

# **FACILITATING LEARNER-CENTERED TEACHING**

**EDUC 5A**



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## Topic III - The Whole Child Approach to Education

Ensuring each child, in each school, in each community is healthy, safe, engaged, supported, and challenged.

The demands of the 21st century require a new approach to education to fully prepare students for college, career, and citizenship. Research, practice, and common sense confirm that a whole child approach to education will develop and prepare students for the challenges and opportunities of today and tomorrow by addressing students' comprehensive needs through the shared responsibility of students, families, schools, and communities.

All educators want to improve the work they do for students, their families, and the community. Whether it's instruction, school climate, leadership, family engagement, or any of the other issues schools face on a daily basis, all educators need tools to help them improve their actions and methods. A whole child approach, which ensures that each student is healthy, safe, engaged, supported, and challenged, sets the standard for comprehensive, sustainable school improvement and provides for long-term student success.

Launched in 2007, ASCD's Whole Child Initiative is an effort to change the conversation about education from a focus on narrowly defined academic achievement to one that promotes the long term development and success of children. Through the initiative, ASCD helps educators, families, community members, and policymakers move from a vision about educating the whole child to sustainable, collaborative action. ASCD is joined in this effort by Whole Child Partner organizations representing the education, arts, health, policy, and community sectors.

Explore resources and opportunities for action here and on [ASCD.org](https://www.ascd.org). Download indicators (PDF) of a whole child approach to education and community engagement and use the ASCD School Improvement Tool to assess your performance on those indicators. Join ASCD and our partners, and together we'll change the face of education policy and practice.

### Whole Child Tenets

- ❖ Each student enters school **healthy** and learns about and practices a healthy lifestyle.
- ❖ Each student learns in an environment that is physically and emotionally **safe** for students and adults.
- ❖ Each student is actively **engaged** in learning and is connected to the school and broader community.
- ❖ Each student has access to personalized learning and is **supported** by qualified, caring adults.

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- ❖ Each student is **challenged** academically and prepared for success in college or further study and for employment and participation in a global environment.

## A. The Healthy Learners

Research confirms that students do better in school when they are emotionally and physically healthy. They miss fewer classes, are less likely to engage in risky or antisocial behavior, concentrate more, and achieve higher test scores. Unfortunately, too many students go to class in less than optimal health.

Schools and communities committed to educating the whole child create an environment that promotes the learning and practice of healthy lifestyles. This includes healthy menus at school, regular recess, physical and health education, school counseling, and intramural programs. Schools and communities collaborate to increase access to health care for children and their families.

Ensuring that each student is healthy, safe, engaged, supported, and challenged requires us to continually ask questions and examine evidence related to implementation. ASCD's indicators of a whole child approach provide a guide for continual school and community improvement and serve as a definition of what a whole child approach to education truly requires.

### Healthy indicators:

1. Our school culture supports and reinforces the health and well-being of each student.
2. Our school health education curriculum and instruction support and reinforce the health and well-being of each student by addressing the physical, mental, emotional, and social dimensions of health.
3. Our school physical education schedule, curriculum, and instruction support and reinforce the health and well-being of each student by addressing lifetime fitness knowledge, attitudes, behaviors, and skills.
4. Our school facility and environment support and reinforce the health and well-being of each student and staff member.
5. Our school addresses the health and well-being of each staff member.
6. Our school collaborates with parents and the local community to promote the health and well-being of each student.
7. Our school integrates health and well-being into the school's ongoing activities, professional development, curriculum, and assessment practices.
8. Our school sets realistic goals for student and staff health that are built on accurate data and sound science.
9. Our school facilitates student and staff access to health, mental health, and dental services.

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10. Our school supports, promotes, and reinforces healthy eating patterns and food safety in routine food services and special programming and events for students and staff.

### **B. The Safe Learners**

Feeling safe at school translates into higher academic achievement, increased student well-being, and greater engagement. Children who don't feel safe can't concentrate on their studies, don't connect with their classmates, or don't go to school at all.

Schools and communities committed to educating the whole child work together to ensure the physical, social, emotional, and academic safety and security of students and adults. They consistently assess comprehensive safety issues to foster effective conditions for learning.

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#### **Safe indicators:**

1. Our school building, grounds, playground equipment, and vehicles are secure and meet all established safety and environmental standards.
2. Our school physical plant is attractive; is structurally sound; has good internal (hallways) and external (pedestrian, bicycle, and motor vehicle) traffic flow, including for those with special needs; and is free of defects.
3. Our physical, emotional, academic, and social school climate is safe, friendly, and student-centered.
4. Our students feel valued, respected, and cared for and are motivated to learn.
5. Our school staff, students, and family members establish and maintain school and classroom behavioral expectations, rules, and routines that teach students how to manage their behavior and help students improve problem behavior.
6. Our school provides our students, staff, and family members with regular opportunities for learning and support in teaching students how to manage their own behavior and reinforcing expectations, rules, and routines.
7. Our school teaches, models, and provides opportunities to practice social-emotional skills, including effective listening, conflict resolution, problem solving, personal reflection and responsibility, and ethical decision making.

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8. Our school upholds social justice and equity concepts and practices mutual respect for individual differences at all levels of school interactions—student-to-student, adult-to-student, and adult-to-adult.
9. Our school climate, curriculum, and instruction reflect both high expectations and an understanding of child and adolescent growth and development.
10. Our teachers and staff develop and implement academic and behavioral interventions based on an understanding of child and adolescent development and learning theories.

### C. The Engage Learners

To learn at their best, students must be engaged and motivated. Substantial research shows that students who feel both valued by adults and a part of their schools perform better academically and also have more positive social attitudes, values, and behavior. Plus, they are less likely to engage in drug use, violence, or sexual activity. After-school programs can promote academic achievement, but their success requires targeted investment, stakeholder commitments, focused academic support, quality programming, and a process of continual improvement.

Schools and communities committed to educating the whole child engage students in the learning process and provide opportunities that connect them to the community. Students who are engaged and connected to their schools demonstrate increased academic achievement, attendance rates, and participation in activities.

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#### **Engaged Indicators:**

1. Our teachers use active learning strategies, such as cooperative learning and project-based learning.
2. Our school offers a range of opportunities for students to contribute to and learn within the community at large, including service learning, internships, apprenticeships, and volunteer projects.
3. Our school policies and climate reinforce citizenship and civic behaviors by students, family members, and staff and include meaningful participation in decision making.
4. Our school uses curriculum-related experiences such as field trips and outreach projects to complement and extend our curriculum and instruction.



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5. Each student in our school has access to a range of options and choices for a wide array of extracurricular and co-curricular activities that reflect student interests, goals, and learning profiles.
6. Our curriculum and instruction promote students' understanding of the real-world, global relevance and application of learned content.
7. Our teachers use a range of inquiry-based, experiential learning tasks and activities to help all students deepen their understanding of what they are learning and why they are learning it.
8. Our staff works closely with students to help them monitor and direct their own progress.
9. Our school expects and prepares students to assume age-appropriate responsibility for learning through effective decision making, goal setting, and time management.
10. Our school supports, promotes, and reinforces responsible environmental habits through recycling, trash management, sustainable energy, and other efforts.

### **D. The Supported Learners**

In addition to improving students' academic performance, research shows that supportive schools also help prevent a host of negative consequences, including isolation, violent behavior, dropping out of school, and suicide. Central to a supportive school are teachers, administrators, and other caring adults who take a personal interest in each student and in the success of each student.

School and communities committed to educating the whole child connect students with caring adults throughout a student's school career through a variety of positive relationships. These relationships reinforce academic achievement and social, civic, ethical, and emotional development.

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### **Supported Indicators:**

1. Our school personalizes learning, including the flexible use of time and scheduling to meet academic and social goals for each student.
2. Our school staff understands and makes curricular, instructional, and school improvement decisions based on child and adolescent development and student performance information.

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3. Our school ensures that adult-student relationships support and encourage each student's academic and personal growth.
4. Our school helps families understand available services, advocate for their children's needs, and support their children's learning.
5. Our school personnel welcome and include all families as partners in their children's education and significant members of the school community.
6. Our teachers use a range of diagnostic, formative, and summative assessment tasks to monitor student progress, provide timely feedback, and adjust teaching-learning activities to maximize student progress.
7. Our school uses a variety of methods across languages and cultures to communicate with all families and community members about the school's vision, mission, goals, activities, and opportunities for students.
8. Every member of our school staff is well qualified and properly credentialed.
9. All adults who interact with students both within the school and through extracurricular, co-curricular, and community-based experiences teach and model prosocial behavior.
10. Each student has access to school counselors and other structured academic, social, and emotional support systems.

### E. The Challenged Learners

To succeed in college, other postsecondary education, and the workplace, students need higher-level thinking, communications, and problem-solving skills as well as knowledge of the world and its people. These are all products of a curriculum that challenges students to work harder as they investigate a wide range of real-world subjects. What's more, our high school graduates who pursue college must be adequately prepared, yet too many are taking remedial courses, which raises deep concerns about the value of their high school diplomas.

Students engage in a broad spectrum of activities in and out of the classroom. Districts and communities committed to educating the whole child work together to prepare young people for success in higher education, employment, and civic life by providing meaningful learning experiences and opportunities to demonstrate achievement.

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### Challenged Indicators:

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1. Each student in our school has access to challenging, comprehensive curriculum in all content areas
2. Our curriculum and instruction provide opportunities for students to develop critical-thinking and reasoning skills, problem-solving competencies, and technology proficiency.
3. Our school collects and uses qualitative and quantitative data to support student academic and personal growth.
4. Our curriculum, instruction, and assessment demonstrate high expectations for each student.
5. Our school works with families to help all students understand the connection between education and lifelong success.
6. Our curriculum and instruction include evidence-based strategies to prepare students for further education, career, and citizenship.
7. Our extracurricular, co-curricular, and community-based programs provide students with experiences relevant to higher education, career, and citizenship.
8. Our curriculum and instruction develop students' global awareness and competencies, including understanding of language and culture.
9. Our school monitors and assesses extracurricular, co-curricular, and community-based experiences to ensure students' academic and personal growth.
10. Our school provides cross-curricular opportunities for learning with and through technology.



**It is not about what teachers cover;  
It is about what students discover.**