

# Employing Systems Thinking to Identify Upstream Levers of Change



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## Background

### ISSUE

- **Environmental issues** are impacting teens' wellbeing and academic outcomes.
- Factors include: stress, poverty, trauma, gun violence and mental health issues.

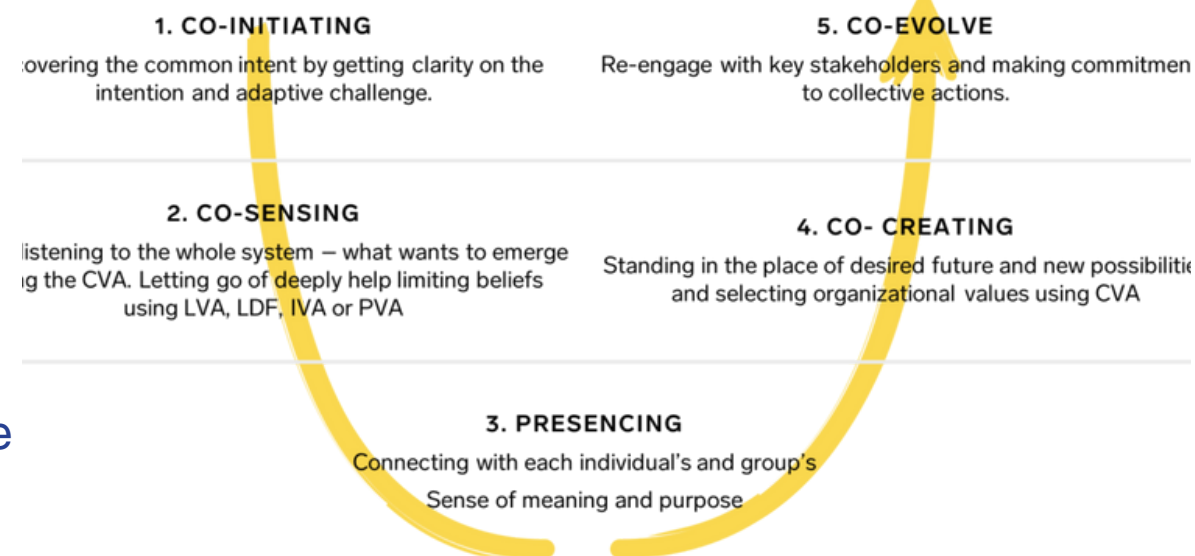
### OBJECTIVE

- **Convene multiple stakeholders** in the ecosystem of education and identify how to have greater impact on teen wellbeing.
- Discern upstream levers of change
- Solidify key focus areas of work

## Methodology

- Employed Theory U
- Created ISE specialized Lab structure
- Convened 30 Lab participants, 6 stakeholder groups
- Conducted 3 Retreats with Lab Group
- Facilitated 30 Learning journeys with outside experts
- Transcribed and synthesized Learning Journeys, presented to Lab Team for distillation and clues to identify key areas of focus

## Theory U



## Results

### FINAL AREAS OF FOCUS

Holistic Suite of Impactful Programs  
Financial Wellspring  
Partnerships of Possibility  
Intentional Technology  
Dynamic Organization  
Conscious Culture

## Discussion

### KEY QUOTES FOR EXPLORATION

- “{This Futures Lab] is why the world *can* work.” *Teen*
- “The school is a unit of change.” *Assistant Superintendent*
- “Spaces that feel most racially literate are spaces where people can see each other.” *DEI Trainer & Principal*
- “Our moods/joy are contagious. Listening actively builds happiness.” *Technologist & Executive MBA Faculty*
- “We can not put it on the system. We have to put it on ourselves. We need to change our interior condition.” *District Leadership Facilitator & Principal*
- “When I think about the mental health crisis, you can look at it as the problem, but you can also look at them as the outcome of a system of problems that needs to be more fully explored.” *Prof. of Nursing Education & Systems Thinking Specialist*

## References

Carrillo, B. (2023). Conceptualizing and Enabling Transformative Learning Through Relational Onto-Epistemology: Theory U and the u.lab Experience. *Journal of Transformative Education*, 21(4), 514–533. <https://doi.org/10.1177/15413446231152237>