

S.P.A.C.E. FRAMEWORK FOR SCHOOL CHANGE™ PREK - 5TH GRADE

Research-Based, Equity-Centered Strategies

At Challenge Success, we have organized our research-based, equity-centered strategies into a framework we call S.P.A.C.E. This framework embodies our vision to create educational systems that value each student for their unique identities, assets, and individual definitions of success and effectively prepare them for the variety of opportunities and challenges they will encounter in school and beyond.

Many of these strategies emerged from our partner schools communities, while others stem from research on best practices for effective schools (for examples, see [Darling-Hammond, 2001](#); [Learning Policy Institute's Whole Child Education](#); and the [University of Chicago Consortium on School Research](#)).



SUPPORTIVE SCHEDULE
& USE OF TIME



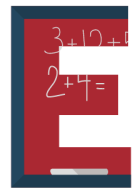
PEDAGOGY THAT
ENGAGES



ALTERNATIVE & AUTHENTIC
ASSESSMENT



CLIMATE OF CARE



EDUCATION FOR
EVERYONE

Well-Being, Engagement, & Belonging: An Interconnected Opportunity

We have identified five categories of change that contribute to positive outcomes in student well-being, belonging and engagement. Within these categories, we strive to curate policies and practices that live into our equity commitments. We acknowledge that these offerings are not an exhaustive list and are not intended to be prescriptive. When we work with schools, we employ a co-design approach and encourage each school to use the framework in a manner that is most responsive and authentic to the unique assets, needs, and values in their community.

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PREK - 5TH GRADE



SUPPORTIVE SCHEDULE & USE OF TIME

Research shows children need daily playtime, downtime, and family time for healthy development. Below are suggestions to incorporate these into the school day to support children's well-being.

Playtime

- Ensure recess and lunch periods provide ample time for play and rest.
- Include free choice time several times per week.
- Prioritize tech-free, unstructured, self-directed play and learning.
- Encourage outdoor and imaginative play.

Downtime

- Build in transition time between activities and space for rest and reflection.
- Incorporate self-selected reading and quiet moments during the day.
- Support routines to help students wind down after lunch and recess.
- Teach stress reduction techniques to support positive coping strategies (e.g., meditation, yoga, breathing exercises).

Family Time (Ideas to support family-like connections at school)

- Use morning/end-of-day check-ins to build connections with each student.
- Pair older and younger students (reading, recess, projects) to foster leadership and belonging.
- Encourage student ownership and agency through meaningful classroom jobs and roles.

Homework

- Follow the helpful homework recommendations in the Challenge Success Homework Guide.
- Ensure homework is purposeful, limited, and developmentally appropriate.
- Consider optional or no-homework policies.
- Emphasize self-selected reading.
- Schedule “no homework” nights/weekends and eliminate assignments during school breaks.
- Offer flex packets or homework passes to support student well-being.
- Share the research from the Challenge Success Homework Research Brief.

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PREK - 5TH GRADE



PEDAGOGY THAT ENGAGES

- Use diverse teaching strategies, including hands-on, project-based, and play-based learning.
- Modify curriculum to reflect students' identities, interests, and backgrounds.
- Provide opportunities for voice, choice, differentiation, and scaffolding of assignments.
- Incorporate service learning or community experts to connect learning to the real world.
- Use varied groupings (pairs, stations, small groups) to support collaboration and diverse perspectives.



ALTERNATIVE & AUTHENTIC ASSESSMENT

- Use multiple assessment types aligned with learning goals, including peer, self, and teacher feedback.
- Include student reflection and revision opportunities.
- Consider eliminating grades or zeroes; use narrative feedback when possible.
- Explore student-led conferences, portfolios, and exhibitions.
- Aim for authentic assessment opportunities, such as writing for real audiences, community-based projects, etc.
- Increase formative assessments and on-going feedback in order to support instructional decision making and student improvement.
- Ensure your classroom assessment and grading policies are fair and equitable and encourage student feedback on these policies for instance, eliminate "zero" policies.

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PREK - 5TH GRADE



CLIMATE OF CARE

- Ensure every student has a trusted adult at school.
- Foster strong student-faculty connections through informal relationship-building activities.
- Integrate SEL into the curriculum to meet young learners' emotional needs.
- Use exit surveys to learn from students' experiences.
- Co-create classroom and school-wide community agreements.
- Implement proactive, relational discipline strategies like restorative practices and peer mediation.



EDUCATION FOR EVERYONE

- Provide professional learning for staff and caregivers on student well-being, sleep, screen use, and the value of playtime, downtime, and family time.
- Develop planning tools to help families balance homework and extracurriculars.
- Leverage back-to-school nights and conferences to share wellness research with families.
- Host community events (e.g., book clubs, game nights, screen-free evenings) to promote connection and dialogue.
- Offer all resources and communications in home languages.
- Create opportunities for parents/caregivers to participate in the class/school community.
- Support teacher/staff mental health and well-being.