SERVING THE WHOLE PERSON

An Alignment and Coherence Guide for State Education Agencies

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INTRODUCTION

To Advance Equity, States Must Serve the Whole Person

Educators in K–12 school systems are increasingly acknowledging the importance of serving the "whole person" as an essential foundation for achieving equitable outcomes. They understand that students' learning and development must include not only their cognitive development but also their physiological, social, and emotional development. These interrelated developmental needs inform the conditions that educators find they must create in schools, for students as well as for the adults who care for them.

The quality of the conditions in a school can be observed in its relationships and environments. When relationships are responsive and when environments are safe, supportive, and equitable, students develop a greater sense of agency, identity, and belonging, which enables high-quality instruction that leads to positive and equitable outcomes. When serving the whole person, adults honor students' experiences, see their worth, and hold high expectations for their futures. Families feel welcome and valued at school, and educators feel that their work is meaningful and supported. Indeed, the right conditions in schools can provide an essential foundation for individual and community well-being, and can create fertile ground for every student to succeed at high levels — academically, socially, and emotionally.

The Need for Alignment and Coherence

State education agencies (SEAs) and local education agencies (LEAs) often employ a wide variety of initiatives and programs designed to create such conditions for student success. Although those initiatives may be evidence-based, they often fail to achieve desired outcomes, in part because they operate in fragmented or uncoordinated siloes that create barriers to effective implementation (Center to Improve Social and Emotional Learning and School Safety, 2019). This challenge manifests in three ways:

The definitions, boundaries, and relationships among social and emotional learning (SEL), school safety, and other whole-person initiatives are often unclear, resulting in misaligned efforts that may work at cross-purposes with one another. For example, related initiatives may go by a variety of names or may be categorized in different ways, such as SEL, character education, 21st-century skills, school-based mental health, trauma-informed practices, school climate, or school safety. Without a common language, the risk of miscommunication — and, therefore, the risk of ineffective implementation — increases significantly.

Disparate whole-person initiatives sometimes lack the coordination that would ensure that they are all working toward one shared, overarching vision for learning, development, and success for students. Leaders see this misalignment and incoherence internally, within their own agencies, as well as vertically, between SEAs and the LEAs in their own states, and horizontally, with other child- and youth-serving agencies and community-based organizations. For example, related initiatives may be housed in different parts of an agency, funded in entirely different ways, described using different terms or frameworks, and/or evaluated using varying measures of success. This misalignment and incoherence may result in efforts that are duplicative at best or conflicting at worst.

Finally, when whole-person work is misaligned or incoherent, education leaders struggle to communicate clearly and compellingly about the work in ways that reflect the values and aspirations of a wide array of stakeholders. Strategic communication is important for building awareness, engagement, and commitment for serving children and youth. When this communication is bidirectional, it also creates avenues for leaders to receive timely, honest feedback from stakeholders about the effectiveness of this work.

Misalignment and incoherence can lead to negative consequences. Leaders may find themselves managing whole-person initiatives that are redundant, poorly integrated, and/or competing for limited resources. With an incoherent set of demands placed on them, teachers may feel overwhelmed or abandoned in finding the right solutions to meet their students' unique needs. And, as a result, students — who need and deserve dedicated whole-person development — may not have access to the right supports for their needs. Fortunately, we can all do better for these stakeholders.

Alignment and Coherence as a Strategy to Better Serve the Whole Person and Advance Equity

When systems are aligned and coherent, whole-person initiatives work in concert to achieve their intended goals. Greater alignment and coherence begins with a unified vision for serving the whole person — one that stakeholders at every level of the system understand and can engage with. State leaders develop policies and funding to achieve the vision, supported by communications that help all stakeholders — from the state level to the classroom — understand, contribute to, and provide meaningful feedback on the work. These leaders also prioritize building the necessary capacity to sustain the work, including professional learning opportunities tailored to the skills and needs of educators and their students. They gather data to inform continuous improvement toward the vision. Finally, they commit to overcoming the personal and external barriers that may stand in the way of equity. In this way, the portfolio of whole-person initiatives should appropriately and equitably address all three types of conditions for learning and development: personal, school, and system.

This document uses the following definitions of key terms:

Key Term	Definition
Alignment	*Alignment* refers to all policies, practices, processes, and roles in a system working together in similar or consistent ways. Think of a jigsaw puzzle. Alignment describes how each of the pieces fit together.
Coherence	*Coherence* refers to integration and interconnection between the parts of the system, in a way that mutually reinforces shared understanding and overall progress toward a clear vision and set of goals. Using the analogy above, coherence describes the full, recognizable picture that the puzzle pieces create.

This guide's central purpose is to help SEA leaders implement conditions for equitable learning and development for students, families, and educators, through their work to improve the alignment and coherence of their whole-person initiatives. (This guide uses the term "initiatives" as a catch-all phrase to refer to the programs, strategies, policies, and other efforts that SEAs and their cross-sector partners may employ to serve the whole person in their states.) The theory of change behind this guide is that equitable outcomes are more likely to result when whole-person initiatives are implemented within an aligned and coherent system. If educators at every level of the K–12 system — from the state level to the classroom — work in aligned and coherent ways to sustain the conditions that support whole-person learning and development, every student will have experiences that support personal purpose, healthy relationships, a sense of place in community, success in school and the workplace, and engaged citizenship.

A DISCUSSION OF KEY CONCEPTS

This guide includes three key concepts:

- The Whole Person
- Conditions for Equitable Learning and Development
- Equity

The Whole Person

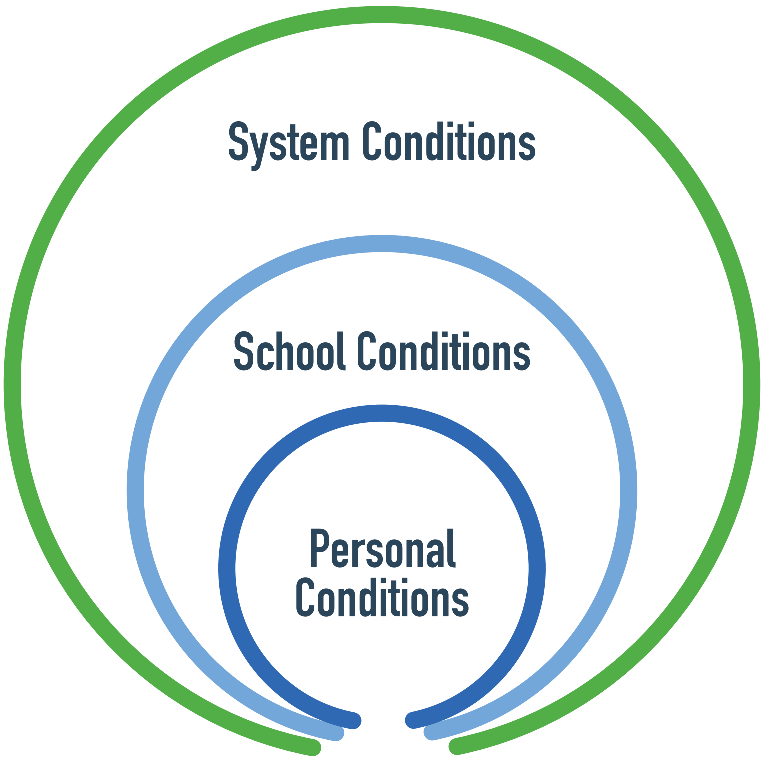
The concept of the "whole person" refers to a comprehensive notion of human development that includes several domains, such as physiological, cognitive, social, and emotional development. The early childhood field includes two additional domains: language development and "general" learning, which refers to skills, mindsets, and "approaches to learning" (Head Start Early Childhood Learning & Knowledge Center, n.d.). Science shows that these domains develop together, and that health and well-being in one domain bolster the health and well-being of the others (Cantor et al., 2018). Moreover, integrated approaches to learning result in improved academic and other outcomes (Durlak et al., 2011; Carneiro et al., 2007). Further, when whole-person efforts are tailored to students' strengths, aspirations, and needs, students can develop and learn to their full potential, regardless of their background.

In this way, serving the whole person promotes the following general outcomes:

Every adult with a meaningful relationship to a student has a role to play in achieving these outcomes. This includes families and caregivers, educators, faith leaders, health and mental health providers, and other adults with a recurring role in a student's community. Next to families, educators and schools play the most pivotal role in promoting or inhibiting positive outcomes for students, with the most impactful, consistent, and potentially close relationships with the students in their care.

Conditions for Equitable Learning and Development

The work of putting conditions in place for learning and development is foundational to effective teaching and learning that helps all students learn at high levels. Drawing from ecological models of development (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006; Garcia Coll et al., 1996; Lerner, 1991), the conditions for equitable learning and development can be organized into three categories, as illustrated by the following Venn diagram:



Personal Conditions. Personal conditions for learning and development are those that bolster and ensure health and well-being within individuals in school communities — students and the adults who care for them. These conditions include social and emotional health and well-being, as well as physical, mental, and behavioral health.

School Conditions. School conditions for learning and development are those that foster a strong climate and culture across the school building. These include safety, connectedness, and belonging. School conditions for success foster responsive, reliable relationships among individuals and groups, such as students, educators, and families. Such relationships promote resilience, provide protective factors that reduce the impacts of chronic or acute stress, and create environments in which every person and the school community as a whole can thrive.

System Conditions. Of course, schools do not operate in a vacuum. System conditions for learning and development are those beyond the direct control of the school that nevertheless affect the health and well-being of the individuals in school communities. Alignment and coherence should extend across every level of the system — from classrooms to the state — and across all child- and youth-serving agencies, including health, mental health, justice, child welfare, and anti-poverty agencies. Therefore, systems conditions include the policies, funding, and other supports provided by SEAs and LEAs, as well as the collaboration that may happen among SEAs, LEAs, and other child- and youth-serving organizations and agencies. Collaboration with these partners can accelerate schools' positive influence over the development and well-being of students and families.

Equity

Equitable experiences promote equitable outcomes. There are many ways to conceptualize equity. The Center for the Study of Social Policy describes work toward equity as acknowledging "unequal starting places and the need to correct imbalance" (2019, p. 5). As one thought leader focused on coaching for equity, Erin Trent Johnson, founder and CEO of Community Equity Partners, puts it: "In order to operationalize and achieve equity, social outcomes must no longer be predicted by race, class, and gender. To do this, we must acknowledge and examine power structures, including systemic advantage and disadvantage that hold inequities in place."

To disrupt this imbalance of power and to foster greater equity, this guide suggests that state leaders consider strategies and approaches such as:

- Engage and listen to teachers, students, and families first, before taking action.
- Adopt strengths-based approaches to planning, decision-making, and communicating.
- Embrace the values, histories, and relationships that are already present in the communities you serve.
- Promote collaboration with students, families, and communities by co-designing, co-implementing, co-leading, and co-governing initiatives.
- Through inquiry and reflection, illuminate and disrupt the implicit and explicit biases that may be held by those in positions of power.
- Through data collection and analysis, illuminate and disrupt organizational and structural inequities that may be found in the policies and practices at every level of the system.
- Help children claim their power and lift up their communities.

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

This guide offers state teams an adaptable process for reviewing their whole-person initiatives, identifying ways to increase alignment and coherence, and monitoring progress.

Six Domains of Alignment and Coherence

Striving toward alignment and coherence is a complex, multifaceted effort. This guide organizes features of alignment and coherent whole-person systems into six interrelated domains:

- Goals
- Funding & Policies
- Strategic Communication
- Stakeholder Engagement
- Capacity Building
- Data Use

Goals

A whole-person initiative's goals describe the intended whole-person outcomes or impacts.

When goals across whole-person initiatives are aligned and coherent:

- All key stakeholders — including educators, students, families, and communities — have a common vision.
- Leaders of whole-person initiatives work in concert to address the needs, and promote the successes, of their students.
- Relevant stakeholders understand both the components of whole-person initiatives — including its specific activities, practices, and interventions — and how those components further the goals.
- Outcomes of the initiatives are equitable.

Funding & Policies

Whole-person funding and policies describes both the strategic use of financial resources and the parameters that guide implementation. Policies may impact a range of contextual issues, including access, program longevity, and resource availability.

When funding and policies across whole-person initiatives are aligned and coherent:

- The populations most in need of specific resources and supports have access to them.
- Funding is adequate to achieve initiative goals.
- Funding and policies reinforce one another and support all important aspects of implementation.
- Leaders blend and braid federal and state funding to maximize the impact of the funding.
- Leaders communicate transparently about funding and policy implications so that both are widely understood by all stakeholders.

Strategic Communication

Equitable and effective strategic communication is bidirectional. Specifically, strategic communication for whole-person initiatives describes the ability of all stakeholders to accurately and compellingly describe the initiatives; articulate their own roles in working toward the vision of serving the whole person; and provide feedback to those in power.

When strategic communication across whole-person initiatives is aligned and coherent:

- Leaders in SEAs and LEAs provide clear and consistent messaging about how initiatives work together to meet the needs of the whole person. Further, that messaging is tailored for stakeholders (e.g., parents, educators, health care providers, policymakers).
- Communication is strengths-based. It includes the assets and aspirations of students, families, and communities, as well as their needs.
- All stakeholders understand the state's reasons for supporting whole-person initiatives.
- All stakeholders communicate using common language and terminology to explain all initiatives and their conceptual underpinnings.
- All stakeholders provide honest and transparent feedback to leaders about this work.
- Leaders incorporate feedback from stakeholders in their decision-making.
- Leaders capture and disseminate effective practices related to implementation.

Stakeholder Engagement

Stakeholders may include students, families, communities, educators at the school or district levels, legislators and other office holders, and staff within other child- and youth-serving systems. Stakeholder engagement with whole-person initiatives describes the ways that stakeholders — who often have diverse experiences and perspectives — are engaged in the assessment of strengths and needs, the selection and implementation of initiatives, and the leadership, governance, and monitoring of the SEA's whole-person work.

When stakeholder engagement across whole-person initiatives is aligned and coherent:

- Relevant stakeholders are well represented in every aspect of the work, from needs assessment to resource and asset mapping to monitoring.
- Leaders advance the shared vision by understanding and employing strategies to support student and family voice for each initiative.

Capacity Building

Capacity building for whole-person initiatives describes ways that leaders will support stakeholders connected to each initiative to ensure that they are capable of achieving their goals. For SEA leaders in particular, the notion of capacity building extends beyond just accountability, to include strategies for supporting districts and schools in working more effectively, such as professional development, funding, and policy incentives.

When capacity building across whole-person initiatives is aligned and coherent:

- Leaders are clear about their roles and responsibilities in the work and how their roles fit into the larger vision of successfully serving the whole person throughout the state.
- Leaders identify and prioritize timely, routine opportunities for coordination and collaboration.
- Educators and other child- and youth-serving professionals receive the professional learning and other supports that they need in order to successfully implement the work within the shared vision. This support should include professional development and job-embedded coaching for effective implementation of culturally responsive practices.
- New educators and leaders receive preservice training and certification/licensure that ensures that they can successfully implement culturally responsive whole-person initiatives.
- Educators experience a greater sense of self-efficacy, reducing the risk of burnout and increasing their satisfaction, effectiveness, and retention.

Data Use

Data use for whole-person initiatives describes systems for identifying key measures of progress and effectiveness of the initiatives, gathering valid data for such measures, and analyzing the data to inform strategic decisions.

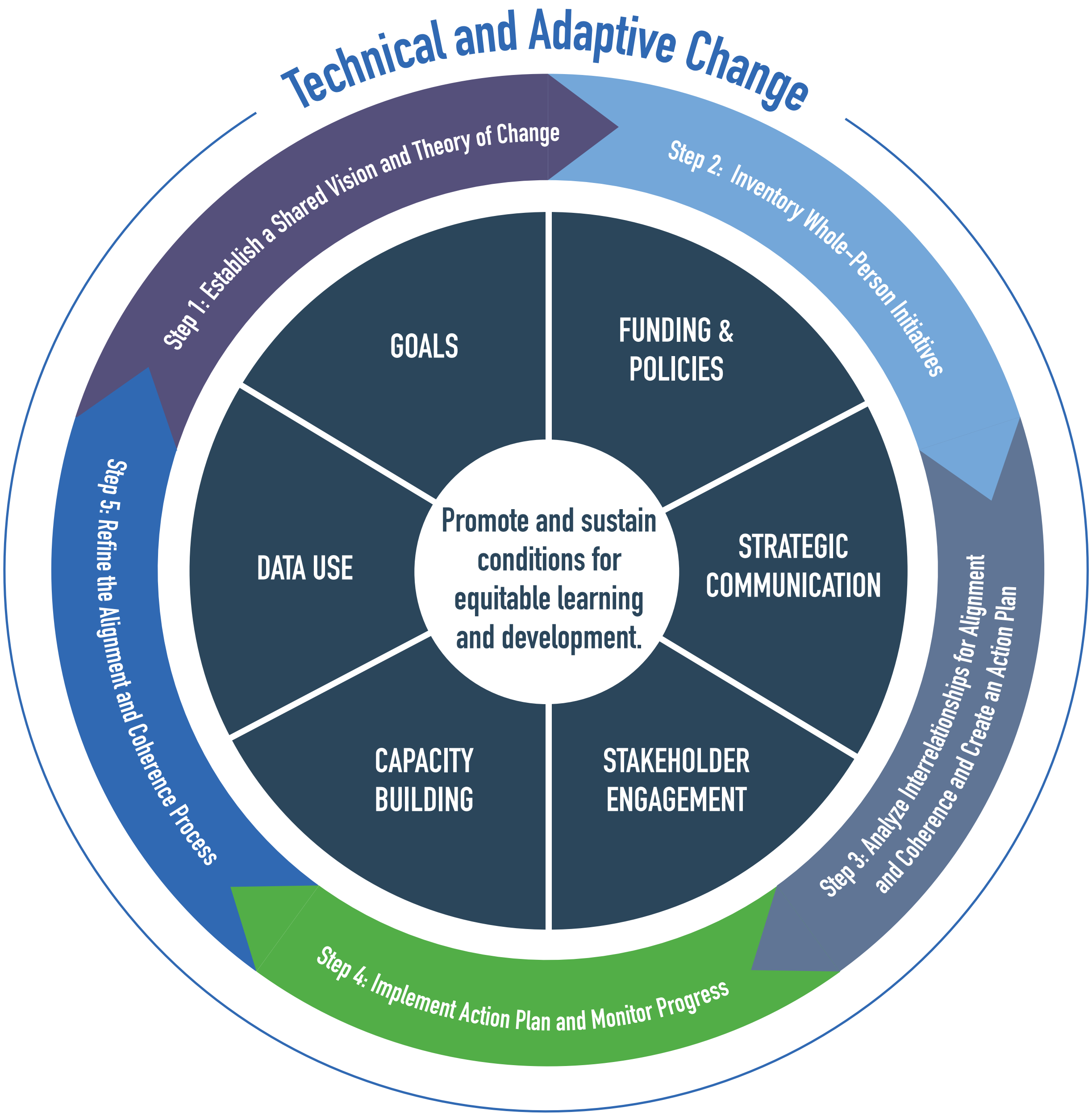
When data use across whole-person initiatives is aligned and coherent:

- Leaders prioritize data that are meaningful and strengths-based and that reflect the values of students and their families.
- Data are disaggregated to evaluate the effectiveness and equity of whole-person initiatives.
- Leaders use data to inform their decision-making.
- Leaders use data to determine the professional development needs of the workforce supporting whole-person initiatives.
- Leaders establish systems and procedures for sharing data among initiatives.

- Data are regularly shared with stakeholders, including youth and families. All stakeholders clearly understand the validity and reliability of the data, as well as the data's relevance and limitations.
- Leaders recognize local districts or schools demonstrating exceptional improvements or outcomes as exemplars, and offer supports for local districts or schools to achieve similar outcomes.

Alignment and Coherence as a Continuous Improvement Process

This guide employs a continuous improvement approach to alignment and coherence, depicted in the following graphic.



Promoting and sustaining conditions for equitable learning and development are at the center of continuous improvement toward alignment and coherence. Surrounding this goal is a “pie” with six slices, illustrating the six domains of alignment and coherence. The outer ring describes five parts of a cycle of improving alignment and coherence:

1. Establish a shared vision and theory of change
2. Inventory whole-person initiatives
3. Analyze interrelationships for alignment and coherence and create an action plan
4. Implement the action plan and monitor progress
5. Refine the alignment and coherence process

This guide’s chapters follow this sequence.

Finally, state teams facilitate alignment and coherence within complex social systems, which vary by capacity and mindset. This involves both technical change (related to process and practice) and adaptive change (related to mindsets or habits), illustrated in the outside ring.

PREPARE TO USE THE ALIGNMENT AND COHERENCE GUIDE

The purpose of this section is to ensure that your team is prepared to effectively implement this guide. In this section, you will:

- Gain a clear understanding of the sequence of activities in this guide and how it can support your SEA's work toward alignment and coherence of whole-person initiatives.
- Identify the initial team and facilitator(s) who will lead implementation of this process.
- Convene an initial meeting to orient your team to this guide, to identify the scope of your alignment and coherence efforts, and to assess your SEA's overall readiness to lead the alignment and coherence process.

Big Picture: Recommendations to Consider

As your team prepares for this work, this guide offers six important recommendations to ensure that your work toward alignment and coherence is as effective as possible:

- **Clarify your "why."** As your team embarks on using the guide, you should begin with a thorough conversation about why you are embarking on this alignment and coherence work. When teams share an understanding of both what this work can achieve and how it fits with other ongoing key strategic efforts, collaboration moves forward more efficiently and effectively.
- **Adapt the guide.** There are many different entry points for this work. Your team may choose to adjust the process outlined in this guide to meet your own needs and to integrate with your existing work. Your team may also work more quickly or more slowly than the guide indicates, depending on where additional work is needed. For example, your state leaders may have done some of the foundational thinking and planning that supports this activity, such as creating a vision for serving the whole person in your state. However, you may need to conduct additional work during work on this chapter and at other times.

- **Engage leaders.** As with any systemic change, the support of key leaders will be essential to this work. Your team should seek their guidance and advocacy frequently and consistently.
- **Communicate transparently.** Keep key stakeholders informed about how your team's work toward greater alignment and broader coherence benefits students, their families, and educators.
- **Work with other approaches and frameworks.** This tool supplements — rather than supplants — other approaches and/or tools for facilitating alignment and coherence. Tailor the guide to work with your existing frameworks. For example, there are several widely used "three-tiered" frameworks that fit this category, such as Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS), Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS), and Response to Intervention (RTI). At key decision points in this process, you can consult these frameworks to ensure that your alignment and coherence work considers their guidance and incorporates it where relevant and appropriate. (See "Additional Resources" on page 86 for commonly used implementation frameworks and other tools for facilitating systems change.)
- **Use data.** Finally, your team should use data to inform your thinking. Data sources can include surveys, focus groups, and interviews with your state's students, families, educators, and community, as well as academic, social, emotional, behavioral, and other data collected across your state.

Early Insight #1:

Delaware SEA staff participated in an early opportunity to pilot this guide. They conceptualized whole-person work with their multi-tiered system in a graphic, which helped SEA staff to illustrate the relationship between the two concepts and clarify their understanding that the "multi-tiered" system is the implementation framework and that "whole-child development" is the end goal. Delaware's framework is linked here.

The state team leader found that clarifying this relationship helped shift mindsets — and, therefore, conversations — toward greater alignment and coherence.

Chapters of the Guide

This guide includes five chapters:

- **Chapter 1.** Establish a Shared Vision and Theory of Change
- **Chapter 2.** Inventory Whole-Person Initiatives
- **Chapter 3**. Analyze Interrelationships for Alignment and Coherence and Create an Action Plan
- **Chapter 4**. Implement the Action Plan and Monitor Progress
- **Chapter 5.** Refine the Alignment and Coherence Process

Each chapter in the guide generally includes these components:

- **Purpose.** Each chapter starts with an overview of the chapter and orients the work within the larger alignment and coherence process.
- **Activities.** Each chapter provides sample agendas and activities designed to be completed collaboratively by your team. Activities are designated as either pre-work or to be completed during a state team meeting.

- **Hypothetical Responses.** To help your team envision how you might proceed through the guide, each chapter includes responses from a hypothetical state in *green italics*.
- **Reflection.** Each chapter concludes with reflection questions for the team about the process.

The following table provides an overview of the sequence and purposes of these chapters in the guide and the process the chapters outline. Given the complexity of the process, state teams could take six months or more to complete the first four chapters of the guide. (The fifth and final chapter offers guidance for annual reflection.) The table also provides estimates of how long meetings and pre-work may take.

Of course, these time frames are only estimates. The actual time needed to complete chapters may vary greatly, based on work your SEA may have already completed, the size of your team, opportunities you see for building new relationships, related efforts occurring within your SEA, and your team's experience and capacity to implement the guide. Therefore, as you move through this guide, you may find yourself moving quickly through some chapters but working more slowly and deeply through others. Likewise, the timing, length, and format of meetings (e.g., in-person or virtual) should be flexible and should be based on your state's needs.

Chapter	Topic & Purpose	Approximate Length of Meeting Time Needed
Prepare to Use the Alignment and Coherence Guide (state team meeting)	To introduce the state team to the key chapters of the guide, to determine the scope of your SEA's alignment and coherence work, and to evaluate your SEA's readiness to adopt the guide	2 hours

Chapter	Topic & Purpose	Approximate Length of Meeting Time Needed
Chapter 1. Establish a Shared Vision and Theory of Change	To articulate a shared vision and theory of change If a state vision for the whole person has not already been developed, this chapter provides guidance to do so. Because key stakeholders should be involved, developing a shared vision from scratch may take several months. If a state vision for the whole person has already been developed, the state team will simply need to fill out the worksheet on pages 26–28 to describe it.	
1a. Establish a Shared Vision (pre-work)		
1b. Establish a Theory of Change That Supports the Vision (state team meeting)		2 hours
Chapter 2. Inventory Whole-Person Initiatives	To develop an inventory of initiatives connected to your state's vision and theory of change for serving the whole person	
2a. Identify Whole-Person Initiatives (state team meeting)		1.5–2 hours
2b. Gather Data About the Initiatives (pre-work)		This process can also be an opportunity for relationship-building across SEA divisions. Depending on your context, a thoughtful, thorough effort could take as little as a few weeks to as long as several months.

Chapter	Topic & Purpose	Approximate Length of Meeting Time Needed
2c. Familiarize the Team with Initiatives (state team meeting)	• Option 1 (intensive) • Option 2 (lighter-touch version)	3 hours 1.5 hours
Chapter 3. Analyze Interrelationships for Alignment and Coherence and Create an Action Plan	To develop an action plan for alignment and coherence by analyzing interrelationships among the selected initiatives	
3a. Select a Small Number of Initiatives for the Alignment and Coherence Process (state team meeting)		1.5 hours
3b. Analyze Selected Initiatives for Alignment and Coherence (state team meeting)		3.5 hours
3c. Create Action Plan (state team meeting)		2 hours
Chapter 4. Implement the Action Plan and Monitor Progress	To monitor progress and tailor the action plan (state team meeting)	Monthly 1 hour per meeting
Chapter 5. Refine the Alignment and Coherence Process	To continuously improve the process over time	Every 12–18 months 2 hours per meeting

Form Your Team

The potentially large scope and complexity of alignment and coherence work calls for a team made up of individuals from across departments and initiatives, who have and represent different expertise, lead relevant bodies of work, and can help carry information and insight from the work back to others. With the right leaders and colleagues on the team, the potentially daunting process of improving alignment and coherence will be not only more manageable, but also more meaningful and effective.

Who to Include

Begin by forming a team to guide this work. Ideally, form a team across divisions and departments in your state, which will invite new collaboration in service of aligning whole-person initiatives. Start by listing the departments, agencies, or organizations focused on whole-person initiatives:

Template Participant List

Initiative	Department, Agency, Organization, or Stakeholder Group	Participant

For example, a hypothetical state might fill out the chart this way:

Initiative	Department, Agency, Organization, or Stakeholder Group	Participant
N/A	*Fannie Lou Hamer Middle School (Parent)*	*Seamus Washington*
N/A	*Libertyville Unified School District (District Superintendent)*	*Shantoya Smith*
Chronic absenteeism	*Operations & Administrative Division*	*Jane Nguyen*
21st-century standards	*Curriculum & Instruction Division*	*John Lo*
Trauma-informed practices training	*Educator Professional Development Division*	*Karina Gutierrez*
School-based mental health initiatives	*Student Well-being Division*	*Simon Jackson*
After-school programs and parent volunteer programs	*Family and Community Engagement Division*	*Janis Costello*
All	*Communications Department*	*Titus Hughes*

You may wish to include other areas of work or initiatives housed in a range of departments or agencies in the SEA, such as:

- **equity**
- **family**
- **children & youth**
- **school climate**
- **discipline**
- **school improvement**
- **social and emotional learning**
- **curriculum & instruction**
- **student support services**
- **mental/behavioral health**
- **safety**
- **crisis response**
- **data and/or accountability**
- **homelessness**
- **health**
- **juvenile justice**

In addition to these areas, consider including school, family, and student members on your state team to help ensure that the work includes essential stakeholder collaboration and promotes equity. However, be careful not to tokenize these stakeholders. Ensure that their roles are meaningful, that their voices and influence are equal to those of the other participants, and that their engagement is actively supported.

While broad representation is important for your state team, large teams can become difficult to manage and may hinder decision-making. If your state is just starting this work, you should consider keeping your initial team to fewer than 10 people.

Finally, remember that this is a journey. As your work evolves, your state team composition may need to evolve with it. Alignment and coherence of whole-person initiatives invites leaders to challenge the status quo and facilitate systems change, while remaining open to learning. By working as a team, you will get to discover together the strengths and aspirations of your community, as well as any gaps between your current reality and your desired vision for serving the whole person. Therefore, following the process in this guide can serve as a powerful opportunity to build and deepen relationships, both within your SEA and among your SEA team, LEAs, partnering agencies, schools, educators, and families.

Roles and Responsibilities, Including Facilitation

As you form a state team, you will need to identify individuals to take notes, develop and facilitate agendas, coordinate preparation, and follow up after meetings. State teams may also wish to identify a data analyst who is able to work across divisions to aggregate and organize key data and to identify important correlations and trends. Finally, for state teams that elect to engage in this process with other child- and youth-serving agencies beyond their own SEAs, a memorandum of understanding (MOU) may help clarify roles and responsibilities.

One of the most important roles is facilitation. For some state teams, a few individuals will share facilitation duties, including responsibility for communication among team members, preparation for and follow-up after the various team meetings, and facilitation of the meetings. For others, one facilitator with a range of knowledge and skills and a flexible leadership style will suffice.

Internal and/or external facilitators may be involved, though each option comes with trade-offs. Recruiting individuals to facilitate from outside of your team (or even your SEA) relieves all team members of the responsibility of facilitating and provides them each with equal opportunities to fully participate and engage in the process. Outside facilitators may also be better positioned to challenge the group and ask difficult questions. On the other hand, a facilitator from within the SEA may have established relationships and useful knowledge of the history and contexts of the initiatives, allowing them to quickly focus the work. Internal facilitators may also be more cost-effective.

Regardless of where the facilitator is from, your state team should clearly define facilitation roles and responsibilities prior to beginning the work. If your team is choosing an external facilitator, consider developing a clear plan for building the internal capacity of your state to engage in continuous improvement of alignment and coherence over time, so that valuable knowledge does not disappear when a facilitator departs.

As you move forward, keep in mind that work toward alignment and coherence may be challenging because it requires incorporating the perspectives, needs, and aspirations of a diverse group of stakeholders. The most beautiful moments occur when the team finds that different positions actually share the same values or interests, and that there is a path forward that feels good to all stakeholders. However, there are certain to be times when a decision needs to be made that does not fully meet the hopes of one person or group within the team. In these moments, it is important for the team to ensure that the decision does not cause harm or calcify systems of inequity. It is also important that the person or group that feels disappointed by the decision continues to seek ways to collaborate and invest in a process that should ultimately promote better, more equitable whole-person outcomes for children and youth in your state.

Your First Meeting

In your first meeting, especially with a newly formed state team, include some time for team members to get to know one another better. The following text box provides a sample meeting agenda and recommended activities. The following sections describe the two activities that should be completed during the first meeting.

Sample Agenda

Prereading: Pages 1–24 of this guide.

Materials: Copies of this guide.

Meeting Goal: Kick off the alignment and coherence work for our state's whole-person initiatives by determining the scope of our alignment and coherence work and our SEA's readiness to engage.

Meeting Agenda:

- ***15 minutes***— Welcome and team introductions
- ***30 minutes*** — Introduction to the guide and to the purpose of the team
- ***30 minutes*** — Identify the scope of our alignment and coherence effort, including where the team has decision-making power, and where it does not, using text in the following sample facilitator's agenda and Activity 1
- ***30 minutes*** — Readiness assessment, using Activity 2
- ***10 minutes*** — Identify next steps

Sample Facilitator's Agenda

Time	Topic	Activity
15 minutes	Welcome and team introductions	Welcome everyone to the meeting. Ask each participant to introduce themselves with: • Name • Role and division in the SEA (or in a child- and youth-serving agency) • How long they have worked in their current role • Answer to the following question: *How did you come to whole-person work?*
30 minutes	Introduction to the guide and purpose of the group	Introduce the guide, including definitions of key concepts and the details of the chapters.
30 minutes	Identify the scope of your alignment and coherence effort	Discuss the six domains of alignment and coherence. Describe the goals of the state's alignment and coherence efforts. Make connections between the purpose of the guide and the team members' own perceptions of the SEA's needs for alignment and coherence. Consider the following reflection questions: • *What leads us to this guide? That is, what need for alignment and coherence do we see in our state?* • *How might this guide help move our state toward alignment and coherence?* • *How does this process contribute to or advance the goals of similar initiatives we may be undertaking?* Discuss the group's charge, including where the team has decision-making power, and where it does not.
30 minutes	Readiness assessment	Work together to complete the readiness assessment (see following activity).

10 minutes	Next steps	Summarize your team's specific reason(s) for using the guide. Determine the logistics of your work together: • How frequently will you meet? • How will you work together? Are there any expectations or agreements? • What are your next steps, and when will you meet next?

Activity 1. Identify the Scope of Your Alignment and Coherence Efforts

Depending on your state's strengths, goals, and needs, the scope of your alignment and coherence process may vary. For example, you may wish to make one division within your SEA (such as student services) more aligned and coherent with other divisions (such as curriculum and instruction); you may wish to help staff within a single division work together in more aligned and coherent ways; or you may wish to make your state's collaboration with your community partners more aligned and coherent. Scoping this work in any of these ways is okay. Further, focusing on alignment and coherence at the largest potential scale may not be necessary or feasible. Starting smaller may be the most effective way to begin the work.

Activity 2. Assess Your Readiness

Consider the following questions to evaluate your SEA's collective skills, knowledge, and support for alignment and coherence of whole-person initiatives.

Leadership

- [ ] *Have our SEA leaders prioritized serving the needs of our state (student, family, or educator) by implementing whole-person initiatives?*
- [ ] *Have our SEA leaders prioritized alignment and coherence of whole-person initiatives?*

Notes:

Facilitation

- [ ] *Have we identified who will facilitate the process outlined in this guide, and do they have the support they need?*

Notes:

Coordination and Communication

- ☐ *Have we identified differences across agencies, offices, roles, and/or levels in how we talk about our whole-person work?*
- ☐ *Have we established systems and procedures for communicating with one another between meetings?*

Notes:

Shared Understanding

- ☐ *Do we have shared goals, and do we understand how to pursue/achieve them?*
- ☐ *Do we understand why alignment and coherence matter?*
- ☐ *Do we understand how our whole-person initiatives impact our children and youth?*

Notes:

Team Capacity

- ☐ *Do we have the right skills on our team for this work? (If not, where can we find such skills?)*
- ☐ *Are we open to adapting our mindsets and behaviors to increase the alignment and coherence of our state's whole-person priorities?*
- ☐ *Are we following a process to improve alignment and coherence of our whole-person initiatives?*
- ☐ *Do data inform our decisions and how we understand our strengths and barriers?*
- ☐ *Do we have a process for action planning and using data to monitor improvement?*

Notes:

Improving Readiness

The readiness of state teams will vary. You do not need to answer "yes" to every question in the previous reflection to start using this guide. However, your responses should inform which steps you want to take to prepare for success. As your state engages in this work, your team's capacity will increase.

List any actions you need to take before implementing this guide.

What?	By When?	Who Is Responsible?

Please proceed to Chapter 1. Establish a Shared Vision and Theory of Change. In this chapter, you will follow in-depth processes for defining an overarching vision for serving the whole person in your state and articulating a theory of change for achieving that vision. Such a vision will provide coherence for the action plan you create in Chapter 3.

CHAPTER 1. ESTABLISH A SHARED VISION AND THEORY OF CHANGE

The introduction to this guide described alignment as meaning that all policies, practices, processes, and roles in a system work together, and described coherence as integration and interconnection between the parts of the system in a way that allows them to mutually reinforce one another. The first step in moving toward greater alignment and coherence of your whole-person initiatives is to identify the overarching vision and goals of the work. It is also important to clarify your hypotheses about how each initiative contributes to that vision.

The first chapter in this guide includes the following components:

1a. Establish a Shared Vision. Your state team will articulate the vision that guides your choice of whole-person initiatives and informs the way(s) in which you implement them. If your state team does not yet have a shared vision (or has multiple competing visions), the guide includes suggestions for identifying key stakeholders and establishing a vision together with them.

1b. Establish a Theory of Change That Supports the Vision. Next, your state team will work together to describe what is required in order to achieve your state's vision. This is an essential step before being able to prioritize initiatives to improve their alignment and coherence.

This guide uses the following definitions of these two key terms:

Key Term	Definition
Vision	The *vision* describes your state's hopes for serving the whole person in your state. It should reflect the values, aspirations, and histories of all of your key stakeholders. It should be broad, inspiring, and easy to communicate. **A vision will guide coherence as you align the whole-person initiatives in your state.**
Theory of Change	The *theory of change* describes the path to achieving the vision. The vision describes the "what," and the theory of change describes the "how." The theory of change typically includes the roles of relevant stakeholders in the work. The theory of change can be written as an if/then statement about what achieving a vision takes. **A theory of change will help your team identify which whole-person initiatives to prioritize for alignment toward a coherent vision.**

1a. Establish a Shared Vision (pre-work)

In advance of your first meeting, identify your state's vision for serving the whole person. Language provided by your state superintendent, your state legislature, or your governor may help you articulate your vision and align your work with key leaders in your state.

If your SEA has articulated a vision related to the whole person, complete the following prompts. (If your SEA does not yet have this vision, don't worry! Skip ahead to the "A Process for Establishing a Shared Vision" section on page 28.)

For example, a hypothetical state might articulate the following vision:

Vision. *Every child in our state will be able to access rigorous academic curriculum offered in a healthy and responsive climate and culture, so that all students graduate with a sense of personal purpose, community connection, and economic promise.*

What is your SEA's vision for supporting the whole person?

What are the sources of this vision? Check all that apply.

- ☐ *State strategic plan*
- ☐ *Legislation*
- ☐ *Portfolio of funding (state, federal, and/or philanthropic)*
- ☐ *Profile of a graduate*

Other:

How do you know if you are making progress toward your vision? That is, what data do your SEA gather? What data are missing?

Data we gather:

Data we are missing:

Consider the equity implications of your work. Who does your vision serve well? Who is being left behind?

Think of the external stakeholders in your state — those who are invested in the success of your state's children and youth, but who do not work for your SEA. Who among them was involved in developing this vision? (Include their roles, such as parents, legislators, educators, or external consultants, and consider specific names.) Who was left out? Consider ways to include their voices as you move forward.

In what ways does your vision build from the strengths, and address the needs and hopes, of these stakeholders?

A Process for Establishing a Shared Vision. If your state has not articulated a shared vision for your whole-person work, or if different departments or initiatives have different visions for your whole-person work, this section provides a process that you can use to develop a shared vision. (If your state has articulated a vision, this process may also be useful as a means of engaging with your external stakeholders to pressure-test your vision. Note, however, that any vision should be aligned with the vision and goals set by state leadership, so that it does not overstep the team's authority in this work.)

This vision-setting process may take as long as two or three months to complete.

1. **Identify your external stakeholders.** What individuals and groups are invested in the health and well-being of children and youth in your state? For example, you may want to include students, parents, community-based organizations, education organizations, juvenile justice organizations, health organizations, mental health organizations, child welfare organizations, equity organizations, organizations representing specific racial or ethnic identities, anti-poverty organizations, legislators, and/or funders.

2. **Learn about their "whys."** The state's vision for the whole person should reflect the values, aspirations, and histories of your stakeholders. To gather this information from a representative sampling of your stakeholders, begin with an analysis of any state stakeholder plans that were recently developed. Then supplement this understanding by conducting a "listening tour," which may include surveys, interviews, focus groups, or even small convenings. Members of your state team may wish to divide up the work. Consider keeping the content very simple, using the following two guiding questions, which are intended to surface the values that motivate stakeholders. These questions may be sent to participants ahead of time:

- *What do you want for children and youth in our state? (You may also choose to add a question about hopes for families and communities.)*
- *What will it take to get there?*

Focus groups should be kept to 90 minutes or less. One-on-one interviews should be less than an hour. A sample agenda for a focus group follows:

- *Welcome, introductions, and goal of the listening tour (20 minutes)*
- *What do you want for children and youth in our state? What about for families and communities? (30 minutes)*
- *What will it take to get there? (30 minutes)*
- *Gratitude and next steps (10 minutes)*

Be sure to end the focus group with clear communication about next steps. Participants should know that their insights are an essential part of forming the vision for the state; however, the team will not be able to incorporate every recommendation. The following synthesis process will emphasize major themes that emerge from all of the participants in focus groups and interviews.

3. **Form a small team to synthesize what you learned.** After reviewing the input from the listening tour, identify the shared values, powerful stories, and distinctive messages you heard. In addition to informing the creation of the vision and the theory of change, these elements can provide important content for a communications strategy to support the work. Explicitly consider what these stories and messages imply for the ideal conditions under which this work will get done, including:
   - The effectiveness and sustainability of educators and the broader school community
   - Policies, practices, processes, and roles at every level of the education system
   - Whether and how well your state's data reflect the strengths, aspirations, and needs of the state's students
4. **Articulate the vision.** The vision should include two elements:
   - A statement of what will be true when the needs of the whole person are met, and
   - A statement of why that matters

   Connecting the two statements with "so that" as a coordinating conjunction can be valuable. (See the example vision from a hypothetical state on page 26.)

5. **Document the ways that this vision connects to the input provided from your stakeholders.** What specific words or ideas did you hear that guided you toward this vision? Plan to follow up with the participants in your listening tour, to share what you heard from them and from other stakeholders, and how that has informed a vision for the state. Allow stakeholders to provide additional feedback.

6. **Refine the vision, based on stakeholder feedback, as appropriate.** Be sure to document all of the work that led to this vision before moving on to section 1b.

1b. Establish a Theory of Change That Supports the Vision (state team meeting)

Now that you have identified your state's vision for serving the whole person, your team is ready to spell out how the state will achieve this vision in a theory of change.

A theory of change states how various people and organizations in a system need to work together to achieve a vision. To articulate a theory of change for your state, you will identify:

- Any overarching implementation frameworks used in your state,
- Levers of change, and
- The stakeholders who can pull each lever.

The following text box provides a sample meeting agenda.

Sample Agenda

Prereading: Completed section 1a. Review the activities in section 1b and begin to think about where we see the highest-priority levers for achieving our shared vision.

Materials: Notepads and pens.

Meeting Goal: Articulate a theory of change for our state's vision. The theory of change will help us prioritize our whole-person initiatives for greater alignment and coherence.

Meeting Agenda:

- 10 minutes — Welcome and review meeting goal and agenda
- 20 minutes — Review state's whole-person vision
- 75 minutes — Co-create theory of change (see following activity)
- 15 minutes — Identify next steps

Activity: Create a Theory of Change

1. **Identify any relevant overarching models or implementation frameworks.** Before establishing your theory of change, consider any overarching models or implementation frameworks used in your SEA. These might include the Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child framework (ASCD, n.d.); the Interconnected Systems Framework (Eber et al., 2019); or another multi-tiered framework. Such frameworks are relevant to your theory of change in two ways. First, implementation frameworks often explicitly identify levers for change. Additionally, these frameworks may help illuminate key points of connection and gaps among various initiatives.

Name the models or implementation frameworks your state uses.

2. **Identify levers of change.** What circumstances, processes, practices, policies, or other elements will influence whether and how your state achieves its whole-person vision? For each lever of change, identify what it looks like when that lever is working in support of your vision. You may have more than one idea about what it looks like! For example, a hypothetical state might articulate a lever of change, and what it looks like, in this way:

   Lever of Change: Professional learning supports

   What It Looks Like:

   – *Shared professional learning experiences, such as job-alike communities of practice.*

   – *Ongoing supports about trauma-sensitive practices and the responsibility of each adult to provide students with safe, supportive, responsive relationships and environments.*

Lever of Change	What It Looks Like

3. **Identify stakeholders' roles in levers of change.** Return to your list(s) of stakeholder groups created in section 1a. For each stakeholder or group, what are their roles in pulling the levers you identified? For example, a state might identify a key stakeholder group and its role in creating change as follows:

   – *Key Stakeholder: District leaders across our state.*

   – *Role in Pulling a Lever of Change: Offering opportunities for professional development and ongoing supports on trauma-sensitive practices.*

Key Stakeholder	Role in Pulling a Lever of Change

A theory of change can be written as an if/then statement about what it takes to achieve a vision:

If a, b, c, d, and e happen, then we will achieve our vision.

Not every lever needs to be pulled in order to achieve a vision. Which of all the levers of change that you identified — and the stakeholders who might be engaged as collaborators — are the most essential for achieving the whole-person vision you have articulated? That is, if you could prioritize pulling only three to five levers of change, what would they be, and why is each a priority? Which stakeholders must you engage to accomplish each? Fill in the following table with your responses.

High-priority lever	Why is this lever a priority?	Which stakeholders must you engage?

Continuing the previous example, the following theory of change might emerge:

If we:

a. *provide job-embedded professional learning opportunities and coaching to every adult in our school buildings about trauma-sensitive practices and integrating social and emotional strategies into the ways they serve children,*

b. *engage parents and students as partners in building healthy school climates and cultures, and*

c. *increase our mental health staffing so that every school has a ratio of at least one licensed/ certified mental health professional for every 200 students,*

then every child in our state will be able to access rigorous academic curriculum offered in a healthy and responsive climate and culture, so that all students graduate with a sense of personal purpose, community connection, and economic promise.

The second portion of the theory of change, beginning with "then," restates your vision. Note that this example doesn't include every stakeholder and every lever for facilitating change. But you can imagine how the team in the hypothetical state example saw these three levers as starting a process that would result in achieving their vision of improving access to rigorous academic curriculum offered in a healthy and responsive climate and culture.

Based on the levers of change that you prioritized, articulate a theory of change for supporting the whole person for your state.

If… *(List your high-priority levers here, and how they will be pulled.)*	**Then…** *(Restate your vision here.)*

Again, the levers you select may not be your only high-priority levers that can lead to change. These are simply the ones that you will focus on for this process.

Reflection

Congratulations! Your team has now articulated a vision for serving the whole person in your state, and a theory of change for achieving it. The vision and theory of change provide a coherent statement about your whole-person approach and will help you align the initiatives in which you invest.

Once you have completed this chapter, reflect on the following questions:

- Reread your vision. Do you feel that it is big? Inspirational? Important?
- Reread your theory of change. If all levers in the "if" portion of the statement are pulled, will your team make dramatic progress toward achieving your vision? That is, have you identified the right priorities?
- Consider your state team that is leading this alignment and coherence work. Are these the right people to influence each of the levers in the theory of change? If not, who else should be included on your state team? Who should step out of this group?
- Consider how your team worked together to develop this vision and theory of change. What worked well? Where did you get stuck? What new agreements or strategies would make your work more effective going forward?
- Who else in your SEA needs to be informed of your progress? In particular, how will you communicate your team's progress — including key decisions, successes, and challenges — to your leaders?

Please proceed to Chapter 2. Inventory Whole-Person Initiatives. In this chapter, you will learn about the initiatives that are connected to your theory of change for serving the whole person.

CHAPTER 2. INVENTORY WHOLE-PERSON INITIATIVES

In Chapter 1, your team developed a shared state vision and theory of change. In Chapter 2, you will gather and become familiar with the whole-person initiatives that are connected to the vision. This chapter involves the following components, including two meetings:

2a. Identify Whole-Person Initiatives (state team meeting). This is a generative process to identify all of the relevant whole-person initiatives in your state.

2b. Gather Data About the Initiatives (pre-work). Next, you will gather and organize more detailed information about these initiatives to create an inventory of whole-person work in your state.

2c. Familiarize the Team with Initiatives (state team meeting). Finally, your state team will meet to review the collected information for accuracy, learn about the initiatives, identify common trends, and begin exploring interrelationships.

The process outlined in this chapter creates a powerful opportunity for building relationships across or beyond your SEA. Do not hold to a rigorous timeline here. Rather, embrace opportunities to create or deepen relationships with your natural collaborators. This chapter may take a few weeks or several months to complete.

2a. Identify Whole-Person Initiatives (state team meeting)

During this meeting, your team will identify whole-person initiatives in your state.

Sample Agenda

Prereading: Vision and theory of change created using Chapter 1.

Materials:

- Copies of this guide.
- Notepads and pens.

Meeting Goal: Identify whole-person initiatives.

Meeting Agenda:

- ***5 minutes*** — Welcome and review meeting goal and agenda
- ***10 minutes*** — Review vision and theory of change
- ***60 minutes*** — Complete section 2a activities (see following activity)
- ***15 minutes*** — Identify next steps

Sample Activity

1. **Generate your list of initiatives.** Your state team will first need to brainstorm a full list of state-level whole-person initiatives that are connected in some way to your vision and theory of change. (There may be important local initiatives happening at the district and school levels as well! For this process, though, focus your list on those that that are led or managed at the state level.) This may be a good time to return to your "whys" for this work. The reasons you are working toward alignment and coherence may inform which initiatives you choose to include in your inventory. Over time, you may expand your list and/or your focus to include additional initiatives — or to remove initiatives — as needed.

2. **Explicitly connect each initiative with your whole-person vision and theory of change.** It is important that your work continues to be guided by the vision and theory of change that you articulated in Chapter 1. This will help to ensure that the focus of your work continues to be coherent.

   Continuing with our previous example, based on the theory of change

   If we:

   a. *provide job-embedded professional learning opportunities and coaching to every adult in our school buildings about trauma-sensitive practices and integrating social and emotional strategies in the ways they serve children,*

   b. *engage parents and students as partners in building healthy school climates and cultures, and*

   c. *increase our mental health staffing so that every school has a ratio of at least one licensed/certified mental health professional for every 200 students,* *then every child in our state will be able to access rigorous academic curriculum offered in a healthy and responsive climate and culture, so that all students graduate with a sense of personal purpose, community connection, and economic promise.*

The hypothetical state team may complete their list this way:

Key Initiative	Connection to Whole-Person Vision and Theory of Change
Professional development series on trauma-informed practices	*Builds the knowledge and capacity of our teacher corps to incorporate trauma-informed practices in their classroom strategies and instructional designs*
District calendars revised to be culturally responsive	*District calendars inform strategies for building community*
Parent engagement forums	*Monthly convenings in urban and suburban districts with parents to provide updates and hear their concerns*
Professional development series on integrating SEL with academic standards	*District participation in workshops on integrating SEL into practice*
Collaboration with behavioral health	*Ensures that every student in the state has access to regular health care; mental health referrals are also available*
Statewide "Get Moving" initiative	*Promotes physical education as a strategy for whole-person well-being*

Document the initial list and its connection to your whole-person vision and theory of change here.

Key Initiative	Connection to Whole-Person Vision and Theory of Change

Key Initiative	Connection to Whole-Person Vision and Theory of Change

You may notice overlap in your initiatives! This is not necessarily an indication of misalignment. Rather, it may simply indicate the depth of investment your SEA has made in a particular aspiration, strength, or need for children and youth in your state.

Early Insight #2:

A finalized inventory can be a powerful and affirming illustration of all of the great work happening in a state and can be used to build opportunities for collaboration or to inform a data-driven cycle of improvement.

2b. Gather Data About the Initiatives (pre-work)

The next step is to gather information about each of the whole-person initiatives. Creating an inventory of all initiatives is a time-intensive process; however, it can provide your state colleagues with a more complete picture of, and greater awareness about, all of the whole-person work happening in your state.

To maximize the use of meeting time, plan to collect and compile data prior to your team's next meeting. States may choose to use a survey tool for gathering the necessary information, or have team members help populate a spreadsheet directly.

Following is a list of data you could choose to collect for each initiative, including general and domain-specific questions (see page 7 for a description of each domain: goals; funding and policies; strategic communication; stakeholder engagement; capacity building; and data use) to help inform the team as they use this guide. This list is only a suggestion! For example, you may decide to select just one or two measures for each domain. As you adapt your data collection for your own needs, consider the following:

- **Your "why."** Your central reasons for embarking on this alignment and coherence process may illuminate what information you choose to collect about each initiative. Focus intentionally on what exactly you are hoping your SEA will do with the data. For example, if you ultimately want to improve the coordination and alignment of your external communications strategies, you may emphasize data collection for the strategic communication domain. Or, if you wish to focus on the effectiveness of initiatives in reducing outcomes disparities, you may choose to focus on data collection for the data use domain.

- **Your "altitude" of inquiry.** The amount of data you choose to collect may be informed by where your list falls on the continuum of general themes or categories versus specific initiatives. For example, if your list includes less than 10 categories of whole-person work, then your team may have capacity for collecting more detailed data. However, if your grain size is small, and you are collecting data about a large number of whole-person programs, initiatives, funding sources, and projects in your SEA, collecting and maintaining an inventory of every detail may be unfeasible.

Remember, the following list is just a place to start.

General Questions:

- Name of the initiative?
- Agency or department?
- Initiative director/lead?
- Workgroup or team implementing the initiative?
- Collaborators/partners?
- Is it evidence-based?
- What assets (programs, relationships, or resources) are already in place to support this initiative?

Additional comments:

Questions on Goals:

- Goal of the initiative?
- Outcomes of the initiative?
- Brief description of the initiative?
- How does the initiative support the shared state vision?
- Is this initiative tied to implementation framework(s) or model(s) for supporting the whole person?
- How does the initiative promote and demonstrate equity?

Additional comments:

Questions on Funding & Policies:

- Legislation/policies that mandate and/or support the initiative?
- Does funding or policy explicitly prioritize populations most in need? If so, which populations?
- Primary funding sources and amounts?
- Is funding adequate for implementation?
- Are funding sources blended or braided?
- Is funding transparently communicated and widely understood?

Additional comments:

Questions on Strategic Communication:

- What key messages are being communicated to key stakeholders?
- What key messages are being received from key stakeholders?
- How are key messages communicated?
- To whom are key messages communicated?
- Are key messages clear and consistent?
- How are key messages tailored for different stakeholders?
- Are effective practices captured and disseminated? If so, which one(s), how, and by/to whom?

Additional comments:

Questions on Stakeholder Engagement:

- Who are the key stakeholder groups?
- How are these stakeholders engaged in every aspect of the work, from needs assessment to monitoring?
- How are youth and family voice supported? How, and by/to whom?
- Who are the enthusiastic champions within each stakeholder group?
- Who are the thoughtful skeptics within each stakeholder group?

Additional comments:

Questions on Capacity Building:

- What are the roles and responsibilities involved in implementing this initiative, at every level of the system?
- What preservice training is provided to support successful implementation?
- What job-embedded professional development and coaching is available to support successful implementation?
- In what ways are professional development and coaching culturally responsive?
- Does the teacher evaluation system align with this initiative?
- Does guidance exist on how to integrate with or coordinate implementation with other related initiatives or approaches?

Additional comments:

Questions on Data Use:

- Overall, what is working well with this initiative? What data support this?
- What data are being collected to monitor and evaluate implementation and to support continuous improvement?
- What data are being collected to monitor and evaluate outcomes?
- How reliable and valid are the collected data? How are data relevant? In what ways might data be limited?

- Are data disaggregated by subgroups? If so, how, and for which subgroups?
- How and why are data reported to different stakeholders (e.g., to recognize successes or challenges; to inform stakeholders, implementers, students/families)?
- In what ways are data shared across initiatives?
- How do data inform professional development for this initiative?

Additional comments:

The information for each initiative should be aggregated into one large spreadsheet, with the initiatives identified in the first column and the data collected in the first row, so that the reader can review all of the initiatives included in the inventory in one document. This also makes it easy to see patterns — as well as outliers — across the six domains of alignment and coherence.

Once your team has created the inventory spreadsheet, allow state team members to suggest edits or provide feedback on the document well in advance of the state team meeting described in section 2c. This will both familiarize the team members with the initiatives and resolve simple errors or issues prior to the meeting.

Incorporate feedback from state team members into the spreadsheet, edit for clarity if needed, and clearly mark any places where your team still needs more information.

Then, closer to the date of the state team meeting, have all team members review the full inventory and note any patterns, trends, or gaps. For example, are any of the listed initiatives already collaborating with one another? What are the similarities among the initiatives? Which initiatives are closely linked to levers identified in your theory of change?

2c. Familiarize the Team with Initiatives (state team meeting)

The work of this section happens in an extended meeting with your state team and other leaders of whole-person initiatives who have contributed to the inventory. The main goal of the meeting depends on the needs of your team. For example, if your team intends to progress to Chapter 3 to prioritize a subset of initiatives for alignment and coherence, you may wish to use this meeting to begin to identify patterns and gaps among your state's initiatives. However, if your team intends to stop after creating an inventory for cross-division teams at the SEA, you may wish to use this meeting to identify opportunities for collaboration and relationship-building.

There are many different ways to tackle this process. This section presents two options: a more intensive version that will prepare you to begin selecting a small subset of initiatives for greater alignment and coherence, and a lighter-touch version that focuses on potential areas for collaboration. Either can be effective, and each can be adapted for your team's preferred ways of working.

Option 1: Deepen team members' familiarity with whole-person work happening in your state, and dive deeply into how the various initiatives and strategies are connected with the state's overarching vision for the whole person. This option is more intensive, and may be a useful precursor to Chapter 3, in which you will select a few initiatives for alignment and coherence (about 3 hours).

Sample Agenda for Option 1

Prereading: Inventory spreadsheet created in section 2b.

Materials:

- Inventory spreadsheet created in section 2b.
- Markers, sticky notes, and chart paper (or an interactive app, if preferred).

Meeting Goal: Deepen team members' familiarity with whole-person work happening in our state and dive deeply into how the various initiatives and strategies are connected with the state's overarching vision for the whole person.

If the meeting is in person, before the meeting, post chart paper for each of the six domains of alignment and coherence along the wall.

Meeting Agenda:

- ***30 minutes*** — Set the stage: Review vision, theory of change, and six domains of alignment and coherence
- ***60 minutes*** — Review inventory
- ***30 minutes*** — Identify patterns
- ***30 minutes*** — Gallery walk
- ***30 minutes*** — Group discussion and next steps

Sample Facilitator's Agenda for Option 1

Time	Topic	Activity
30 minutes	Set the stage	Welcome everyone to the meeting At the beginning of the meeting, spend about 30 minutes returning to the work you completed in section 2b: • Review the goals of this alignment and coherence effort • Re-introduce the six domains of alignment and coherence: goals; funding and policies; strategic communication; stakeholder engagement; capacity building; and data use • Review your state's whole-person vision, theory of change, and data sources for monitoring progress toward the vision
60 minutes	Review inventory	Share the draft inventory and ask state team members to take turns presenting the initiatives they are most familiar with. If your list of initiatives is long, then presentations may need to address groups or categories of initiatives together. These succinct presentations may include the following information: • A high-level overview of what the initiative does, for whom, and the demonstrated impact • Highlights of the initiative across the six domains of alignment and coherence • How the initiative relates to the shared vision and theory of change
30 minutes	Identify patterns	At the end of the final presentation, facilitate a whole-group conversation about the patterns across the initiatives, including similarities and outliers. Potential guiding questions may include: • Which initiatives have similar goals or missions? Which are outliers? • Which initiatives have similar funding or are guided by the same or similar policies? • Which initiatives use similar strategies to engage with stakeholders? • Which initiatives gather the same or similar data? • Which educators or other stakeholders are involved in multiple initiatives? • Which subgroups are not yet served by these initiatives?

Time	Topic	Activity
30 minutes	Gallery walk	Ask every participant to grab a marker and some sticky notes. Give participants 30 minutes to move around the room and add their reflections on the chart paper for each of the six domains of alignment and coherence posted along the wall. If your meeting is virtual, you can adapt this activity by using an interactive function in your virtual meeting space. Guiding questions for each domain may include: • Where is there overlap among initiatives? Where are there gaps or dissonances? • What opportunities exist for collaborating or leveraging resources to increase impact more effectively and efficiently? • What are common challenges or obstacles observed across initiatives that the state team or other stakeholders may tackle together? • What other insights would participants like to share?
30 minutes	Group discussion and next steps	Invite participants to share what they noticed during the gallery walk. Then co-create a list of three to five next steps.

Option 2: Deepen team members' familiarity with whole-person work happening in your state and explore opportunities for future collaboration. This option is lighter and shorter than Option 1, but still useful if your state team wishes to increase understanding of whole-person work across divisions of the SEA (about 1.5 hours).

Sample Agenda for Option 2

Prereading:

- Inventory spreadsheet created in section 2b.
- Guiding questions (see page 47).

Materials:

- Inventory spreadsheet created in section 2b.
- Markers, sticky notes, and chart paper (or an interactive app, if preferred).

Meeting Goal: Deepen team members' familiarity with whole-person work happening in our state and explore opportunities for future collaboration.

If the meeting is in person, before the meeting, post chart paper for each of the four guiding questions along the wall.

Meeting Agenda:

- ***15 minutes*** — Set the stage: Review vision, theory of change, and six domains of alignment and coherence
- ***30 minutes*** — Interpret and discuss the inventory
- ***15 minutes*** — Gallery walk
- ***30 minutes*** — Group discussion and next steps

Sample Facilitator's Agenda for Option 2

Time	Topic	Activity
15 minutes	Set the stage	Welcome everyone to the meeting At the beginning of the meeting, spend about 30 minutes returning to the work you completed in section 2b: • Review the goals of this alignment and coherence effort • Re-introduce the six domains of alignment and coherence: goals; funding and policies; strategic communication; stakeholder engagement; capacity building; and data use • Review your state's whole-person vision, theory of change, and data sources for monitoring progress toward the vision
30 minutes	Interpret and discuss the inventory	Facilitate a whole-group conversation about what participants noticed as they reviewed the inventory. Potential guiding questions may include: • What was affirmed for you? • What surprised you? • What do you want to know more about?

Time	Topic	Activity
15 minutes	Gallery walk	Give participants 15 minutes to move around the room and add their reflections on the chart paper for each of the four reflection questions posted along the wall (see the following list). If your meeting is virtual, you can adapt this activity by using an interactive function in your virtual meeting space. Guiding questions may include: • Notice the categories of whole-child work happening in the SEA. Which categories include initiatives with which you might like to collaborate and coordinate in the future? • Notice that the data fall into the six domains. Which of these domains feel most ripe for collaboration between your team and the teams leading the initiatives that you identified in question 1? • With which initiatives do you already collaborate? Do you see new or additional opportunities to collaborate with the teams in charge of those initiatives? With which initiatives/teams have you not yet collaborated, but have interest in building a relationship with? • How else might this inventory of whole-person initiatives be helpful to your team's work?
30 minutes	Group discussion and next steps	Invite participants to share what they noticed during the gallery walk. Then co-create a list of three to five next steps.

Reflection

Congratulations! Your team has now created an inventory of initiatives and begun to identify areas of overlap. As a team, reflect on the following questions:

- As you review the information within your inventory, does it feel thorough?
- As you reflect on your theory of change, do you see gaps in your portfolio of initiatives? What other work needs to happen in order for your vision to be achieved?
- As you consider your state team that is leading this alignment and coherence work, do you feel that these are still the right people to influence the prioritized initiatives? Who else should be included? Who should step out of this group?
- Consider how your team worked together to develop this inventory. What worked well? Where did you get stuck? What new agreements or strategies would make your work more effective going forward?

- Who else in your SEA needs to be informed of your progress? In particular, how will you communicate your team's progress — including key decisions, successes, and challenges — to your leaders?

Please proceed to Chapter 3. Analyze Interrelationships for Alignment and Coherence and Create an Action Plan. In this chapter, you will learn more about the interrelationships among the initiatives connected to your theory of change.

CHAPTER 3. ANALYZE INTERRELATIONSHIPS FOR ALIGNMENT AND COHERENCE AND CREATE AN ACTION PLAN

Now that your team has taken stock of the whole-person initiatives in your state and become more familiar with them, you are ready to use this information to analyze the interrelationships among these initiatives — particularly with regard to key domains of alignment and coherence. The alignment and coherence activity in this chapter is complex, so consider focusing on just a subset of the whole-person initiatives in your state. Try to prioritize no more than five initiatives to start. Remember that achieving alignment and coherence is an iterative process. Over time, you can return to this list to add more initiatives for increased alignment and coherence.

Chapter 3 involves the following components, occurring in three separate state meetings:

3a. Select a Small Number of Initiatives for the Alignment and Coherence Process: From your inventory of whole-person initiatives, your state team will select just a few to focus on for alignment and coherence.

3b. Analyze Selected Initiatives for Alignment and Coherence: Your state team will rate the overall alignment and coherence of your initiatives across each of the six domains.

3c. Create an Action Plan: Based on your team's analysis across initiatives and domains, your team will reflect upon opportunities to improve alignment and coherence and come up with a plan for action.

3a. Select a Small Number of Initiatives for the Alignment and Coherence Process (state team meeting)

This section is a prioritization process — using the vision and theory of change that you developed in Chapter 1 and the inventory you created in Chapter 2 — to prepare for the more in-depth analysis that follows.

Note also that different colleagues in your SEA or stakeholders across your state may be champions of different initiatives. The prioritization process may involve a great deal of discussion, and even negotiation. Remind participants that identifying an initiative for prioritization in this alignment and coherence process does not detract from its intrinsic value. It may well be a priority for your state and will not be abandoned through this process. For the purposes of these activities, prioritization simply signifies the subset of initiatives that will be first to be engaged in this alignment and coherence process.

Sample Agenda

Prereading:

- Vision and theory of change created in Chapter 1.
- Inventory spreadsheet created in Chapter 2.

Meeting Goal: Select whole-person initiatives for the alignment and coherence activity in section 3b.

Materials: A blank version of the following chart (see page 53).

Meeting Agenda:

- ***15 minutes*** — Welcome and review agenda
- ***45 minutes*** — Review initiatives in the inventory and discuss their connection to the vision and theory of change (see following activity)
- ***30 minutes*** — Select initiatives for the alignment and coherence activity in section 3b

Activity: Select Initiatives for Initial Prioritization

Return to the vision and theory of change that you created in Chapter 1 and the inventory of whole-person initiatives that you created in Chapter 2. Consider which initiatives are most likely to move your state closer to achieving its whole-person vision and should therefore take priority in your alignment and coherence efforts. The following questions may be useful to the discussion:

- Which initiatives have the strongest or most direct connections to the levers in your theory of change?
- In what ways do these initiatives help you achieve this vision for every student?
- Which initiatives achieve the most equitable outcomes?

- Are there unique near-term opportunities for alignment and coherence, based on external factors such as timing, funding, or new leadership?

Continuing with the previous example, based on the theory of change...

If we:

a. *provide job-embedded professional learning opportunities and coaching to every adult in our school buildings about trauma-sensitive practices and integrating social and emotional strategies in the ways they serve children,*

b. *engage parents and students as partners in building healthy school climates and cultures, and*

c. *increase our mental health staffing so that every school has a ratio of at least one licensed/certified mental health professional for every 200 students,*

then every child in our state will be able to access rigorous academic curriculum offered in a healthy and responsive climate and culture, so that all students graduate with a sense of personal purpose, community connection, and economic promise.

This hypothetical state team may prioritize the following four initiatives for alignment and coherence:

Key Initiative	State Team Lead	Reason for Prioritization
Professional development series on trauma-informed practices	*Karina Gutierrez, Educator Professional Development Division* *Simon Jackson, Student Well-being*	*Builds the knowledge and capacity of our teacher corps to incorporate trauma-informed practices in their classroom strategies and instructional designs*
Parent engagement forums	*Janis Costello, Family and Community Engagement*	*Provides monthly opportunities for parents in urban and suburban districts to provide updates and for the SEA to hear their concerns to inform a continuous improvement process*
Professional development series on integrating SEL with academic standards	*Karina Gutierrez, Educator Professional Development Division* *John Lo, Curriculum and Instruction Division*	*Provides a mechanism for building educator capacity to integrate SEL strategies into practice, though the series currently only serves a few districts.*

Key Initiative	State Team Lead	Reason for Prioritization
Collaboration with behavioral health	*Simon Jackson, Student Well-being* *Karina Gutierrez, Educator Professional Development Division*	*Ensures that every student in the state has access to regular health care as well as mental health referrals*

Prioritize your initiatives for alignment and coherence in the following table:

Key Initiative	State Team Lead	Reason for Prioritization

3b. Analyze Selected Initiatives for Alignment and Coherence (state team meeting)

Sample Agenda

Prereading:

- Inventory spreadsheet created in section 2b.
- Alignment and Coherence Tool (see pages 56–61).
- Review the activities in section 3b.

Materials:

- Digital polling tool, if using one.
- Alignment and Coherence Tool in digital form, for recording the collective votes in the meeting.

Meeting Goal: Develop shared ratings for each of the six domains of alignment and coherence.

Meeting Agenda:

- ***30 minutes —***
  - Welcome and review agenda
  - Review Alignment and Coherence Tool and address any clarifying questions about rating criteria and/or the six domains of alignment and coherence
- ***3 hours (30 minutes per domain)*** — Rating and discussion of each domain (see following activity)

Sample Activity Using the Alignment and Coherence Tool

Rather than rating each whole-person initiative separately, the group will consider all of the initiatives prioritized in section 3a together for each domain. This meeting will likely take between three and four hours, depending on the size and capacity of the team.

Before beginning the rating activity, ensure that all state team members have a copy of the Alignment and Coherence Tool and have had an opportunity to review it. The agenda suggests allocating about 30 minutes at the beginning of the meeting for participants to ask any clarifying questions about the rating criteria or the six domains of alignment and coherence, so that they can become familiar and comfortable with the tool.

Participants will use the questions included in the tool to rate their initiatives for alignment and coherence across each of the six domains. The tool uses a four-point rating to describe relative areas of strength and opportunities for growth.

Point Rating	Area of Strength/Opportunity for Growth
4	Significant alignment/coherence
3	Moderate alignment/coherence
2	Moderate misalignment/incoherence
1	Significant misalignment/incoherence

It is important to remember that these ratings are snapshots, taken at a particular moment in time, rather than comprehensive assessments of progress. Also, these ratings are not intended to reflect or enable comparisons with other states, but, rather, are intended to support continuous improvement in your state.

The review for each domain should take 30 minutes, totaling three hours for all six domains. The following table describes in more detail the review process to be used within each domain.

Time	Activity
5 minutes	**Individual reflection.** Individuals reflect on their ratings for the domain and submit their responses. Ratings can be read aloud and recorded centrally, or the team can use a digital polling tool to immediately provide a clear display of the group's ratings.
25 minutes	**Group discussion.** Individuals share their ratings and rationales as the group moves toward reaching consensus on a shared rating for the domain. Being able to articulate a rationale — based on some specific evidence — is important. It is also important to note that the final rating should be something that everyone can live with — a lower threshold than all participants advocating for the same rating. A facilitator records the group's shared rating and notes on the rationale for the shared rating, along with initial insights that the group has for ways to advance alignment and coherence within the domain.

Your team may choose to stop here and reconvene within a few days or weeks to complete section 3b, or you may proceed to section 3b after a break.

Alignment and Coherence Tool

This tool and review process were adapted from the Deliverology methodology (Barber et al., 2010), utilized by the Council of Chief State School Officers for capacity reviews conducted with state leadership teams from SEAs. The content in this activity was developed by WestEd.

Category	4	3	2	1	Rationale
GOALS: Intended whole-person outcomes or impacts. • Overall, are our selected initiatives guided by a shared vision? • Do leaders work in concert to address needs and promote successes of our state's students? • Is it clear how the initiatives' components — activities, practices, and interventions — work in concert to achieve the desired outcomes? • Do the initiatives reinforce one another? • Are the outcomes of the initiatives equitable?	☐	☐	☐	☐	

Category	4	3	2	1	Rationale
FUNDING & POLICIES: Financial resources that support whole-person initiatives, and parameters that guide implementation. • Do policies and funding sources prioritize populations most in need? • Is funding adequate to achieve the goals of these initiatives? • Do funding and policies reinforce one another? • Are strategies used for blending and braiding federal and state funding? • Do funding and policies support implementation of these initiatives? • Are funding and policy implications transparently communicated and widely understood?	☐	☐	☐	☐	

Category	4	3	2	1	Rationale
STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION: Ability of all stakeholders to accurately and compellingly describe the initiatives, articulate their own roles in working toward the vision of serving the whole person, and provide honest and transparent feedback to those in power about important issues. • Do state and local education agencies provide clear and consistent messaging, tailored to diverse audiences, about the selected initiatives? • Is communication strengths-based? • Are the state's reasons for supporting whole-person initiatives understood widely? • Are language, terms, and conceptual underpinnings of initiatives understood and communicated? • Do stakeholders have the opportunity to provide candid feedback directly to leaders about important issues? • Do leaders incorporate such feedback in their decision-making? • Are effective implementation practices captured and disseminated?					

Category	4	3	2	1	Rationale
STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT: Ways in which stakeholders are engaged in assessment of needs, the selection of initiatives, and the implementation, leadership, governance, and monitoring of the SEA's whole-person work. • Are all key stakeholders engaged in these initiatives in meaningful ways — from needs assessment to design to implementation to governance? • Are strategies to support youth and family leadership and voice for each initiative understood and employed?	☐	☐	☐	☐	

Category	4	3	2	1	Rationale
CAPACITY BUILDING: Ways that leaders will support the people connected to each initiative to ensure that those people are capable of achieving their goals. • Do educators at every level of the system clearly understand their roles and responsibilities in these initiatives and how their work fits into the larger vision? • Do leaders at every level of the system identify and prioritize timely, routine opportunities for coordination and collaboration among these initiatives? • Do preservice training and certification/licensure requirements support successful implementation of these initiatives? • Do educators and other child- and youth-serving professionals receive the professional support that they need in order to successfully implement these initiatives? • Are there opportunities for job-embedded professional development and coaching to support effective and culturally responsive implementation within and across these initiatives?					

Category	4	3	2	1	Rationale
DATA USE: Effective systems for identifying key measures of progress and effectiveness of the initiatives, gathering valid data for such measures, and analyzing the data to inform strategic decisions. • Are measures and information that are strengths-based, and that reflect the values of students and their families, prioritized? • Are data disaggregated by demographic subgroups? • Do decision-makers understand the relevance or limitations of the data? • Do data inform the decision-making of state leaders? • Do data inform professional development for the workforce? • Do systems and procedures support data sharing? • Is the relevance of the data clear to all stakeholders? Are the limitations of the data clear to all stakeholders? • Are data shared regularly with key stakeholders, including students and families? • Are local district or school exemplars identified and highlighted statewide?					

3c. Create Action Plan (state team meeting)

Congratulations! Your team has identified a consensus rating for each of the six domains and shared with one another your initial insights about how to advance alignment and coherence in these areas.

In this relatively long section, your team will complete two intensive activities. First, you will reflect on the "big picture" reasons behind your ratings for each domain in section 3b, considering potential barriers to greater alignment and coherence across initiatives, as well as resources that may support them. You will reflect on both technical (related to process and practice) and adaptive (related to mindsets or habits) aspects of the work. Then, you will use that reflection to help create an action plan for alignment and coherence.

Before beginning, you may wish to refer to the previous chapters to remind yourself of the hypothetical state team's journey, including the creation of their vision and theory of change and their prioritization of relevant initiatives for greater alignment and coherence.

Sample Agenda

Prereading: Shared ratings for each domain, created in section 3a.

Materials:

- Interrelationship analysis questions (see pages 62–66).
- Action plan template (see pages 72–77).

Meeting Goal: Create an action plan for alignment and coherence.

Meeting Agenda:

- ***5 minutes*** — Welcome and review meeting goal and agenda
- ***45 minutes*** — Conduct interrelationship analysis (see following activity)
- ***60 minutes*** — Create an action plan (see action plan activity on pages 68–71)
- ***10 minutes*** — Identify next steps

Activity: Interrelationship Analysis (45 minutes)

This activity includes seven reflection questions based on the outcomes of using the Alignment and Coherence Tool.

As a team, discuss the following questions together.

1. Which domains are rated 4 (significant alignment/coherence)?
   - *Why are they rated 4? Include reflections on both technical and adaptive aspects of the work, including practices, policies, or mindsets that contribute to this rating.*

- *What opportunities exist to elevate this good work?*
- *What opportunities exist to learn from what you are already doing well to inform other domains where you have more opportunities for growth?*

The hypothetical state team may respond this way:

The GOALS domain was rated 4.

This domain was rated 4 because the leaders of three of the initiatives (professional development series on trauma-informed practices, professional development series on integrating SEL with academic standards, and behavioral health) were co-led by two people from different divisions.

Further, the three initiatives shared a co-leader: Karina Gutierrez. As a result, the three initiatives share aligned visions about the "why" of the work: ensuring that adults are equipped with the knowledge and capacity necessary to sustain the well-being of their school communities. The teams work well together, too. They have routines and practices that were widely understood and shared. There is a high level of trust and respect across the teams, as well.

Though the domain was rated 4, the team saw an important opportunity to elevate the work with educator and parent communities across the state. Through strategic communication, the leaders of these initiatives could cultivate new partners and collaborators in the work and receive invaluable feedback on how effective the initiatives felt for students, families, and teachers.

Document your team's answers below:

2. Which domains are rated 3 (moderate alignment/coherence)?
   - *Why are they rated 3? Include reflections on both technical and adaptive aspects of the work, including practices, policies, or mindsets that contribute to this rating.*
   - *What opportunities exist to advance alignment and coherence in these domains?*
   - *What potential actions feel manageable within the next three months, six months, and/or 12–24 months?*

The hypothetical state team may respond this way:

The CAPACITY BUILDING and DATA USE domains were rated 3.

For the CAPACITY BUILDING domain, the team spent a great deal of time discussing opportunities for coordination, collaboration, and job-embedded professional development and coaching. Ultimately, the team rated this domain 3 because the licensed/certified mental health professionals in schools were not yet included in the professional development series on trauma-informed practices. Only the teachers were receiving training. The team saw an opportunity to ensure that both groups receive the same training and have opportunities to practice that training together in their schools and districts. Including the licensed/certified mental health professionals would not only give these professionals a better understanding of what's happening in classrooms, it could also include them in sustainable response at all three tiers of a comprehensive, three-tiered system. Beyond just training, school-based teams could co-develop systems for gathering data, reflecting together, changing practice, and, ultimately, building sustainable capacity.

Further, training was currently offered to teachers with at least five years of experience. They saw an opportunity to seed an understanding of brain development and learning for teachers earlier in their careers, perhaps through better collaboration with universities offering preservice training and certification.

When the team discussed the DATA USE domain, they noted that the three well-being initiatives being evaluated had the same or similar measures. However, they saw two very important opportunities to extend the data into meaningful action. First, they wanted to push their teams to have more rigorous conversations about the disparities that the disaggregated data illuminated — and take courageous action to address those disparities. Additionally, Washington shared that families often learned about inequitable outcomes through the local press. He advised that having transparent conversations directly with schools about these inequities would go a long way to engendering trust between schools and families of color. Smith added that the "big picture" of the data was often held at the state level but was not communicated clearly or transparently to districts or schools.

Document your team's answers below:

3. Which domains are rated 2 (moderate misalignment/incoherence)?
   - *Why are they rated 2? Include reflections on both technical and adaptive aspects of the work, including practices, policies, or mindsets that contribute to this rating.*
   - *What opportunities exist to advance alignment and coherence in these domains?*

- *What potential actions feel manageable within the next three months, six months, and/or 12–24 months?*

The hypothetical state team may respond this way:

The STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT and STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS domains were rated 2.

The team rated STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT and STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS 2 for similar reasons. They saw significant opportunities for educators, families, and community leaders to collaborate on serving the social and emotional needs — including experiences with trauma — of students. However, they saw that stakeholders didn't have complete knowledge of the initiatives in place, nor did stakeholders feel that they had contributed sufficiently to the planning or implementation of those initiatives. Further, the entire team agreed that the communication about the initiatives often focused on student needs and challenges, and didn't sufficiently build from the strengths of their communities, their cultures, their values, or their histories.

Document your team's answers below:

4. Which domains are rated 1 (significant misalignment/incoherence)?
   - *Why are they rated 1? Include reflections on both technical and adaptive aspects of the work, including practices, policies, or mindsets that contribute to this rating.*
   - *What opportunities exist to advance alignment and coherence in these domains?*
   - *What potential actions feel manageable within the next three months, six months, and/or 12–24 months?*

The hypothetical state team may respond this way:

The FUNDING AND POLICIES domain was rated 1. Though the current policies were neutral with respect to supporting the goals of the initiatives that the team was evaluating for alignment and coherence, there was significant concern that the funding was insufficient to support sustainable implementation and impact. Nguyen saw two opportunities emerge to support this work. She wanted to think more deeply about opportunities to blend and braid funding streams, and she wanted to work with Hughes to consider a communications strategy that could better engage the state legislators in creating policy that prioritized the goals of these initiatives.

Document your team's answers below:

5. As you reflect on your ratings and your identified opportunities to further alignment and coherence, do any jump out as clear priorities, given your state's vision for the whole person and your state's theory of change?

   - *Do any feel manageable as "quick wins" you could accomplish in the next six weeks?*
   - *Which ones excite you, and why?*
   - *Which ones feel overwhelming, and why?*
   - *What can be done to make this work feel more manageable?*

The hypothetical state team may respond this way:

At the end of the meeting, the team was inspired by the work already in place to serve the whole person. They saw that their colleagues in the SEA shared a clear vision related to serving the whole person and equity. However, the opportunities to align their efforts toward that clear vision were evident.

The opportunities that most excited them were also the ones that overwhelmed them. Costello and Hughes were especially overwhelmed since much of the work would fall to their divisions: Family and Community Engagement and Communications. Gutierrez agreed to offer staff from the Educator Professional Development Division to create the content they would need for better stakeholder engagement and strategic communications. They also agreed to sequence the work — both to make the effort more sustainable for their staff and to create a narrative arc that could be more engaging for stakeholders. Nguyen was also overwhelmed. The need for sustainable funding was urgent and would be a long-term effort. She was concerned that she would be on her own trying to figure out how to leverage funding streams and communicate with the legislature. Jackson offered to staff someone from the Student Well-being division to provide content expertise, but Nguyen knew that she would need to free up the time of someone on her staff to research new funding opportunities and strategies for blending and braiding funding. Nguyen also oversaw the data analysts at the agency and knew that the other alignment and coherence goals would also require time from her staff.

Document your team's answers below:

6. Consider your state team that is leading this alignment and coherence work.

   – *Are these the right people to carry out the action steps you have discussed today?*

   – *Who else should be included or informed? Who should step out of this group?*

The hypothetical state team may respond this way:

> *The team agreed that they were the right team to continue the work. However, they decided to add another parent representative from the east side of the state, which is more rural. (Washington lives in the state's capital.) Additionally, the team decided to form working groups for each of the emerging goals, to build greater capacity for improving alignment and coherence. Those working groups would include staff from Gutierrez, Jackson, Costello, and Lo's teams.*

Document your team's answers below:

7. Consider your ways of working.

   – *What worked well?*

   – *Where did you get stuck?*

   – *What new agreements or strategies would make your work more effective going forward?*

The hypothetical state team may respond this way:

> *The team was proud of the work they had accomplished — they had achieved a clear understanding of their needs for alignment and coherence and felt that they had done the work needed to inform a thoughtful action plan. They had worked through disagreements and had no turnover on their team.*
>
> *However, they recognized that the work had been hard. They had committed to completing the process in six months, but that had meant working long hours and weekends. Going forward, they agreed that they would slow to a more reasonable, sustainable pace of work. They also agreed to staff an administrative assistant and a data analyst to their team, to give them some additional capacity. Finally, they agreed that they should present the progress on their work more frequently to their agency's cabinet leaders. They reached out to the Deputy Superintendent for Student Supports to request 20 minutes on the cabinet meeting agendas, every other month.*

Document your team's answers below:

Activity: Action Planning (60 minutes)

Next, create an action plan. Once your team has responded to the reflection questions, review the opportunities for alignment and coherence that you identified for each domain, and use the following template to develop an action plan to reach your prioritized goals. Consider returning to your vision and theory of change periodically as you create this action plan, to ensure that the action plan supports the levers of change that you have identified. Your team may also wish to gather additional information and/or data to better understand the barriers to alignment and coherence within a given domain.

Ideally, your team should focus on just a few goals that allow you to focus your efforts. Using this template, you can identify up to three high-level activities to complete each goal, as well as who will lead the work, when each activity should be completed, the status of each activity toward completion, and a measure or measures that describe how the team will know when the activity has been completed. The template includes space below each goal for supporting notes. Ideally, these goals will be "SMARTIE" goals, where each letter stands for an attribute of the goal. That is, goals should be:

S = Specific

M = Measurable

A = Ambitious

R = Realistic

T = Time-bound

I = Inclusive

E = Equitable

The hypothetical state team might fill out goals and activities for the action plan this way (they chose to use the notes to identify the cross-division alignment work that would happen):

Goal 1. *FUNDING AND POLICIES. In six months, create a strategy for sustainable funding of the state's SEL and trauma-informed practices work, including the following four components, so that there is* *adequate funding to meet the well-being needs of every child in the state, regardless of background or circumstance.*

Goals and Activities	Lead	Due Date	Status	Measure(s)
1a. A description of the state's current funding outlook for whole-person work.				
1b. At least three new potential large, multi-year grant programs that would support the goals of the whole-person work.				
1c. At least two specific strategies for blending and braiding funds.				
1d. Examples of policies from other states that could actively support whole-person goals.				

Notes: Goal 1 activities will be led by Nguyen's team and supported by a content expert from Jackson's team.

Goal 2. *STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT, DATA USE, AND STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS. Over the next two years, all parents and teachers will be systematically engaged as leaders and partners in SEL and trauma-informed practices work through their schools.*

Goals and Activities	Lead	Due Date	Status	Measure(s)
2a. Adopt a family engagement framework that districts can use to engage families in SEL and trauma-informed practices initiatives.				
2b. Engage in inquiry and reflection on what works and what needs to be improved in serving the whole person for local communities, using a statewide survey and focus groups in 3–5 communities of varying demographics.				

Goals and Activities	Lead	Due Date	Status	Measure(s)
2c. Co-create a plan for implementation and monitoring of whole-person initiatives.				
2d. Co-create a plan for ongoing data and feedback collection and dissemination.				

Notes: Goal 2 activities will be led by a new task force of not more than 10 people. The task force would be staffed by Costello's and Hughes's teams, as well as parent, teacher, school leader, and district representatives.

Goal 3. *CAPACITY BUILDING. In the next year, fund the adaptation of the trauma-informed professional learning series to serve the needs of both teachers and licensed/certified mental health professionals and to provide colleagues at the same school site with opportunities to share data, align and practice their efforts together, and work toward long-term, sustainable capacity.*

Goals and Activities	Lead	Due Date	Status	Measure(s)
3a. Convene a team to adapt the curriculum for both teachers and licensed/certified mental health professionals, including opportunities for practical application.				
3b. Identify 10 districts that will be early adopters of the new learning series.				
3c. Create a feedback loop to inform the revision of the learning series.				

Notes: Goal 3 activities will be co-led by staff from Gutierrez's and Jackson's teams.

Goal 4. *DATA USE. In two years, divisions will use data to come to a shared understanding of systemic inequities in our state and to take courageous action to eliminate disparities.*

Goals and Activities	Lead	Due Date	Status	Measure(s)
4a. Create a shared data system for decision making that illustrates the full picture of academic outcomes, school climate, and student engagement by school and district, and disaggregated by race, income, gender, ability, and geography.				
4b. Meet quarterly to discuss the equity issues (including implicit bias) that emerge and create an action plan to address them.				

Notes: Goal 4 activities will be co-led by staff from Jackson and Lo's team, and supported by a data analyst from Nguyen's team.

Document your team's action plan below:

Action Plan Template

Goal 1:

Goals and Activities	Lead	Due Date	Status
1a.			
1b.			
1c.			

Notes:

Goal 2:

Goals and Activities	Lead	Due Date	Status
2a.			
2b.			
2c.			

Notes:

Goal 3:

Goals and Activities	Lead	Due Date	Status
3a.			
3b.			
3c.			

Notes:

Reflection

When your action plan is complete, your team may discuss whether this feels like the "right" work toward alignment and coherence. Reflect on the following questions:

- If you are successful in completing this action plan, will your team have made meaningful, significant, and identifiable strides toward alignment and coherence? That is, will your stakeholders experience a positive difference?
- If you are successful in completing this action plan, will your team have contributed to equitable outcomes for all students in your state? That is, will you have significantly smoothed the path toward achieving your whole-person vision for the students and families who are furthest from it?
- Who else in your SEA needs to be informed of your progress? In particular, how will you communicate your team's progress — including key decisions, successes, and challenges — to your leaders?

Please proceed to Chapter 4. Implement the Action Plan and Monitor Progress. In this chapter, you will establish a plan for how your state team will continue to refine the work, build capacity, plan for sustainability to move the work forward, and ensure progress toward the goals identified in your action plan.

CHAPTER 4. IMPLEMENT THE ACTION PLAN AND MONITOR PROGRESS

Congratulations! Your team has developed a strong foundation for supporting the ongoing work of alignment and coherence. At this point, you have a state vision guiding your work, an inventory of initiatives, a shared understanding of the connections among them and how they relate to the six domains of alignment and coherence, and an action plan detailing how you will increase alignment and coherence across whole-person initiatives so that you can better achieve your state's vision. You have worked very hard to get to this point!

In Chapter 4, the focus will shift to implementing your action plan and monitoring your progress. Your state team will work together, in ongoing team meetings, to overcome the challenges inherent in implementation and to celebrate your successes along the way. Even under ideal conditions, facilitating change is not easy. For inspiration and guidance, refer regularly to your state's shared vision.

Regardless of whether your state established a separate team focused on alignment and coherence or assigned this work to an existing team, you should schedule regular meeting times and consistent guides to monitor implementation of your alignment and coherence action plan. Anyone new to the team should have an individual meeting with the team's facilitator or with another member of the team to help orient them to the work. This is especially important for any stakeholders who are not familiar with the departments, such as new members from the community or from youth or family agencies.

The team should meet not less than once per quarter, ideally monthly. The amount of time your team will need for each meeting will vary depending on the frequency of your meetings, the complexity of your action plan, and the capacity of your team. Generally, your team meetings will involve the following:

Prereading/Materials:

- Prior meeting notes.
- Action plan.

Meeting Goal: Monitor the implementation of the action plan and solve any problems that arise.

Meeting Agenda:

- ***10 minutes*** — Welcome any new members and review shared vision
- ***30 minutes*** — Review action plan and progress toward goals: celebrate successes, address barriers, and revise/update action plan with notes
- ***10 minutes*** — Additional agenda items as needed (e.g., guest presenter, team-building activity)
- ***10 minutes*** — Review action items and confirm date and time of next meeting

Follow-Up:

- Send meeting notes and updated action plan.
- Plan to communicate your team's progress — including key decisions, successes, and challenges — to SEA leaders (and other agencies, as appropriate) and stakeholder groups.

Typically, the majority of your meeting time will be spent reviewing your team's action plan and progress toward your goals. If not much progress has been made, the team will work together to identify barriers and develop strategies to overcome them.

Your team should address the following items during each meeting:

- **Review your action plan.** What tasks have been accomplished since your last meeting? What has gone well? Where are you getting stuck? Are challenges related to technical processes and practices and/or to adaptive mindsets or behaviors? Are there any immediate barriers that you have not addressed?
- **Consider who is leading your alignment and coherence work.** Who is actively engaging in the work? Are these the right people to influence alignment and coherence among the prioritized initiatives? Who else should be included? Who should step out of this group?
- **Consider your ways of working.** What worked well? Where did you get stuck? What new agreements or strategies would make your work more effective going forward?
- **Who else in your SEA needs to be informed of your progress?** In particular, how will you communicate your team's progress — including key decisions, successes, and challenges — to your leaders?

It is also important that the team celebrates and shares successes with both SEA leaders and other stakeholders, and that it regularly disseminates updates on the process to the public. This strategic communication can happen through state websites, newsletters, public meetings, and/or other methods. Team meetings can also include time to share updates that are relevant to the work of the group, and may include time for activities or guest speakers to build the team's knowledge and capacity.

Please proceed to Chapter 5. Refine the Alignment and Coherence Process. In this chapter you will find an activity, to be conducted each year, in which your state team will examine the work toward alignment and coherence of whole-person initiatives and what aspects need to be changed, refined, or abandoned.

CHAPTER 5. REFINE THE ALIGNMENT AND COHERENCE PROCESS

Welcome to the final chapter of the guide! At the end of Chapter 3, you created an action plan that identifies specific goals and activities to improve the alignment and coherence of your whole-person initiatives. In Chapter 4, your team started an ongoing process to monitor the implementation of your action plan.

This final chapter provides guidance on how to sustain and continuously improve your alignment and coherence work over the longer term and ensure that your work remains relevant to the needs of your state's students, educators, families, and communities. About once every 12–18 months, or during times of transition, your team should reexamine and refine its process for alignment and coherence of whole-person initiatives. This may involve revisiting your theory of change, updating and/or expanding your inventory of whole-person initiatives, completing the Alignment and Coherence Tool and interrelationship analysis again, and/or refining your goals and action plan. Thoughtful and consistent communication along the way will help to ensure that your work remains effective and relevant.

You may schedule a separate meeting or add meeting time (approximately two hours) to an existing meeting. When your team meets, consider the following:

	Notes	Next Steps
Relevance of goals • Are the vision and theory of change still current? • Are the initiatives and goals we prioritized still relevant? How do we know?		
Impact on students, educators, families, and communities • What have we achieved through this alignment and coherence work? • How has our work helped to smooth the path for those students and families furthest from our vision? Which gaps are we closing? Which persist? How do we know?		
Extending scope of alignment and coherence Is our team ready to expand our inventory of whole-person initiatives and/or to complete the Alignment and Coherence Tool and interrelationship analysis again?		
Sustaining the work of the core team • Are we effectively communicating our work toward greater alignment and coherence of whole-person initiatives to all of our stakeholders? • Are we actively listening to and incorporating feedback from all of our stakeholders? • Are new policies, funding, staffing, and/or other resources needed to sustain this work? • Are there changes in leadership and/or staff that have affected this work, or forthcoming changes that require planning?		

	Notes	Next Steps
Engagement and satisfaction • How are team members working together to explore new ways of thinking? • How is the team sharing decision-making? • How is the team cultivating trust? • How satisfied are team members? • How satisfied are stakeholders? • How do we know?		

Following the team's discussion, update your team's action plan to include any next steps that you have identified.

Congratulations! Your team has completed a full cycle of work toward improving the alignment and coherence of your state's whole-person initiatives!

CONCLUSION

By improving the alignment and coherence of your state's whole-person initiatives and reducing the fragmentation of the systems and programs they support, your team has just taken a significant step toward ensuring that all students and adults can reach their fullest potential. This work is a compelling way for you and other state education leaders to more productively engage all of your state's stakeholders — from policy leaders to educators to families — in promoting equitable learning and development of children and youth in your state.

This is just the beginning of a productive cycle of improvement, which will help your state's children and youth become thriving adults who are well equipped to raise our next generation of children. No other work is more important.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

General Process Resources

Communication Protocol Worksheet

Tools to Support the Development of a Coherent and Aligned System

Theory of Change Approach (Chapter 1)

The Community Builder's Approach to Theory of Change

Interrelationship Tool (Chapter 3)

Interrelationship Diagram Tool

Implementation and Monitoring Resources (Chapter 4)

Creating an Implementation Team

Creating Team Alignment with Terms of Reference

How to Support Change Management

Background Resources and Frameworks

Advancing Comprehensive School Mental Health Systems: Guidance from the Field

Advancing Education Effectiveness: Interconnecting School Mental Health and School-Wide Positive Behavior Support

Advancing Education Effectiveness: Interconnecting School Mental Health and School-Wide Positive Behavior Support, Vol. 2: Implementation Guide

Alignment of School Mental Health Quality Frameworks and Tools

[CLF Framework]

Educating the Whole Child: Improving School Climate to Support Student Success

The Equitable Access Implementation Playbook: Creating Coherence and Alignment Tool

From Insights to Action: Redefining State Efforts to Support Social and Emotional Learning

National School Reform Harmony

PBIS State Systems Fidelity Inventory (SSFI)

Systemic Social and Emotional Learning for States

State Examples of Alignment and Coherence

Ohio's Strategic Plan for Education: Built by Ohioans for Ohioans

Virginia 5 C's

Wisconsin's Framework for Equitable Multi-Level Systems of Supports

The Wisconsin School Mental Health Framework

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