcams and screen sharing

- Conducted Sept. 7 – Oct. 11, 2016

Key Question Areas:

- Healthy school environments – aspirations and reality (projective story-telling exercise and direct questions)
- Exploration of language and key terminology
- Feedback on messaging to provide inputs for communications strategy
- Identification of barriers and opportunities

Note: Qualitative research is designed to reveal a target audience’s range of behavior and the perceptions that drive it with reference to specific topics or issues. They are in-depth studies of people to guide and support the construction of hypotheses. The results of qualitative research are descriptive rather than predictive. Please see the Appendix for a complete list of research participants.
Exploring the Concept of Healthy School Environments: Respondent Storylines
Popular Storylines

• These are the “stories” that emerge as stakeholders describe healthy school environments.

Five common themes or storylines:

Better Learners Story - healthy schools allow learning to thrive

Equity Story - the inequity between under- and well-resourced schools

Partnership Story - multiple players working collaboratively

Social-Emotional Story - positive behaviors/interactions among students & adults

Environment Story - a bright, welcoming environment that can be seen and felt

Projective storytelling exercise:
Describe a picture, story or a vision of what it looks like when we have created a healthy school environment. Probes:
• Who is involved? What is your role?
• What is the best case – desired impact, outcome?
• Additional characteristics of healthy school environments such as social and emotional aspects and mental health
Better Learners Story

• Everyone interviewed agrees that healthy kids make better learners

• This is supported by attention to the social, emotional, mental, and physical needs of students

• Instruction can be bolstered through the integration of health content into the curriculum

• Project-based learning and the teaching of practical skills further engages students while preparing them for “real-life” situations

• For K-5, integration of outdoor time/recess and movement is considered especially important

“You see learners who are engaged; you see learners who are eager; you see learners who are actively learning.” State

“If you don’t address social and emotional learning you’re not going to get focus on facts and figures. If the child’s afraid to get an answer wrong, you won’t get one…you have to build a safe place to make it meaningful.” OST

“One of the things that I think is missing is basic knowledge, home cc, dance classes, wood shop - some of the cultural pieces of how to function.” State

“Encouraging the time with our students to go out and have recess breaks and...times throughout the instructional day when kids can get up and move around.” District
Equity Story

• Many immediately bring up under-resourced, predominantly urban schools as either “unhealthy” school environments and/or places where students are not thriving

• Violence, poverty and low parental involvement are stressors that severely inhibit academic performance

• Schools are uniquely situated to offer support and resources – including health services, counseling, and food. BUT, they cannot unilaterally solve the underlying issues

• Teachers/staff need training/support to serve these needs. Some went as far as to say they need to be “caseworkers,” and several mentioned cuts to counseling services

“So much of healthy schools has to do with the zip code. Poverty and health are absolutely linked.” State

“When you are in marginalized communities...the school culture becomes a space of refuge. But it also provides additional services to young people whether that be social workers or adults that support children and their families.” OST

“Especially when you’re working with under-resourced populations, there is a social work aspect to being a good teacher, being able to be on the lookout for things a child might be experiencing...the teacher is also a case manager.” OST

“Teachers who are well trained to work with a diverse group of students with different linguistic, racial/ethnic, socioeconomic backgrounds.” State

“Areas where families have the resources, they don't need this kind of model.” District
Partnership Story

• Many discussed healthy schools as an “ecosystem” where multiple actors are engaged in its success: school and afterschool staff, students, parents, and the wider community

• Strong ties to the community and partnerships with community organizations can provide additional resources and services/fill gaps

• Parental engagement is critical to success, but not always reliable

• OST decision-makers often brought up greater synergy and communication between school and OST as a way to foster this

---

“An environment that has a really strong partnership between school administration, parents and community organizations.” OST

“All kinds of community members come together including governor, mayor’s office, local organizations, mental health programs, etc.” District

“If we’re thinking about a healthy school environment, it would include better engagement with our families.” District

“From the school to the afterschool time, the more communication that is between the staff who are working in both timeframes, the more you’re going to create a healthy environment for the kids.” OST
The “social and emotional” aspect of healthy schools was mentioned in most interviews.

Defining “social and emotional” often leads to discussion of both “positive behavior,” as well as disciplinary actions.

Social and emotional “skills” include the development of “resiliency” and tools to help guide more positive interactions with peers and adults.

Teaching these skills is seen as a role for teachers/staff. However, some would either prefer that families take this on or worry that families will feel school is over-stepping.

“Social-emotional behavioral support in the classroom, helping them to behave well and treat their friends with respect, all that good stuff.” District

“A place where conflict is easily and quickly taken care of between young people, where adults and children both know what the expectation is around how they speak and interact with each other.” OST

“It’s positive, encouraging, as opposed to punitive—teaching kids what you expect of them and then giving feedback when they do it right.” State

“Staff have the ability to positively manage behaviors...but also help kids manage relationships with other kids and with their families.” District

“The ability to build healthy and caring relationships with peers and adults.” OST

“Number one: Kids feel like someone loves them.” State
Environment Story

• Discussion of healthy schools as “positive” environments that one can both “observe and feel”

• For many “environment” also refers to the “culture,” “climate” or atmosphere of the school—e.g., “welcoming,” “comfortable” and “safe”

• “Environment” is often taken literally—e.g., a school that is “well-landscaped,” “bright,” decorated with students’ artwork and “in good repair”

• Environment/atmosphere is cultivated by school staff, where both students and staff feel positive

“The principal and staff are out there greeting students, giving hugs and high fives.” District

“You can tell in 10 minutes when you walk into a building...an environment that is inviting and welcoming.” State

“An environment where the kids feel safe, cared for, and a lot of their needs are met...It’s a culture.” OST

“School is a place where kids could look forward to going every day.” OST

“If the school building looks good it will affect their mood.” State

“A bright facility that is clean and modern.” District
While many recurring themes cut across stakeholder audiences, a few differences stood out in the way leaders in state, district, and OST talk about healthy school environments.

**State Level**
- More likely to focus on the infrastructure of a school; talk about data and consistency
- “A place where learning occurs... where knowledgeable and skilled teachers are employed.”

**District Level**
- More likely to emphasize safety, basic needs
- “I want them to be safe. I want them to be fed.”

**OST**
- More likely to talk about school “culture” and “social and emotional” health
- “Social emotional development is the superstar... it’s that skill that propels you forward.”
Language on Benefits and Barriers

• As they discussed the benefits and barriers to creating “healthy school environments,” respondents often used language and phrases focused on building skills and relationships. “Whole child,” “holistic,” “culture,” and “climate” are words that come up naturally, but some later say they would not use them in communications.

**BENEFITS**

- Skills towards being a total person
- Build skills and knowledge
- Practical pieces of how to function in a society
- Positive social interaction
- Positive role models
- Social and emotional learning/skills
- Social interaction
- Partnerships
- Collective impact
- Open communication
- Whole child is being cared for, looked after by adults in the room
- Holistic development of children
- Creating a climate, an atmosphere

**BARRIERS**

- Not yet a good culture of support around mental health
- Cross cultural differences between school culture and home culture
- There is only so much we can do with the limited amount of resources and time people have
- Not a lot of time and resources to apply to the holistic approach
- Schools are overwhelmed
- We add and don't take away expectations, which compromises quality
Landscape of Terms
Terms that Resonate

• Several terms had more traction - across audiences and ideology.
• A few suggested combining top terms: WSCC is the goal and having “healthy, safe, and nurturing school environments” is how you get there.

Healthy, safe, and nurturing school environments

Describes the ideal situation for learning; addresses positive relationships; easily understood - no room for interpretation; widely accepted; has urgency

“You need a nurturing environment for students to learn at their full potential. It’s the most urgent: there are elementary school shootings. It’s difficult to learn if kids are worried about safety.” District

Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child

Speaks to the partnership that many feel is critical to support healthy students. New; very few familiar with WSCC. Caveat: may not be understood on its own

“It has to be a synergy between schools, parents and communities so families understand what their child needs in terms of school support.” OST

Building Healthy Schools

“Building” indicates a plan of action with a starting point from which to grow; has urgency

"This seems the most urgent. Education is changing. Building indicates that we are working towards something.” State
Less Effective Terms

- Some terms that came up in natural conversation were considered too “vague” and confusing for parents and the wider community with which stakeholders need to communicate. They also pushed back on language that some might interpret as “touchy feely” or liberal.

Culture of Health in Schools

Culture is a loaded term

“I think culture is a really heavy term that can have a lot of connotations and can be off-putting or confusing.” State

Embedding Health in Schools

“Embedding” feels forced or disciplinary

“Embedding seems like it’s forced... and health in schools is a whole thing, not partial. I don’t like this word.” State

Whole Child

Mixed: Some consider too vague or broad to be understood by all; too touchy-feely

“It’s too new age-y. The administrators will get it, but parents won’t. The connection is missing.” District

Healthy School [Environments]

Mixed: Some appreciate breadth; while others feel too focused on physical health and/or building infrastructure

“‘Healthy’ leads people in a different direction. People first think of physical health and not mental health or the ability of the child to learn, to be happy and hardworking.” State
Messaging Opportunities
In order to graduate ready to succeed in an increasingly competitive **workforce**, young people need skills that are cultivated in healthy school environments: **not just book smarts, but strong interpersonal relationships, social skills, and emotional intelligence, as well as the ability to work effectively in teams.**

**Messages that Resonate**

- Most popular message. Although this idea rarely came up unaided, many think it will be well-received by policymakers

> “Workforce is really the focus of our state right now...kids walking out of high school able to get a job.” State

- Also appreciate action-oriented specifics

- Short, to the point, and sums up their frame of reference that healthy kids make better learners

> “Kids don’t learn if they don’t feel safe.” District

- Mixed reviews. Second half of statement resonates, especially among OST audience (if you add in “afterschool”)

> “You need to look at the whole picture. Schools can’t do it all in 6.5 hours.” District

- BUT need to temper with the idea that schools cannot act alone

**Safe and healthy environments ensure that our children are ready to learn.**

**Kids spend more time at school than anywhere outside their homes. Schools are where we have the greatest chance of improving a child’s health through their physical, social, emotional, and cognitive development to ensure they grow into successful, productive adults.**
Messages that Raise Questions/Concerns

- While equity came up a lot in exploratory discussions, participants cautioned against statements that place too much burden on schools to solve broader societal problems.
- Many prefer to focus on the success of “all” students versus a focus on the “gap.”
- Less specific, “flowery” language is a non-starter for many.

Focusing only on academics is not enough. In order to close the opportunity gap and prepare more students for success, we must focus on the needs of the whole child by nurturing the heart, body, and mind.

“It should be about focusing on fair and equitable outcomes for all students.” OST

“I would try to avoid ‘heart, body, mind’ language. It’s too flowery.” State

More than half of our nation’s public school students live in poverty. Schools have an important role to play in the community, particularly in neighborhoods where students face poverty, family instability, and violence.

“This may resonate with advocacy groups but poverty is not something that resonates with the education community in terms of ‘what can I do about it?’ ... it goes beyond the school door.” State
Bottom Line
What Makes This a Priority?

Kids cannot learn if their basic needs are not met. Greater focus on specific academic and health issues has brought this topic to the forefront

- **ESSA** – provides a timely opening to conversations about this

- **Research** – there are proven links between physical and emotional health and academic achievement that help make the case for a focus on healthy schools

- **Obesity rates** – rising rates of childhood obesity and diabetes are a rallying point

- **Mental health focus** – the federal government’s greater attention to mental health needs has trickled down to the state and district levels

- **Attention to workforce skills** – long term outcomes for students - employability, college - are top priority

“Maslow’s hierarchy of needs...if we can’t get them to the lowest level where they’ve got food in their stomach and they feel safe and cared for, the ability to have them care about math or get instructed in a way that makes sense, really, it’s not going to happen.” District

“Reauthorization of ESSA...There is more of an emphasis on the whole child...State plans to support ESSA recommendations and authorization may be a chance to grab some of that energy and it’s kind of lightening in a jar.” District

“[Physical activity] is an easier sell than a social and emotional learning program. It’s concrete, there is data, champions...we know we are chubby.” OST

“Mental health issues with young people came to attention in 2008 with Obama’s mental health first aid in schools. It put focus on it in a new way.” OST

“If we don’t solve that we are going to continue to have the same challenges that overall affect employability, higher education, etc.” OST
What Gets in the Way?

- **Urgent is the enemy of important** - investing in healthy schools is often seen as a long term goal, but gets superseded by more “urgent” priorities and limited resources

- **Relevance** - Many leaders are too far removed or working in well-resourced areas where students are getting the physical and social-emotional supports they need

- **Measurement** - so much emphasis on data and accountability, and social and emotional dimensions are harder to measure

- **More proof** - need to further demonstrate the link between social and emotional health and academic performance, in particular

“This has been a long term, high priority...it’s so enduring and ubiquitous. However, a lot of urgent things will push it off my plate.” State

“We are fighting battles on all fronts.” District

“We have a lot of constraints - when you talk about implementing something, it’s difficult when school districts are so different.” State

“When you work in a district and nobody seems to care about it, it’s hard to be passionate. People don’t want to stay in unhealthy situations, but that’s what it takes to fix it.” OST

“Do we try and focus on test scores or also build social skills in lessons and forego the test scores?” District

“There are blunt negative indicators focused on what we don’t want, and not what we do. Socio-metrics is not very accepted.” State

“We need good research with validated tools showing how we have impacted academic achievement.” State
Roles and Responsibilities

- Local control is key, as most look to schools as the focal point – principals at the helm, ideally partnering with parents and the larger community. State and district leaders can offer support and guidance, or be seen as obstacles to “get around” or to “get out of the way.”

- “We put guidance out...we have cross-sector conversations at the state level, for example engaging with the Department of Health...State grants can help incentivize and encourage schools.” State

- “The district office should be a source of support to the principal.” District

- “It takes a village to raise a child...the community has to take a larger role. They have to be willing to step in and fill in the gaps.” State

- “When they’re with us, they’re our responsibility.” District (Principal)
  “If the school principal gets it, then we see effective policies and programs throughout the school.” State

- “Parents and relatives need to set the stage for how a child shows up in the morning, they set the stage for the day.” State
Language and Messaging Takeaways

✅ Keep it simple, tangible – “healthy, safe, and nurturing school environments” is understood, accepted, some say urgent

✅ “Social and emotional” is common lexicon - however, important to spell it out, e.g., “teamwork,” “social skills,” “interpersonal relationships”

✅ Stress “academic success” – link benefits to learning, but also highlight “integration” and building skills “beyond academics”

✅ Collaboration is key - language around “building,” “partnerships,” and “involvement” is well-received

✅ “Workforce” is a buzzword - this is a top priority for many policymakers

✅ “Environments” connotes “culture” – and avoids isolating certain stakeholders, although some take it too literally

❌ Mind the “gap” – need to be careful with equity argument. Focus on opportunities for all, instead of “achievement” or “opportunity gap.” (Would suggest testing alternatives in next phase)

❌ Don’t put undue burden on schools – avoid language that positions schools as “the greatest chance”

❌ Avoid “flowery” language – language around “nurturing hearts and minds” and “culture” is a turnoff for some audiences

❌ “Embedding” feels forced – suggests top-down enforcement, lack of collaboration

❌ Use “whole child” and “holistic” with caution – these are words many people use on their own, but may not resonate among parents and more conservative policymakers (Would continue to test w/ parents, teachers)
## More on Making the Case

- Messaging should include the following attributes:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Action-oriented</strong></th>
<th><strong>Skills-based</strong></th>
<th><strong>Partnership-focused</strong></th>
<th><strong>Equal-opportunity</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“It’s action-oriented. I know what social skills are.”</td>
<td>“There is increased desire to have kids walking out of high school able to get a job.”</td>
<td>“Schools should not be a one-stop location for everything.”</td>
<td>“Equitable, greater opportunities for students.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“It gives a framework for what we do and why we do it.”</td>
<td>“That’s one of the local arguments we’re making - that soft skills are also important for keeping a job too.”</td>
<td>“It can’t just be family and communities responsibility. School has to play a part.”</td>
<td>“All students’ achievement.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Healthy living provides strategies to succeed.”</td>
<td>“You need to be book smart, have social skills, interpersonal skills, all of those things to succeed.”</td>
<td>“We need to understand that it takes all of us. We need to provide this as a society.”</td>
<td>“Kids are not getting the same opportunities.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Safe. It’s a starting point.”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“Optimizing learning for all of our kids to be successful”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Focus on concrete steps to achieve a healthy school

Emphasize positive outcomes and skills gained

Include school as part of a larger ecosystem of support

Stress greater opportunities and success for all students

“Optimizing learning for all of our kids to be successful”
Appendix 2: Qualitative Research with Parents and Teachers

Findings from Focus Groups with Parents and Teachers, December 2016
Methodology

12 Focus Groups in Low Income (including Title I) schools/districts

- Atlanta, GA November 15-16
  - Mix race K-5 Parents
  - Hispanic K-5 Parents
  - K-5 Teachers (2)

- Columbus, OH November 17
  - Mix race MS Parents
  - African American K-5 Parents
  - MS Teachers
  - K-5 Teachers

- Des Moines, IA November 29-30
  - Mix race K-5 Parents
  - Mix race HS Parents
  - K-5 Teachers
  - HS Teachers

Notes:

- Qualitative research is designed to reveal a target audience’s range of behavior and the perceptions that drive it with reference to specific topics or issues. They are in-depth studies of people to guide and support the construction of hypotheses. The results of qualitative research are descriptive rather than predictive.
- “Metaphor Elicitation” was used to explore thoughts and feelings about “healthy schools, healthy students.” Focus group participants were asked to collect and share images, which are the pictures found throughout this analysis.
Healthy Schools, Healthy Students

- Parents and teachers agree that there are multiple dimensions to creating a healthy school environment, and these elements are interconnected.

“There are a lot of puzzle pieces to make a healthy school. This trifecta of teachers, students, and parents is really important. We can either push our puzzle pieces together, or we can do our own thing and never match up. When we push all of our puzzle pieces together with security and high expectations and communications and relationships, you get a completed puzzle, which is when you have all of your people that are in your district working together.” Columbus, MS, Teachers

Feedback from Columbus Middle School parent group
Healthy School Components

- This issue is large and complex. As with our stakeholders, several parents/teachers directly and indirectly brought up Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs in explaining the key components of any healthy school.

**Six dimensions described across groups:**

- **Physical Health** – Nutrition and physical activity were mentioned most frequently, especially among K-5

- **Safety and Security** – Many see school as both a physical and mental refuge. Frequency of mentions depends on experience of participants.

- **Mental Health** – Especially important among MS and HS audiences. Parents and teachers mention lack of resources for dealing with students experiencing serious trauma.

- **Social & Emotional Development** – Myriad of non-academic skills and attitudes described, second only to physical health in mentions

- **Academic Health** – Tools and teaching styles that lead to the highest learning outcomes are seen as important components of a healthy school

- **School Support** – For schools to be healthy, all stakeholders must work together. A healthy school is difficult to achieve with limited time and resources.
Physical Health

“Let’s Move”

“Kids come to school to eat. I was hungry as a child, I know how it can break your whole mental state. Some students are fending for themselves and their siblings, physical health is critical and diet in terms of having food, not even about the right food, just food period.” Columbus, MS, Teachers

“Let’s Move”

“Kids don’t know how to play. They can’t do recess, they get 40 minutes of gym once a week. The school looks like it’s promoting health through images but not through actions.” Columbus, K-5, Teachers

“Leading by Example”

“At her school they have a garden, they have a STEM program, that they do. She’s got these experiences that now she wants to come home, and plant a garden and do some more healthy things. She actually motivated me to start doing things because of the things she’s learned at school.” Atlanta, K-5, Parents

“Growing own Food/Farm Fresh”

“If they eat the wrong foods they won’t have enough energy for the day. I wonder if he’s eating well during the day because there’s no one there monitoring him.” Atlanta, K-5, Parents
“Provide an atmosphere where they feel safe and are able to express themselves and find some balance.” Atlanta, K-5 Teachers

“Bullying is not tolerated. There is always someone to talk to. My son has a medical condition. I know that there is somebody there all the time that can watch him, and monitor him, make sure he’s okay. He feels safe there, and it’s about safety, about being accepted. You feel accepted, you feel safe.” Columbus, MS, Parents

“Healthy relationships at home so that students understand what a healthy relationship is. But granted, we don’t live in a perfect world, and sometimes school is a student’s only safe place.” Des Moines, HS, Teachers

“Safety in the classroom is also important. I’ve experienced kids not feeling safe in their community. Kids spend the night on the floor because there is shooting going on in the apartment complex.” Des Moines, K-5, Teachers

“A place to belong; emotional safety

School may be the only safe place in high violence communities

Safety, security, physically protected

Teachers as Protectors
“We’ve got to balance all the healthy things like physical health, mental health, their physical well-being, their physical safety, and their academic health. We don’t balance all this, and we don’t have enough services in place to help the kids that need mental help.” Atlanta, K-5, Teachers

“A healthy school will have someone who can assess, diagnose, and support kids who have issues.” Des Moines, HS Teacher

“I think it’s important for a healthy environment for the kids to feel like there is somebody there that’s going to catch them if they fall, that’s going to catch them if their struggling.” Columbus, MS, Parents

“We would love to have people come in and train us on how to deal with [mental health and trauma]. When I encounter these things that these children are going through, I don’t know how to handle it. I get angry, and I’ll do my part and call children services, and then nothing will happen. As an adult, I should be able to help them and I can’t.” Columbus, MS, Teachers

“The teachers are such an integral part, but if we feel overwhelmed, then we can’t be there to be good teachers. I worry so much about grading.” Des Moines, K-5, Teachers
“I’m so happy that my super nerdy son is happy at school. That has a lot to deal with teaching kids compassion and empathy and helping kids to understand that everyone is different and to accept different people.” Des Moines, K-5, Parents

“They don’t get to build those relationships with people at home. They come to school and they learn self-confidence, social skills. I want them to be able to be well rounded people and be able to work and have those skills to fend for themselves.” Columbus, MS, Teachers

“These other teachers could not believe they were working together because they fight all the time and when they’re in my room they’re doing fine. Healthy environment is where you can have relationships and work out confrontations.” Atlanta, K-5, Teachers
“There are lots of different things kids can participate in, different subjects that help the overall wellbeing of the child. **There are other things besides math and reading that make the whole child.**” Atlanta, K-5, Teachers

“They want them to learn because it’s for a test so that they can grade teachers. **It’s a one-size fits all kind of thing** and the kids can’t use their imaginations.” Columbus, AA, Parents

“**College and career-readiness and financial literacy** are missing and we know they are important but we are getting sidetracked because we have to focus on these abstract concepts that they are being tested on.” Des Moines, K-5, Teachers

“The state requires testing three times per year. We are putting a lot of pressure on kids to learn at a certain level, even though we know they learn differently.” Des Moines, K-5, Teachers

---

**Academic Health**

- Passionate teachers
- Technology
- Strategy and “real world” skills
- Project-based and hands-on learning
- Alternative learning styles
- Variety of subject areas during and after school
School Support

“School should be structured, flexible, and fluid. The problem at my school is there’s an established thing you have to do, rules and regulations, but there has to be some kind of flexibility – this doesn’t work for my students.” Atlanta K-5 Teachers

“That Capitol building is important because they make a lot of decisions that they might not understand the direct impact of. We expect kids to learn differently and yet we have these deadlines for kids to pass at certain milestones to get a perfect score.” Des Moines, K-5, Teachers

“Schools can’t do it alone – that’s true. They need support from parents, community.” Atlanta, K-5, Parents

“Parents need to be involved, present, communicate, and answer the phone. A lot of parents don’t know how to do their role. I try to focus on my sphere of influence and can’t relinquish the success of my classroom to parenting. It’s great when they get it but I can’t depend on it.” Columbus, MS, Teachers
The Enemies of Healthy Schools

- Across groups, similar barriers emerged: overcrowded classrooms, over-testing, overburdened teachers, disengaged parents, poor food quality, and students who are technology dependent (sedentary, anti-social).

“Diet effects everything. If I see one more kid eating a Taki at 7 in the morning I’m going to scream.” Atlanta, K5, Teachers

“My son came through the inner city, and classes are overcrowded, and a lot of bad kids, and he got mixed up in that. He was failing all of his classes.” Columbus, MS, Parents

“One of the things that the state requires is spending time on these tests once a week and that’s not a healthy environment for kids or important for the students.” Des Moines, K-5, Teachers

“My kids get mad about not having the latest Jordan’s or whatever. I’m like, ‘Yeah, your classmates might have Jordan’s, but their mom’s not there. Their moms are in the bar every night.’ A lot of parents are like that.” Columbus, MS, Parents

“Now they’re learning things that are not going to help them be successful in life, it’s just helping them through this virtual world, but they’re not really making any real contacts, real friends, real lasting relationships.” Atlanta, K-5, Parents

“There is so much that goes into being a good teacher that I think that it becomes overwhelming, and if we can’t be performing at our best and if we don’t get any time to ourselves in the day, how can we create a good environment for the kids?” Des Moines, K-5, Teachers
As heard with stakeholders, a healthy school “takes a village,” but parents and teachers really see themselves as the key spheres of influence...

“[Healthy schools have] staff that feel that they have the support and resources of the policymakers who make the decisions that affect our lives.” Des Moines K-5 Teachers

“The principal sets the culture and climate in the building. It helps a lot when they understand what it’s like to be in a classroom.” Des Moines K-5 Teachers

“We have parents who aren’t teaching kids. We have to take a major role in creating healthy choices, environments. It’s our job.” Atlanta K-5 Teachers

“A teacher or a counselor raise your child just as well as you raise your child, they spend 8 hours a day with them. There should be reinforcement at school of what we’re doing.” Atlanta K-5 Parents
The Parent-Teacher Dynamic

• **The Ideal** – Parents and teachers work in “partnership” with each other. Parents teach values and teachers model those values by caring about and inspiring their students.

• **The Reality** – Many parents are disengaged and SEL often falls to teachers (some embrace this, others find it overwhelming). Many teachers say this requires “walking a fine line” and there are limits to what is ultimately under their control.

• **Solutions?** Teachers want/need more support – from community partnerships; in-school counselors/mental health professionals; additional training in skills to identify and work with troubled students. However, much more difficult for parents or teachers to come up with any solutions.

“It’s our job to teach them and mold them on all different aspects in life. *It starts at home.*” Columbus, AA K-5 Parents

“School’s role is setting a good example and being a *positive role model.*” Des Moines, K-5 Parents

“We have to incorporate those social and emotional things but at the end of the day, I still have to teach them Spanish. *If I’m not teaching them Spanish, I’m not doing my job.*” Des Moines, HS Teachers

“When we signed up for urban [schools], *it kind of comes with the territory* as much as we would like to distance ourselves... finding ways to manage it is probably the more difficult part for those of us who are in it for the long haul.” Columbus, MS Teachers

“We want them to connect with our kids and have these relationships but it’s difficult balancing what we expect from them with what they are paid. *Teachers definitely need more support.*” Des Moines, HS Parents
Community Supports

Participants brought up many examples of how the community is currently working with/supporting their school.

- **Neighborhood** – Particularly important to our African American parents. Neighbors help look out for/discipline kids, serving as “family” for those who don’t have one.

- **Out of school time programs** – Can help bridge the gap between school and home and serve as additional role models.

- **School volunteers** – Community groups/volunteers that help contribute to positive in-school environment, e.g., reading to children or cheering for them when they walk in.

- **Outside experts** – Providing a “third eye” for consultations on mental/behavioral health issues and safety and security issues (e.g., having police offers come to the school, professional development for teachers).

- **Community partnerships** – Formal partnerships with community organizations/businesses for funding or provision of specific services, e.g., medical/dental care.

“In lower income communities, parents might have two jobs or work odd hours to keep food on the table so community programs like Big Brother Big Sister can help fill in where the parent can’t.” Des Moines, K-5 Parents

“Pulling in people from the community, someone they don’t know comes in and speaks to them provides a level of respect. That has a lot more impact than we give it credit for.” Atlanta, K-5 Teachers

“I've seen where the community, the library and the YMCA's, and all these other things are all invested in that school. They offer a lot of free programs. When they do it just makes such a better environment...it creates that safety net.” Columbus, MS Parents

“I did a year long training on the effects of trauma. You can’t learn with the brain development of cyclical poverty.” Columbus, MS Teachers
Response to Healthy Schools Definition

- Well-received overall – for many this accurately captures their own definition
- However, many also felt this was overly aspirational and not realistic for their school
- “Role models” was positively received by teachers, after replacing “healthy examples” which garnered strong pushback in Atlanta groups
- Some wariness of language that overpromises, e.g., “every” aspect of a student’s health is too much to expect from a school
- Link between “building and grounds” and feeling “motivated” is unclear – motivating staff and students goes well beyond the physical building
- Some teachers mention wanting to see more language about support for them
- Reaction to “resilience” is mixed – some are confused by what this means or how it can be taught. For others it connotes self-reliance, an important counterpoint to “nurturing.”

A healthy school is one that nurtures and supports every aspect of a student’s health – physical, social, emotional, and cognitive health. This means getting kids active and eating healthy foods. School buildings and grounds that make kids and staff feel energized motivated and ready to learn. Teachers who support students and serve as healthy examples positive role models. A safe space welcoming place for parents and families to learn about how they can help their kids succeed. And working with a community that promotes learning and resilience – inside and outside of school walls.

Blue=Positive    Aqua=Questions/mixed    Red=Negative
Message Themes Tested

Workforce.
In order to graduate ready to succeed in an increasingly competitive workforce, young people need a well-rounded set of skills – not just book smarts, but strong interpersonal relationships, social skills, and self-confidence, as well as the ability to work effectively in teams. Students need to learn these skills at home and during the school day.

Ready to Learn.
Healthy, safe, and nurturing school environments ensure that all our children are ready to learn. When children are healthy - physically and emotionally - and are surrounded by caring teachers and adults who support them, they're able to focus on what they're learning.

Whole child.
Academic achievement is important, but it’s only piece of the puzzle. In order to help all students succeed in life, we should support a whole child approach in schools. This means nurturing every student’s health and wellbeing to help them grow into successful, well-rounded adults.

Equity.
More than half of our nation’s public school students live in poverty. Schools can help kids overcome challenges and give them the skills they need to succeed in life, no matter who they are or where they’re from. But schools can’t do it alone and need families and communities involved so all students have a supportive network at school, at home and in between.

Schools are an important channel.
Schools are where kids spend most of their waking hours. While nothing can replace a parent or caregiver’s influence, schools are an important channel through which to improve a child’s physical, social, and emotional health, so they are ready to learn and make the most of their education.
**Feedback: Workforce**

**What works:**

- Clear winner for parents
- Focus on being “well-rounded” and building social/interpersonal skills seen as necessary for living in the “real world” and fending for themselves
- Both home and school should be playing a role in teaching these skills

**Less effective:**

- While these specific life skills are vital to learn early on, some found language around a “competitive workforce” too far removed, especially when thinking of K-5 students

"I like the ‘not just book smarts’ part. I think social skills, self-confidence is huge, working in teams is important.” Des Moines, K-5 Parents

“This is about standing up for yourself. You’re not always going to have a teacher there to shroud you. Nobody is going to look after you more than yourself.” Atlanta, K-5 Parents

“It’s the ultimate goal – that they work. So much focus on university, and they never learn how to work.” Atlanta, K-5 Hispanic Parents

“It’s good to start early. Why not talk about it. There’s a lot of stuff that they’re dealing with now in middle school. You don’t want to wait until they get to high school.” Columbus, MS Parents

**Preferred message:**

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Respondents were asked to star their preferred message.
Feedback: Ready to Learn

What works:

- This statement was popular with teachers – ties back to academics/their main job
- The visual of students being “surrounded” and supported by caring teachers/adults is powerful, especially to parents

Less effective:

- Many felt the statement was generic – didn’t get into any specifics on how and what
- “Nurturing” can be polarizing – for some it is absolutely part of the school’s role, for others it can connote “babying”

“*It ties back into our primary goal as a teacher – to teach content. And that’s what we’re hired for.*”
Des Moines, HS Teachers

“I like ‘surrounded’ – that they’re not going to feel alone and have plenty of support and adults and teachers that actually care for them, a personal relationship.”
Columbus, AA K-5 Parents

“This sounded more acceptable for me hearing it as a teacher. This is part of what we have to do and this is why. There would have to be more about what we would do and this is how.”
Atlanta, K-5 Teachers

“This was kind of an obvious statement for me. It’s true and I agree with it, but it’s just a little too vague.”
Des Moines, HS Parents

Preferred message:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teachers</th>
<th>12</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Respondents were asked to star their preferred message.
Feedback: Whole Child

What works:

- Framing academics as “only one piece of the puzzle” resonates with many teachers and parents
- For some the “whole child approach” connotes more personalized, individualized learning for students – particularly resonates with parents with special needs/IEP (individual education plan) students

Less effective:

- While the term “whole child” is embraced by some, it confuses others, or sounds like academic-speak

Preferred message:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teachers</th>
<th>Parents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Respondents were asked to star their preferred message.

“All that is in my wheel house. I don't have any impact on their socioeconomic status. I can't control their families. But I can control or at least impact their academic achievement, their health, and their well being while they're with me, and hopefully contribute to them being successful when they leave me.” Columbus, MS Teachers

“I think we focus too much on academics - ‘only one piece of the puzzle.’ We need to focus on whole child. Focus on test scores is a disservice. Success for one student is different from another. But that’s what teachers are held accountable for.” Atlanta, K-5 Teachers

“That says looking at each child as their own child not grouping them with the whole herd of kids... It’s about the individual learning and playing off how kids learn and their strengths and encouraging those.” Des Moines, HS Parents
Feedback: Equity

What works:

- Poverty statistic lifts heads – surprising to some, a “truth” to others
- “No matter who you are or where you come from” speaks to many on a personal level
- Widespread agreement that “schools can’t do it alone” – this is a shared responsibility – home, school, and “in between” resonates

Less effective:

- “Schools can help kids overcome challenges” – but there is only so much a school can do to address systemic issues
- Some pushback on “poverty” focus when multiple issues lead to inequity in schools, e.g., poor parenting, funding

Preferred message:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Parents</th>
<th>Teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Respondents were asked to star their preferred message.

“The first sentence is reality and it hurts to see the truth. It gets your attention.”
Columbus, AA K-5 Parents

“More than half of kids in public school live in poverty. That to me is heartbreaking.”
Columbus, MS Parents

“It’s just an accepted reality. That’s where we work.” Columbus, MS Teachers

“That “in between” stood out – where there’s other influence, maybe because of the community, to keep our kids from getting into trouble.” Columbus, AA K-5 Parents

“It goes back to what we can control as a school. Ideally you want the families and communities involved, so it’s important – but I can’t really control that. There’s only so much a school can do.” Des Moines, HS Teachers
The Equity Conversation

• The topic of equity is emotionally charged and elicits many strong feelings:
  • Some inspired by messaging - personal success story
  • Others find it condescending
  • A few were concerned about entitlements
  • Some were overwhelmed by the issue - there is only so much schools can do

• In the early contextual conversations, participants discussed disparities in resources and support for mental health and school safety. These may be natural ways the equity conversation presents itself – healthy schools need to meet these “basic needs.”

• Messaging around equity needs to consider audience and be very clear about expectations for what schools can reasonably accomplish

“This is the reason that I became a teacher. When you know that education is the one thing that can change the world, it becomes really important.” Des Moines, K-5 Teachers

“There have been a lot of studies that students who grow up in poverty have PTSD. How can they learn if they’re traumatized?” Atlanta, K-5 Hispanic Parents

“They’re already in poverty. There’s no need to point it out. This help is only for poverty-driven people. I don’t like that they’re trying to define kids.” Columbus, AA K-5 Parents

“We’re not providing a fair and equal education to everybody so it would be hard to say we’re going to provide a healthy environment, when they’re not even getting the basics.” Atlanta, K-5 Teachers
Terms that Resonate

- Results from parents and teachers were relatively consistent with those from stakeholders in terms of which terms garnered traction.

**Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child***
- It encompasses the “whole package” of the major stakeholders in a child’s life. (31 prefer)
- “It just made it seem like we were all on the same page. Everybody coming together for that one goal of creating that well-rounded child.” Columbus, MS Parents

**Healthy, safe, and nurturing school environments**
- These are seen as the basic building blocks for a healthy school. Safety particularly resonates. (21 prefer)
- “You have to have that environment first in order to promote the whole child. We got those routines and procedures down before you can attack the whole child.” Atlanta, K-5 Teachers

**Building Healthy Schools**
- “Building” indicates a plan of action and continual improvement. Teachers were particularly in favor of this term. (13 prefer)
- “I like the word ‘building’ - it’s in the works, it will never be done. It will always be getting better and always working toward the best you can be.” Des Moines, K-5 Teachers

* We have some concern that this might not be understood out of context, i.e., when you are not talking about the topic for an hour. May need further testing.
Less Effective Terms

- Many terms were considered overly “vague” or “buzzwords” used by education policymakers and not understandable to the average parent/teacher.
- For teachers in particular, “climate” and “culture” are the over-used verbiage of state-level improvement plans.

**Culture of Health in Schools**

- Many referred to this as an “academic” term and too broad (19 crossed out)

**Healthy School Climates**

- Many considered *climate* “vague and confused with the weather” (23 crossed out)

**Whole Child**

- Many considered *whole child* “vague “buzzword” used by policymakers (28 crossed out)

---

“*It’s such a taboo school term. It’s drilled into us. Build a culture! What’s the culture and climate of your classroom? Over and over again.”* Des Moines, HS Teachers

“When you hear climate, it means the weather.” Atlanta, K-5 Hispanic Parents

“I thought the world ‘whole’ was weird. I don’t get “whole child.” Des Moines, K-5 Parents
Parent and Teacher Takeaways

✔ Be realistic – Definitions of “healthy schools” are multi-dimensional and this issue is BIG. RWJF may consider an angle or a few actionable steps/aspects on which to focus.

✔ Outline skills for success – Parents relate to messaging that says academics are only one aspect of school, and speaks to equipping students with life skills that prepare them for the future.

✔ Tie equity to “basic needs” – Inequities in safe schools and availability of mental health support/services come up naturally and can open the door to discussion around solutions.

✔ Language needs to be simple & concrete – Use action-oriented language (“building”) that defines outcomes (e.g., “healthy, safe nurturing schools”) and identifies who is involved (schools, community, etc.).

✔ Emphasize partnership – Overwhelmed teachers need to hear about support from administrators + parents + community.

✗ Don’t overpromise – Parents and teachers said to avoid language like “every” and “ensure” which sound lofty and overly aspirational.

✗ Tread carefully with poverty – Poverty statistics raise emotions/grab attention, but messaging needs to include reasonable and realistic expectations for schools.

✗ Don’t over-coddle – “Nurturing” resonates with some parents and teachers, but others emphasize importance of “resilience” and equipping students with skills to navigate “bumps in the road,” “learn from mistakes.”

✗ Avoid “academic” jargon – “Climate and culture” are the language of policymakers and not easily understood by the public. While WSSC was a favored term, “whole child” raised questions/confusion and both terms may not be well understood outside of context.
Appendix 3: Quantitative Research with Parents and Teachers

Findings from a National Survey of Public School Parents and Teachers, June 2017
Online Non-Probability Survey of Public School Parents and Teachers

- Nationwide sample of 1015 K-12 Public School Parents
  - Oversample of 203 Spanish-speaking parents
- Nationwide sample of 914 K-12 Public School Teachers
- Fielded June 9-22, 2017
- Offered in both English and Spanish
- Throughout this report, arrows ↑↓ indicate statistically significant differences between audiences

Survey Note:
- Parents and teachers recruited through Survey Sampling International (SSI), an online non-probability panel provider. SSI’s Consumer Online Panel is currently comprised of over 1.2 million adult participants (age 18+) across the US. The panel is built using multiple certified sources, respondents are authenticated, and incentivized for participation.
- Quotas set so that the survey representative by key demographics.
- The findings are NOT generalizable to all parents nor all teachers.
Mindset: “Healthy Schools”
Parents & Teachers Surveyed Rate Schools

- Scores are more “good” than “great.” Teachers surveyed give lower scores.
- Social & emotional development and mental health rank lowest on the list.

### Overall School Ratings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Parents</th>
<th>Teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>A - Excellent</strong></td>
<td>32%↑</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>B - Pretty Good</strong></td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>54%↑</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>C - Just Okay</strong></td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>D - Not So Good</strong></td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>4%↑</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>F - Poor</strong></td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Ratings on Specific School Dimensions (A-Excellent)

- **Safety and security**: Parents 38%, Teachers 45%
- **Academics**: Parents 32%, Teachers 40%
- **School buildings and grounds**: Parents 27%, Teachers 40%
- **Supportive environment for students, parents, teachers**: Parents 32%, Teachers 39%
- **Promoting physical health and wellness**: Parents 25%, Teachers 36%
- **Classroom management and discipline**: Parents 24%, Teachers 36%
- **Social and emotional development**: Parents 24%, Teachers 34%
- **Mental health supports for those who need them**: Parents 19%, Teachers 32%
## Identifying Priorities

- Survey respondents went through a trade-off exercise to better understand priorities for their school. The following statements were developed based on focus groups and used in the exercise:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Statement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SAFETY Physical</td>
<td>I want my school to be a place where students are physically safe, secure, and protected.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAFETY Emotional</td>
<td>I want my school to be a place where students feel emotionally safe, accepted, and able to express themselves.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DISCIPLINE Suspend</td>
<td>I want my school to be able to suspend or expel students who are disruptive or threaten the safety of other students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DISCIPLINE Managing Conflict</td>
<td>I want my school to have discipline policies that keep students in school by effectively managing conflicts and building a positive learning environment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEL Mental Health</td>
<td>I want my school to support the mental health needs of students, particularly those exposed to trauma and violence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEL Life Skills</td>
<td>I want my school to teach students life skills like self-control, kindness, teamwork, and problem solving to help them become well-rounded adults.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACADEMICS Core</td>
<td>I want my school to focus on teaching academics like reading, writing, math, and science.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACADEMICS Creativity</td>
<td>I want my school to nurture creativity and imagination as part of achieving academic excellence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENVIRONMENT PD</td>
<td>I want my school to offer teachers more support and training to meet the complex demands of students and families today.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENVIRONMENT Partners</td>
<td>I want my school to be a place where parents and teachers work in partnership with one another to provide the best environment for their students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENVIRONMENT Building</td>
<td>I want my school to have clean, bright, welcoming buildings and grounds that motivate students and staff to learn.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHYSICAL HEALTH Diet</td>
<td>I want my school to provide healthy, nutritious food options so students have the energy they need to focus on learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHYSICAL HEALTH Exercise</td>
<td>I want my school to provide time and space for physical activity and movement throughout the day.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Identifying Priorities: Methodology

• Qualitative research informed the statements developed for testing
• Because all of these statements are considered important, a tradeoff analysis (called Max-Diff) was used to get a rank order of importance and determine the magnitude of preference
• 13 statements were tested. Statements were shown in randomized groups of 5, and each respondent went through several sets of statements.
• Aggregated data and modeling yields a “utility score” for each item

EXAMPLE FROM SURVEY:
On the next few screens, you will see 5 statements about schools. For each list, please select the ONE statement that is most important to you when you think about what you want for YOUR school/YOUR child’s school (on the left), and the ONE statement that is least important to you.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MOST Important</th>
<th>LEAST Important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I want my school to be a place where students are physically safe, secure, and protected.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I want my school to be a place where parents and teachers work in partnership with one another to provide the best environment for their students.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I want my school to focus on teaching academics like reading, writing, math, and science.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I want my school to teach students life skills like self-control, kindness, teamwork, and problem solving to help them become well-rounded adults.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I want my school to provide time and space for physical activity and movement throughout the day.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Parents Surveyed Identify Most Important Aspects

Parent Results From Tradeoff Exercise: Most/least important when you think of your school

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspect</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SEL (Life Skills)</td>
<td>13.307</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAFETY (Physical)</td>
<td>11.941</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACADEMICS (Core)</td>
<td>11.726</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAFETY (Emotional)</td>
<td>10.287</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENVIRO (Partners)</td>
<td>8.399</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DISCIPLINE (Managing Conflict)</td>
<td>7.936</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACADEMICS (Creativity)</td>
<td>6.982</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEL (Mental Health)</td>
<td>6.141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENVIRO (PD)</td>
<td>5.912</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DISCIPLINE (Suspend)</td>
<td>5.674</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HEALTH (Diet)</td>
<td>4.856</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HEALTH (Physical)</td>
<td>3.423</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENVIRO (Building)</td>
<td>3.416</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The trade-off highlights:

- A healthy school is multi-faceted
- Positioning makes a difference
- Teaching “life skills” is seen as most important, almost 2x more important than mental health supports
- Physical and emotional safety are priorities
- Teaching core subjects is critical, more so than “nurturing creativity”
- Nutrition and Physical activity are seen as less important
Surveyed Teacher Priorities Are Similar, But ...

Teacher Results From Tradeoff Exercise: Most/least important when you think of your school

Prioritize “life skills like self-control, kindness, teamwork & problem solving” even more than parents.

“Emotional safety, acceptance, and expression” are just as important as physical safety.

Physical activity and nutrition are even lower priorities.
A Description of a “Healthy School” Resonates, but Gap Exists Between Real & Ideal (esp. with Teacher participants)

Read a Description of “Healthy Schools;” Heat Map: Feedback From Focus Groups

A healthy school is one that nurtures and supports every aspect of a student’s health – physical, social, emotional, and cognitive health. This means getting kids active and eating healthy foods. School buildings and grounds that make kids and staff feel motivated and ready to learn. Teachers who support students and serve as positive role models. A welcoming place for parents and families to learn about how they can help their kids succeed. And working with a community that promotes learning and resilience – inside and outside of school walls.

Blue=Positive  Aqua=Questions/mixed  Red=Negative

Your Experience vs. What You’d Like to See at Your School

Parents-Reality: 22%  Parents-Ideal: 72%  13 pt gap
Teachers-Reality: 9%  Teachers-Ideal: 71%  32 pt gap

Parents-Reality: 59%  Teachers-Reality: 39%
Parents-Ideal: 72%  Teachers-Ideal: 32%
Healthy Schools Are an Important Priority

Thinking about your child’s school, how big a priority?

Hispanic, African American
Urban
Free/Reduced Lunch
Rate School A

More likely to say priority

Hispanic
Northeast
Urban
Liberal ideology
Rate School A
But Barriers Exist

- In no case do a majority strongly agree with any of these, but decided to look at those who agree somewhat to identify potential red flags.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(Strongly + somewhat agree)</th>
<th>Parents</th>
<th>Teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teachers need more support/training</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficult to get parents actively involved</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td><strong>#1 80% ↑</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too many urgent priorities; limited resources to go beyond academics</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers are already overworked, overburdened</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Many public schools in troubled areas; idea is not realistic</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schools/teachers should only be accountable for academics</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not the school’s place; that’s the role of family</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sounds like gov't intervention</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Only possible in high-income districts</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Note on Potential Detractors:** Parents and Teachers surveyed who say this is LESS of a priority agree with many of the same barriers + government intervention (61% P, 52% T) and that this is not realistic in troubled neighborhoods (56% P, 52% T).
Parents and Teachers surveyed see themselves, Principals, and students as the key players; others several spheres removed.
Message Themes
Four Themes Tested on Multiple Dimensions

**Equity:** Every student deserves a chance to succeed, no matter who they are, where they’re from, or how much money their family makes. More than half of our nation’s public school students live in poverty. Schools can help kids overcome challenges and give them the skills they need to succeed in life. But schools need resources, and families and communities need to be involved so all students have a supportive network at school, at home, and in between.

**Success:** In order to graduate ready to succeed in [Split Sample A: an increasingly competitive workforce]/[Split Sample B: in life], young people need a well-rounded set of skills – not just book smarts, but strong interpersonal relationships, social skills, and self-confidence, as well as the ability to work effectively in teams. Students need to learn these skills at home and during the school day.

**Ready to Learn:** Healthy, safe, and nurturing school environments ensure that all our children are ready to learn. When children are healthy – physically and emotionally – and are surrounded by caring teachers and adults who support them, they’re able to focus on what they’re learning.

**Whole Child:** Academic achievement is important, but it’s only one piece of the puzzle. In order to help all students succeed in life, we should support an approach in schools that nurtures a student’s health and well-being to help them grow into successful, well-rounded adults.

• **Note:** These themes were revised and improved over the course of the research
Theme Preference

- A plurality of Parents and Teachers prefer the “Equity” theme, followed by “Success.” This is true across all subgroups.

Scores for all messages are higher among parents surveyed who rate their schools an A, parents who prioritize healthy schools, mothers, parents of color, and urban parents.
Evolution of the Equity Theme

- A key concern, but a complex issue to message. The frame was refined over the course of the research to bring the core principle to the front (for all students), and acknowledge that this goal takes resources.

From the Qualitative

More than half of our nation’s public school students live in poverty. Schools have an important role to play, particularly in neighborhoods where students face poverty, family instability and violence.

In the Survey

Every student deserves a chance to succeed, no matter who they are, where they’re from, or how much money their family makes. More than half of our nation’s public school students live in poverty. Schools can help kids overcome challenges and give them the skills they need to succeed in life. But schools need resources, and families and communities need to be involved so all students have a supportive network at school, at home and in between.
Equity Theme

- “Every student deserves a chance to succeed” resonates
- Speaks to some on a personal level
- Agreement that this is a shared responsibility between, home, school, and communities
- Teachers surveyed, in particular, highlight the need for “resources” and parental engagement

**Even More Convincing:**
- Younger parents
- African Americans
- Less educated
- Incomes under $100k
- Free and reduced lunch

**Even More Convincing:**
- <10 years tenure
- Midwest, South
- Urban, Rural
- Healthy schools a higher priority
- Title I

**RATINGS**

- Personally Motivating (top box) 57%
- Convincing to Make Priority (top box) 53%
- Most Convincing (pick 1) 45%

★ = top choice in category
Equity Theme Feedback

- The opening phrase, in particular, resonated with audiences.

**Equity**

*Every student deserves a chance to succeed*, no matter who they are, where they’re from, or how much money their family makes. More than half of our nation’s public school students live in poverty. Schools can help kids *overcome challenges* and give them the skills they need to *succeed* in life. But schools need *resources*, and families and communities need to be involved so all students have a *supportive network* at school, at home, and in between.

Highlighter Tool: 30-39% liked  40% or more liked

"More than half of kids in public school live in poverty. That to me is heartbreaking."

"This is the reason that I became a teacher. When you know that education is the one thing that can change the world, it becomes really important."
Success Theme

- Tested two versions after feedback that the “workforce” language might not resonate for younger students
- No sub-group differences by age of child nor grade-band of teacher – either option works (though “workforce” resonates with stakeholders and business leaders)
- Spelling out specific skills for success stands out (this is consistent with other studies)
- “Working in teams” is particularly important to teachers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Success Theme</th>
<th>Version A (Increasing Competitive Workforce)</th>
<th>Version B (In Life)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Motivating, Personally</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(top box)</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convincing to Make Priority</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(top box)</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most Convincing (pick 1)</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

★ = top choice in category
Success Theme Feedback

Skills language cuts through.

Success

In order to graduate ready to succeed in [an increasingly competitive workforce/life], young people need a well-rounded set of skills – not just book smarts, but strong interpersonal relationships, social skills, and self-confidence, as well as the ability to work effectively in teams. Students need to learn these skills at home and during the school day.

Highlighter Tool: 30-39% liked 40% or more liked

“I think social skills, self-confidence is huge, working in teams is important.”

“I thought if I can help that kid who can’t get above 50% with interpersonal skills, maybe he’ll be the top ranking salesman anyone’s ever seen. Let’s look at different measures of success.”
“Healthy, safe, and nurturing schools” pops (though in qualitative “nurturing” was polarizing, can connote “babying”)

- Speaking to the multifaceted “physical and emotional” aspects of a healthy school aligns with perceptions
- Acknowledging the importance of “caring teachers” is key
- In qualitative, some felt the statement was too generic – didn’t get into any specifics on the how and what
Ready to Learn Theme Feedback

• While many of the words and phrases resonate, the statement was seen as table stakes.

Ready to Learn

Healthy, safe, and nurturing school environments ensure that all our children are ready to learn. When children are healthy – physically and emotionally – and are surrounded by caring teachers and adults who support them, they’re able to focus on what they’re learning.

Highlighter Tool: 30-39% liked 40% or more liked

“This was kind of an obvious statement for me. It’s true and I agree with it, but it’s just a little too vague”

“There would have to be more about what we would do and this is how.”
Whole Child Theme

• Lower scores across the board
• While the term “whole child” is embraced by some, it confuses others, or sounds like academic-speak
• “Well-rounded” is popular, and may be a more parent-friendly way to make this point
• But other feedback would suggest that spelling out these skills is even more powerful
Whole Child Theme Feedback

- Parents and teachers highlight those words and phrases that speak to the comprehensive aspects of a “healthy school.”

Whole Child

**Academic achievement** is important, but it’s only one piece of the puzzle. In order to help all students succeed in life, we should support an approach in schools that **nurtures a student’s health and well-being** to help them grow into **successful, well-rounded adults**.

Highlighter Tool: 30-39% liked 40% or more liked

“That says looking at each child as their own child not grouping them with the whole herd of kids...It’s about the individual learning and playing off how kids learn.”

“I think we focus too much on academics - ‘only one piece of the puzzle.’ We need to focus on whole child. Focus on test scores is a disservice.”
Two Umbrella Terms Rise to the Top

- Both Parents and Teachers surveyed favor terms that convey the multifaceted nature of the effort.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Comfortable using</th>
<th>Matches definition</th>
<th>Comfortable using</th>
<th>Matches definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Healthy, Safe, and Nurturing School Environments</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building Healthy Schools</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Healthy School Climates</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whole Child</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture of Health in Schools</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Implications
Activating Parents and Teachers

• Parents surveyed are interested in a number of activities, face-to-face and virtual

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Extremely likely</th>
<th>Very</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Visit a website to learn more</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteer project at school</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attend an event to learn more</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sign a pledge demanding healthy schools</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forward information to your school/district</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promote the issue on social media</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participate in PD/training</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discuss at PTA/School Board meeting</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make a financial donation</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Write an elected official</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

• Professional development is the key way the Teachers surveyed say they will get involved

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Extremely likely</th>
<th>Very</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participate in PD/training</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visit a website to learn more</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteer project at school</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attend an event to learn more</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sign a pledge demanding healthy schools</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forward information to your school/district</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promote the issue on social media</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Write an elected official</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discuss at PTA/School Board meeting</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make a financial donation</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Here are different ways YOU could get involved in supporting a healthy school. How likely to take action?
Implications: Audience State of Mind

**“HEALTHY SCHOOLS”**
- Complex, interconnected: teaching life skills, physical and emotional safety, core academics, managing conflict, and parent/teacher partnership are all priorities
- Less emphasis on physical health and disciplinary measures
- The issue is BIG – consider an angle or area of focus

**BARRIERS**
- Teacher training, parent engagement, competing priorities rise to the top
- Parents surveyed are more likely to cite teacher training; Teacher participants more likely to point to parent engagement – reliance and tension between these groups
- Potential detractors also point to government intervention

**ROLES**
- Parents & Teachers surveyed see themselves, principals, and students as key players
- The partnership between Parents and Teachers is critical, but complex
- Others players are further removed in their minds

**MESSAGES**
- The Equity message is effective, but tricky: cannot put too much burden on schools nor call out certain groups
- This is about ALL students deserving a chance to succeed, and partnership is needed to make it happen
Implications: Language

Words and phrases that work

Multidimensional:
“Physical, social, emotional & academic health”
“Well-rounded set of skills”
“Healthy, safe, and nurturing school”
“Nurtures a student’s health and well-being”

Partnership:
“Caring teachers”
“Positive role models”
“Supportive network”

Skills for Success:
“Interpersonal relationships, social skills, and self confidence”
“Teach students life skills like self-control, kindness, teamwork, and problem solving”
“Work effectively in teams”
“Successful, well-rounded adults”
“Academic achievement”

Equity:
“Every student deserves a chance to succeed”
“Overcome challenges”

Caution

• Schools cannot do it all (i.e., “every aspect,” “the greatest chance”)

• Get too touchy-feely (i.e., “safe space,” “hearts and minds”)

• Use academic jargon (i.e., “Culture of health,” “Healthy school climates,” “Whole child” on its own)

• Be careful about the Equity argument (i.e., “particularly in neighborhoods where students face poverty, family instability, and violence”)

Multidimensional:
“Physical, social, emotional & academic health”
“Well-rounded set of skills”
“Healthy, safe, and nurturing school”
“Nurtures a student’s health and well-being”

Partnership:
“Caring teachers”
“Positive role models”
“Supportive network”

Skills for Success:
“Interpersonal relationships, social skills, and self confidence”
“Teach students life skills like self-control, kindness, teamwork, and problem solving”
“Work effectively in teams”
“Successful, well-rounded adults”
“Academic achievement”

Equity:
“Every student deserves a chance to succeed”
“Overcome challenges”
Appendix 4: Qualitative Research with Business Leaders

Findings from In-depth Interviews with Large and Small Businesses, July 2017
Methodology: Business Leaders

20 In-Depth Interviews

- Representing business leaders
  - Small/medium business decision-makers, $5-10 mil revenue (10)
  - Large business decision-makers, $1 bil+ revenue (10)

- Small businesses recruited through an online panel and professional recruiter, with the goal of getting a good mix across industry/vertical

- Large businesses targeted by size and title, with the goal of getting a good mix across industry/vertical. Contact information obtained through online research/cold calling/networking, and then invited to participate by a professional recruiter

- Interviews @ 45 minutes in length

- Most conducted over virtual platform, using webcams and screen sharing

- Completed June/July, 2017

Key Question Areas:

- Current priorities
- Healthy schools mindset: aspirations and reality
- Identification of barriers
- Making the case for healthy schools – messaging feedback (note, made iterative changes to messaging based on feedback)
- Role of the business community
- Exploration of terminology
- Feedback to inform communications strategy
“Healthy Schools” Vision

• When asked to describe their idea of a “healthy school,” most business leaders articulated a comprehensive vision. There was some skepticism about this actually happening in public schools today.

Most were comprehensive...

“Empower youth to develop skills and strengths, be productive citizens, who don’t get incarcerated, get a good job and are healthy and active members of society.” Large business

“Safety, cleanliness, and intellectual stimulation with a fire of creativity and passion for learning. Everybody has a chance at excelling -- the 7-year-old in Ward 8 has the same advantages as a senator’s child.” Small business

“We’d matriculate more balanced, thriving humans who are physically and mentally fit. They’d go into college with more realistic expectations and can accommodate challenges.” Small business

“Diverse and inclusive with respect for one another and strong standards to encourage success and push kids to be successful. The school is safe and supported.” Large business

“Students have the ability to feel safe and valued, have a safe haven from difficult environments, and feel protected. It would produce healthy, well-rounded young people with the time, opportunity, and environment to thrive.” Large business

Some were more literal...

“It promotes some type of physical and nutritional education with structured physical education and academic information about diet, biological needs, and health.” Small business

“Healthy school lunches and a healthy environment in terms of pollution and chemicals.” Small business

Is it happening?

“The average school administration doesn’t focus on this.” Small business

“A few schools in the country focus on this, mostly charter schools.” Large business

“In and around my county, yes, but the American education system is not egalitarian.” Large business
A healthy school is one that nurtures and supports every aspect of a student’s health – physical, social, emotional, and cognitive health. This means getting kids active and eating healthy foods. School buildings and grounds that make kids and staff feel motivated and ready to learn. Teachers who support students and serve as positive role models. A welcoming place for parents and families to learn about how they can help their kids succeed. And working with a community that promotes learning and resilience – inside and outside of school walls.

**Response To Definition**

- Business leaders reacted to the same definition shared with other audiences:

  - Business leaders found the definition comprehensive and ideal, but cast doubt over whether it can be realistically achieved.
  - They appreciate addressing every aspect of a student’s health, whether or not these aspects came up unaided.
  - The idea of creating role models for kids stood out as something they can impact.
  - Including parents and “working with the community” in the definition was crucial, as it points to the potential role of businesses.

  “Comprehensive. It describes a welcoming place for parents and families and extending to the community is key. You need to keep staff, parents, and the community engaged. It takes a village.” Large business

  “It’s pretty comprehensive and well-put. It encompasses all types of health, kids in school as well as parents and the community and touches on physical space.” Large business

  “I like it, how it nurtures and supports a student’s health, keeps kids active, a welcoming place. But it sounds a little like a political promise—it’s great and wonderful but it could only happen in a perfect world.” Small business

  “I agree but it’s ambitious. It promises to be all things to all people. A school intending to develop health in all regards would be a struggle.” Large business
**Perceived Barriers**

- Business leaders articulated many of the same barriers to healthy schools that were heard from other audiences.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Competing Priorities</th>
<th>Resources</th>
<th>Lack of Community Support</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“There’s too much focus on state testing, scores, and the school’s reputation. You lose that deeper connection with students.” Small business</td>
<td>“We’re close to this in more affluent schools. This requires more resources. Though that is an oversimplification since in many schools with the highest spend ratio per pupil, the outcomes are worse. We need to use resources wisely.” Large business</td>
<td>“You have to have leadership to drive this at the community level. The most successful schools have respect and help from the community to bridge the schism between school and community.” Small business</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Home Life</th>
<th>Public Policy</th>
<th>Teacher Quality</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“There are issues at home that students bring to school and that factor on top of this topic.” Large business</td>
<td>“Change needs to happen at the policy level where they have the most impact on public schools. We need a holistic approach to education that values youth.” Large business</td>
<td>“If one has good, dedicated teachers, anything can be overcome. We need passionate people in public school roles.” Small business</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Role of Business

Mindset on Corporate Responsibility

• They want to be engaged and build good will with the community.
• Their philanthropic missions are often aligned with their industries, especially among small businesses.
• Business leaders have a lot of priorities. Activities that affect their bottom line are most important.

Getting Involved on this Topic

• They need and want partners to help them with this effort. They typically look to NGOs to bridge the gap to working with schools.
• Helping in this area does not come naturally - they want a proven program they can follow to be most effective.

“We go to corporate responsibility and community investment conferences. We’re looking for subject matter experts who can share best practices for companies investing in education, where we can have the most impact, and places to support the mission.” Senior Director, Corporate Responsibility, Large Business

“Mine is a small business. Developing the future workforce seems like something Microsoft or Boeing is doing, not a small shop.” President/Owner, Small Business

“Participation in this type of thing is not a natural part of business. We need a blueprint to get involved, not just to send a check. We need a model of success.” Senior Dir. Communications and External Affairs, Large Business
Role of Business: In Their Own Words

**Business Has a Vested Interest**

“We could help with a program, teach, do a presentation, donate to a program, volunteer time or provide internships.” Small Business

**Particularly Around Tomorrow’s Workforce**

“This feeds into the candidate pipeline. But we have so many competing priorities. The non-profit community helps us achieve our mission.” Large Business

**Interested in Involvement that Aligns With Expertise**

“We could help with a program, teach, do a presentation, donate to a program, volunteer time or provide internships.” Small Business

**Hands-on Initiatives, Like Mentoring, Are Popular**

“Kids benefit from a caring adult other than a parent. Any adult can have a huge impact. We need company partnerships with non-profits and to see schools as valued partners.” Large Business

**But Bottom-line, They Have Many Priorities**

“We can only do so much. We need to meet our payroll and payments. There’s a cost to it. We need to strike a balance.” Small Business
Message Testing With Business

- Messages to business leaders need to better emphasize WHY the business community specifically should invest in healthy schools.
- All of these messages were viewed positively with potential to influence business leaders.
- Mentoring, internships, and specific skills resonate. These also allow businesses to share their expertise rather than just write a check.
- Most agree that education of young people will shape the future and acknowledge the importance of preparing the next generation of our country.
- The poverty statistic lifts heads.
- However, a few cautioned against explicitly calling on businesses to financially support schools or bridge the resource gap. Their taxes do that, and this is not a primary role for business.

Additional messages were presented to business leaders to better gauge their priorities and how they viewed their role.

- **[Employability Skills]** Strong interpersonal relationships, social skills, and self-confidence are important skills in order to succeed in the workplace.
- **[Workforce Prep]** Hands-on training, mentoring and internships provide students opportunities to build skills like problem-solving and teamwork that prepare them for success both in the classroom and the workforce.
- **[Return on Investment 1]** Local businesses can help schools and communities thrive by mentoring students, volunteering time at the school, and/or donating resources.
- **[Return on Investment 2]** Investing in healthy schools helps to increase and diversify the available talent pool.
- **[Community Investment]** A business is an integral part of its community and can play an important role to help shape and create an environment that is better for everyone – including students.
- **[Resource Gap]** It’s on all of us to support schools so that they can provide healthy learning environments for our students—that includes financial support from businesses to expand access to opportunities for students and bridge the resource gap. An investment in our schools is an investment in the future.
- **[Expertise]** Businesses that lend their expertise – whether through training and mentoring or in an advisory capacity – advance their mission while also contributing to the development of the future workforce.
- **[Equity]** More than half of our nation’s public school students live in poverty. The business community can play a vital role in providing resources – time, expertise, and monetarily – to schools to help kids overcome challenges and give them the skills they need to succeed in the workforce and life.
More on Message Feedback

Skills Messaging

[SUCCESS] In order to graduate ready to succeed in an increasingly competitive workforce, young people need a well-rounded set of skills – not just book smarts, but strong interpersonal relationships, social skills, and self-confidence, as well as the ability to work effectively in teams. Students need to learn these skills at home and during the school day.

[Employability Skills] Strong inter-personal relationships, social skills, and self-confidence are important skills in order to succeed in the workplace.

Most supported emphasizing the importance of interpersonal skills as well as books smarts. However, the more robust description in the original Success message generated more positive feedback than the simplified version.

Equity and Resource Messaging

[Equity] More than half of our nation’s public school students live in poverty. The business community can play a vital role in providing resources – time, expertise, and money – to schools to help kids overcome challenges and give them the skills they need to succeed in the workforce and life.

[Resource Gap] It’s on all of us to support schools so that they can provide healthy learning environments for our students— that includes financial support from businesses to expand access to opportunities for students and bridge the resource gap. An investment in our schools is an investment in the future.

Business leaders recognize the effects of poverty on the potential for healthy schools but do not see themselves as a primary source for school funding. That said, they want to share expertise and help support education for our country’s future.

“I’m interviewing people, reading resumes—but they need to be able to read and write and express themselves.” Small Business

“This is not about the near future but the long term. It’s everybody’s responsibility to recognize the value of education to the country and the future.” Small Business

“Most students live in poverty and business can play a role. But we do pay taxes in the community we live in. it’s not the sole responsibility of businesses to provide resources when tax dollars should be helping.” Large Business
More on Message Feedback

Workforce/Expertise Messaging

[Workforce Prep] Hands-on training, mentoring, and internships provide students opportunities to build skills like problem-solving and teamwork that prepare them for success both in the classroom and the workforce.

[Expertise] Businesses that lend their expertise – whether through training and mentoring or in an advisory capacity – advance their mission while also contributing to the development of the future workforce.

Business leaders enjoy the opportunity to provide hands-on training and share their expertise. It creates goodwill in the community, makes businesses feel they are making more of a difference than if they merely wrote a check, and is an especially good way for small businesses to feel involved. Business leaders also acknowledge that college is not for everyone and apprenticeships are a great way to build successful career paths without higher education.

“We're very much looking for engagement opportunities beyond the dollars. Writing a check doesn’t let us inspire anybody. I'm for getting beyond the check writing.” Large business

“We some people aren’t college bound. We have wonderful apprentice programs so there can be a good future for those that are not going to college” Small business

ROI Messaging

[Return on Investment 1] Local businesses can help schools and communities thrive by mentoring students, volunteering time at the school and/or donating resources.

[Community Investment] A business is an integral part of its community and can play an important role to help shape and create an environment that is better for everyone – including students.

“A business has to be part of the community and try to influence and create a good environment.” Small business

Business leaders recognize their responsibility to the community and want to play an active and beneficial role.

[Return on Investment 2] Investing in healthy schools helps to increase and diversify the available talent pool.

Response to this message was mixed. It rings true for some who see themselves as shaping future employees, others don’t see this as a direct benefit.
Feedback on Language

Employability Skills:
“Inter-personal relationships, social skills”

What Business Can Offer:
“Business is an integral part of its community”
“Hands-on training, mentoring, and internships”
“Mentoring students, volunteering time”
“Expertise”
“An advisory capacity”

Equity:
“More than half of our nation’s public school students live in poverty.”

ROI:
“An investment in our schools is an investment in the future.”

Businesses Closing the Resource Gap:
“Financial support from businesses to...bridge the resource gap”
“A vital role in providing resources”
Feedback on Terms

- Terms that resonated with other audiences also stood out for Business.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child</strong></th>
<th>School, Community, and Children are the three main things we’re talking about</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Healthy, Safe, and Nurturing School Environments</strong></td>
<td>Summarizes their expectations - what you want your school to be</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Building Healthy Schools</strong></td>
<td>“Healthy” on its own doesn’t go far enough—many might think it’s just physical health. “Building” gives it the sense of being integral to the school structure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Culture of Health in Schools</strong></td>
<td>“Culture” embraces everything but “health” does not go far enough</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Healthy School Climates</strong></td>
<td>Makes some think about climate change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Whole Child</strong></td>
<td>Difficult to understand, amorphous</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other terms they volunteer...

- Common Sense, Real World School
- Nurturing the Child
- Importance of Healthy Children to the Community and the Future
- Building Physical, Social, Emotional, and Cognitive Health for All Students
- Well-Rounded Students
## Implications: Activating Businesses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Clearly articulate the needs of schools</th>
<th>Tap into the expertise of the business</th>
<th>NGOs as the Conduit</th>
<th>Rally employees as parents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Ask the schools what they most need from a company like ours. Ask what the experts need, what challenges they’re trying to solve. Then we can see if we’re equipped to help solve those problems.” Large Business</td>
<td>“Everyone wants to be asked about what they do—you feel valued that way. Tap into self-value and hook them with that one thing. Inspire them. Find out what their expertise is and match that to skills people need.” Small Business</td>
<td>“It’s hard for private companies to partner with public schools, to manage time and learning objectives. It’s easier to work with wraparound services than directly with schools. We need non-profits as an intermediary.” Large Business</td>
<td>“Employees have kids in schools so they will support you in this effort. Business is switching from home and work being totally divorced.” Large Business</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Partners mentioned:
- Afterschool All Stars
- 4-H
- Boys and Girls Clubs
- Junior Achievement
- DECA

---

**Meet business leaders where they are**

“You need to be where these people are congregating, the Chamber of Commerce, Community Leader meetings—the meetings and organizations where leaders participate.” Small Business
For additional information, please contact:

Pam Loeb | 703-842-0200 | loeb@edgeresearch.com
Emily Sanders | 703-842-0214 | sanders@edgeresearch.com
Erin Wagner | 703-842-0216 | wagner@edgeresearch.com
Karen Emmerson | 703-842-0206 | emmerson@edgeresearch.com

Edge Research
1560 Wilson Blvd, Suite 475
Arlington, VA 22209
www.edgeresearch.com