




"Why Isn't This Working?": Unraveling the Complexity of School Safety through Context, Culture, & Systems

Jeremy Bullock Safe Schools Summit
Plenary Session
August 2024

Christina Pate
Curtis Herring
Krystal Wu
Lauren Trout

A diverse group of seven people (four men and three women) are standing in a line, smiling and looking upwards. They are dressed in casual to semi-formal attire. The background is a dark, textured wall. Overlaid on the image is white text asking questions about group dynamics and issues.

Who's in the room?!
What are your thoughts?
What are your most pressing issues?

Wordcloud

Join at menti.com | use code 9217 3891

Mentimeter

The most pressing school safety issue I am facing is...



focus

bold leader

creative

fast

inspiration

transpiration

Safety Paradigms




Defining School Safety



Ecosystem of Safety

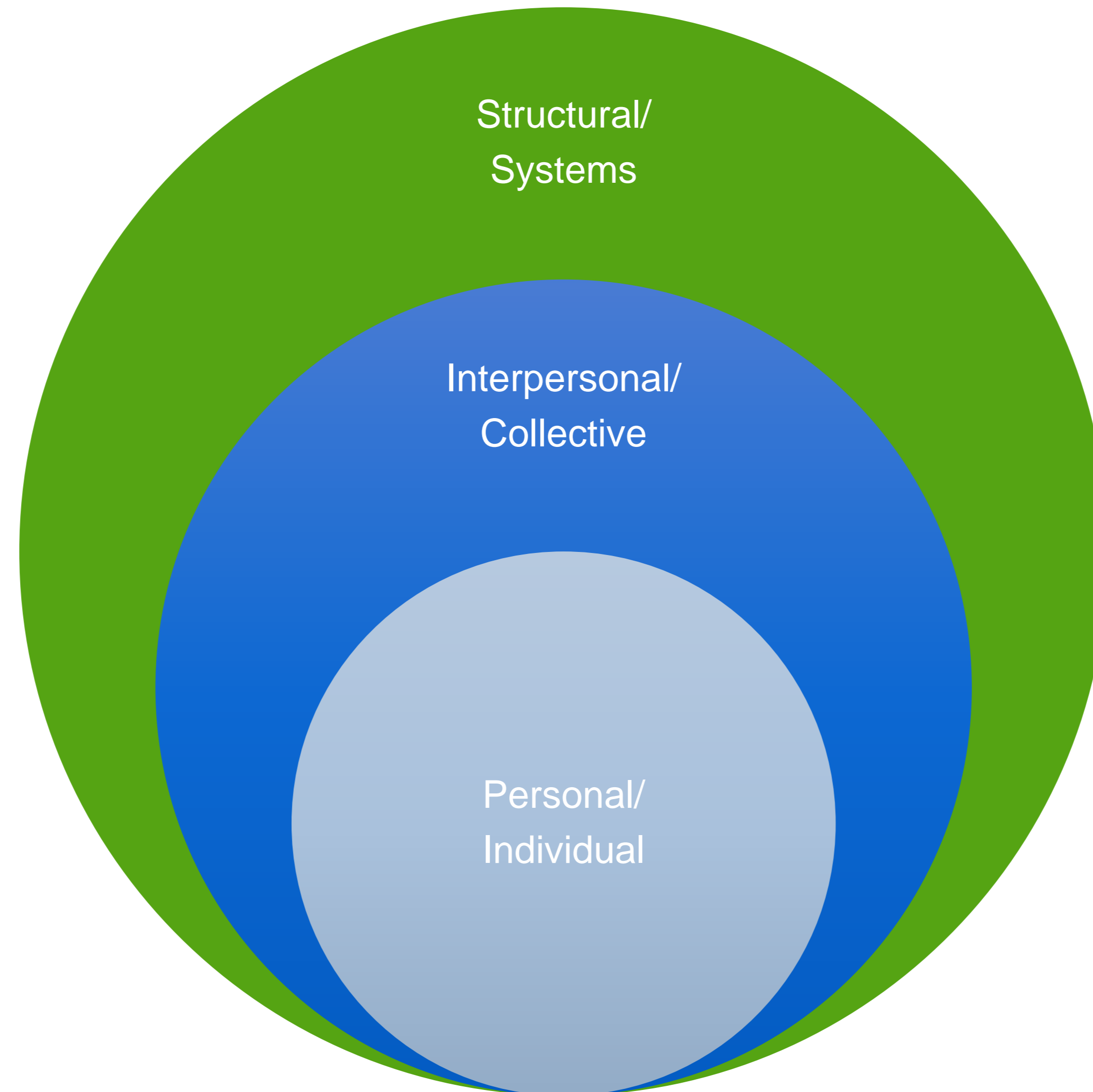


Complexity and Complex Adaptive Systems



Safety is not the absence of threat, harm, or violence; it is the existence of systems and structures that support mutual care, connection, and belonging

Ecosystem of School Safety



Complexity & Complex Adaptive Systems



Complex Adaptive Systems

Simple

- Technical in nature. Linear
- Described by basic terminology
- Can be addressed by mastered techniques and carry a high assurance of success
- Examples:
 - Following a Recipe
 - Door Locks; Fire Drills; Active Shooter Drills; Metal Detectors; SEL curriculum

Complex Adaptive Systems

Complicated

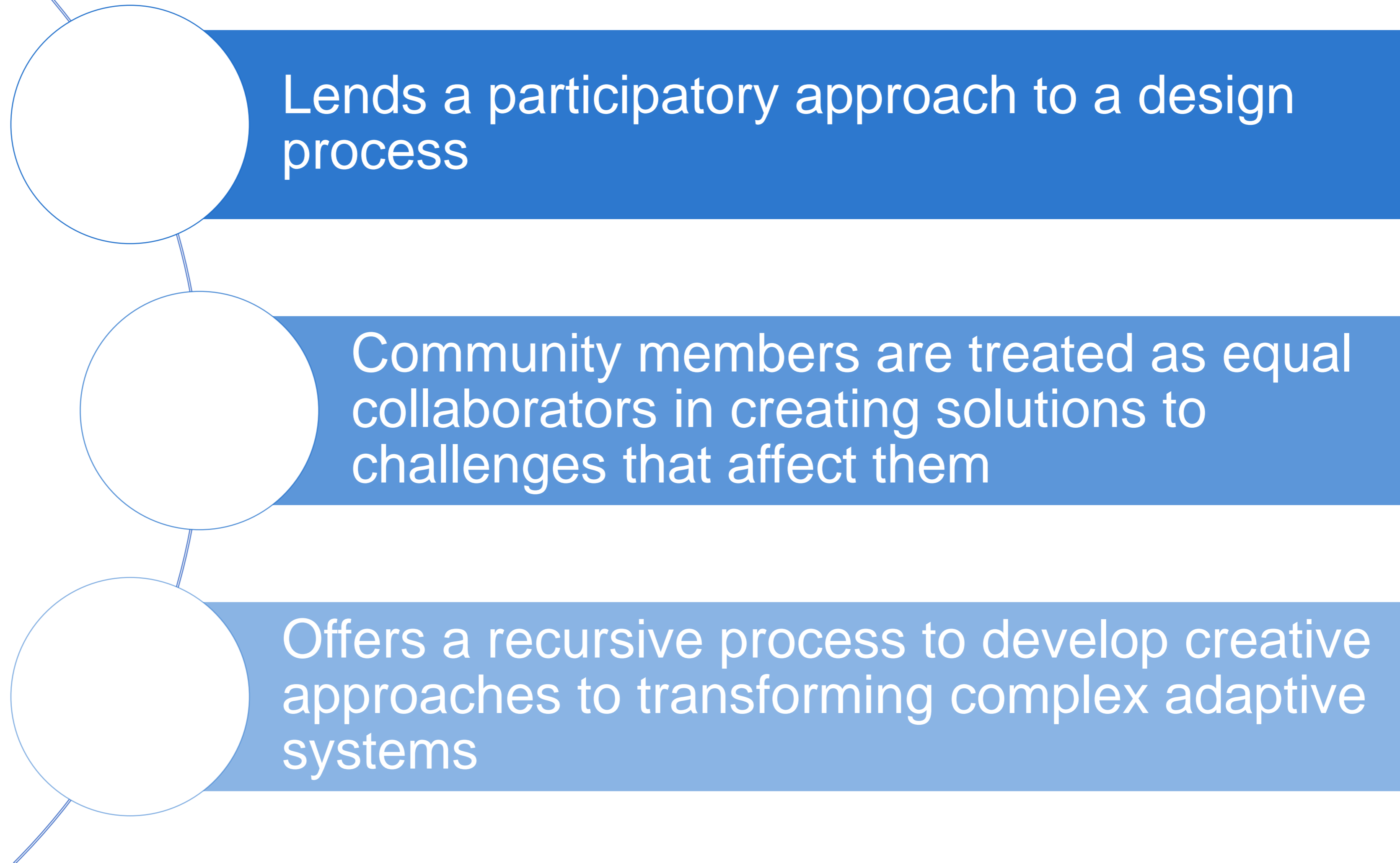
- Deterministic in nature
- Of larger scale or have increased requirements of coordination or specialized expertise
- Have a relatively high degree of certainty or outcome with repetition
- Examples:
 - Sending a Rocket to the Moon
 - Truancy Policies; Mental Health Supports; Professional Development

Complex Adaptive Systems

Complex

- Adaptive in nature. Non-linear
- Based on relationships and properties of self-organization, interconnections, and evolution
- Solutions emerge and evolve over time; Outcomes are often unanticipated or counterintuitive
- Examples:
 - All Ecological Systems (families, communities, education, environment)
 - Ecosystems of safety & wellbeing

Co-Design & Design Thinking



Pause & Reflect

Thinking about what's in (or going into) your school safety plans AND how it's being created

Consider whether they're:

- Simple/technical
- Complicated/deterministic
- Complex/adaptive
- ***Who are you listening to and learning from?***
- ***Who are you inviting to provide input/feedback?***
- ***Does it involve those most impacted and those with least power?***





Remember...

A single individual, a single choice, or a single shift at the micro level can have profound ripple effects at the macro level to generate larger systems change.

Thank you!



Dr. Christina Pate
cpate@wested.org



Curtis Herring
cherrin@wested.org



Krystal Wu
kwu@wested.org



Lauren Trout
ltrout@wested.org

https://www.wested.org/area_of_work/resilient-and-healthy-schools-and-communities/
and
https://www.wested.org/area_of_work/justice-prevention/

References & Resources

Heifitz, R., Grashow, A., & Linksy, M. (2009). *The practice of adaptive leadership: Tools and tactics for changing your organization and the world*. Harvard Business Press. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lisr.2009.05.001>

Meadows, D. H. (2008). *Thinking in systems: A primer*. Chelsea Green.

Pate, C.M., Pfister, T., & Ripma, T. (2023). *Creating a culture of care: A guide for education leaders to develop systems and structures that support educator well-being*. Center to Improve Social and Emotional Learning and School Safety at WestEd. <https://www.wested.org/resources/creating-a-culture-of-care/>

Senge, P. (1990). *The fifth discipline: The art and practice of the learning organization*. Doubleday Publishing Group.

Trout, L., Pate, C., Wu, K., & McKenna, J. (2022). *Reimagining school safety: A guide for schools and communities*. Center to Improve Social and Emotional Learning and School Safety at WestEd. <https://selcenter.wested.org/resource/reimagining-school-safety-guide/>

Trout, L. (2021). *The toolkit before the toolkit: Centering adaptive and relational elements of restorative practices for implementation success*. [Center to Improve Social and Emotional Learning and School Safety at WestEd]. WestEd. https://selcenter.wested.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/SEL_Restorative-Practices-Guide-5.pdf



Survey