Seven Essential Elements Providing the Foundation for the
Success Gaps Toolkit

IDC developed the *Success Gaps Toolkit* to assist educational leaders in pinpointing the true cause of the success gap(s) so that they can engage in proactive actions that will eliminate future issues. Part of these actions include engaging in effective practices. The *Success Gaps Toolkit,* which includes the *Success Gaps Rubric*, was developed around reviewed research that points to seven essential elements or practices that support equitable opportunity for all children. Research indicates that when these essential elements are in place within an educational system, children and youth are more likely to have an equitable opportunity to achieve and make educational progress.

The seven essential elements providing the foundation for the *Success Gaps Toolkit* are described in the following table:

Essential element	Key points	References
1. Data-Based Decisionmaking	• Educational leaders base decisions about school curricula, instructional programs, academic and behavioral supports, and school improvement initiatives on disaggregated data for the school, reflecting the differences in subgroups by gender, race/ethnicity, socio-economic factors, disability, and native or home language. For example, data on graduation, attendance, dropout, discipline, and achievement are all examined and considered individually and collectively. • Educational leaders base decisions about child and student interventions (behavioral and/or academic) on multiple data sources, including screening, progress monitoring, and formative and summative assessment data. • Educational leaders review and disaggregate data regularly to compare progress for all subgroups of children and youth.	Hamilton et al. 2009; Keuning et al. 2019; Lai and McNaughton 2016; van Geel et al. 2016; van Kuijk et al. 2016.

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Essential element	Key points	References
2. Cultural Responsiveness	• Effective academic and behavioral practices for all learners are based on a school's recognition of the diversity across student ethnicity, language, and socio-economic status. • Schools and districts provide and design ongoing professional development and resources so teachers and other staff can meet all children and youth's cultural and linguistic needs, including students with disabilities who are also English learners. • Schools and districts invite, value, and welcome the participation of all families that are part of the diverse school community and adapt to the culture of the community. • Schools and districts include families from all backgrounds in discussions and meetings about the school, the school programs or initiatives, and their children's academic and behavioral progress.	Bal 2018; Francis et al. 2016; Gay 2002; Henderson and Mapp 2002; Jeynes 2017; Klingner et al. 2005; Powell et al. 2016.
3. Core Instructional Program	• There is a rigorous, consistent, and well-articulated PreK-12 instructional program (i.e., curriculum and instructional delivery) aligned with both English language arts and mathematics standards and delivered with fidelity. • In addition, there is a comprehensive, well-articulated, district-level school discipline policy that is culturally sensitive to the school's diversity. This policy requires positive, proactive, and restorative strategies focused on keeping children engaged and in school. • All children receive high-quality instruction that utilizes research-based practices, higher-order thinking skills, flexible grouping, and instructional technology. Universal Design for Learning guidelines are an integral component of the instruction. Thus, effective differentiation in the core curriculum addresses the needs of the full range of learners, learning styles, and cultural and linguistic backgrounds. • Schools and districts believe that families are an integral component of instruction. Therefore, schools and districts inform families, in their primary language, about the core instructional program and the differentiation of instruction and assessment data based on their child's unique learning or behavioral needs.	Childs et al. 2016; Huberman, Navo, and Parrish 2012; Jeynes 2017; Jorgensen, McSheehan, and Sonnenmeier 2009; Newmann et al. 2001; Oyen and Wallersheim-Shervey 2019; Puzio, Colby, and Algeo-Nichols 2020; Tomlinson et al. 2003.

Essential element	Key points	References
4. Ongoing Assessment—Universal Screening and Progress Monitoring	• Universal screening is available for all PreK-12 children and youth to identify early developmental, academic, or behavioral risk factors using valid and reliable measures. • Furthermore, each school has identified and uses valid and reliable progress-monitoring tools to support data collection to examine student growth. • Schools define and implement reasonable and regular intervals for monitoring, which allow staff to review performance data and make adjustments to instruction/interventions based on data review cycles. • Schools have processes in place to regularly inform families, in their primary language, of their child's screening and progress-monitoring results for academic and behavioral progress and how those results are being used to support their child's progress.	Brosnan et al. 2018; Fuchs and Fuchs 2002; Huberman, Navo, and Parrish 2012; Jorgensen, McSheehan, and Sonnenmeier 2009; Reedy and Lacireno-Paquet 2015; U.S. Department of Education 2015; U.S. Department of Education 2017; Wilcox, Gregory, and Yu 2017.
5. Evidence-Based Instructional and Behavioral Interventions and Supports	• Evidence-based, culturally sound academic and behavioral interventions and supports, in addition to the core instruction, are embedded within a multi-tiered framework and implemented with fidelity. • Schools regularly inform and consult families, in their primary language, about culturally appropriate interventions provided to their children and their children's responses to those interventions for academic and behavioral skills.	Benner et al. 2010; Bradshaw, Waasdorp, and Leaf 2015; Griffiths et al. 2007; Dignity in Schools Campaign 2019; Gage et al. 2018; King-Brown et al. 2013; Lassen, Steele, and Sailor 2006; National School Boards Association 2013; U.S. Department of Education 2014; Zambrana et al. 2019; Jeynes 2017.
6. District/School Leadership That Facilitates Improvement	• Leadership that promotes equitable practices directly affects the culture and climate of the district and school, the motivation of teachers to implement innovations, and the use of data-based decisionmaking. • This type of leadership is key to leading improvement in student achievement. In the *Success Gaps Toolkit*, leadership is incorporated into the process as a role model and leader of equitable practices.	Sun and Leithwood 2012; Liebowitz and Porter 2019; Zuckerman et al. 2018; Schildkamp et al. 2019; Thornton, Zunino, and Beattie 2020.

Essential element	Key points	References
7. Parent/Family Engagement Throughout the Education Process and System	• Engaging families and the community in all school activities and decisions and in their child's education creates a welcoming and equitable educational environment. • When families and schools partner to support children, both behaviorally and academically, children's outcomes improve. In the *Success Gaps Toolkit*, family engagement is embedded in the process and in every section of the *Success Gaps Rubric*.	DeSpain, Conderman, and Gerzel-Short 2018; Francis et al. 2016; Pemberton and Miller 2015; Smith et al. 2019.

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