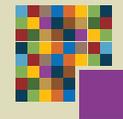


# Whole Child Network of Schools



Final Report



WHOLE CHILD  
**NETWORK**  
of SCHOOLS

The ASCD Whole Child Initiative



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### **About ASCD**

ASCD is a global community dedicated to excellence in learning, teaching, and leading. Comprising 140,000 members—superintendents, principals, teachers, and advocates from more than 138 countries—the ASCD community also includes 56 affiliate organizations. ASCD's innovative solutions promote the success of each child. To learn more about how ASCD supports educators as they learn, teach, and lead, visit [\*\*www.ascd.org\*\*](http://www.ascd.org).

### **Whole Child Initiative**

ASCD helps educators, families, community members, and policymakers move from a vision about educating the whole child to sustainable, collaborative action.



# Whole Child Network of Schools

## Final Report



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## Executive Summary

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For more than 70 years, ASCD has served the K–12 education community as a nonprofit association dedicated to the success of each child. In 2012, ASCD established the Whole Child Network (WCN) of Schools to assess the implementation and sustainability of the ASCD Whole Child approach to education, which aims to establish an environment that best helps students learn and achieve—where they are healthy, safe, engaged, supported, and challenged. Over the course of the three-year project, ASCD provided strategic training and support to the participating schools with the aim to change educational philosophies and climates, bolster developmentally appropriate classroom methodologies and strategies, and see measureable outcomes in student referrals and attendance. ASCD contracted with an independent research organization—the American Institutes for Research (AIR)—to gather and analyze data on each school’s progress in implementing the Whole Child approach to education. According to ASCD’s and AIR’s assessments, all members of the WCN have found that deploying ASCD’s specific strategies in their implementation processes helped embed the Whole Child approach into their school improvement plans (SIPs). Additional outcomes included improved attendance, decreased suspensions and disciplinary actions, greater value in school partnerships among local communities and families, and staff and students’ perception of greater respect for their voices and opinions. Network schools achieved positive changes across all of the five tenets of the Whole Child approach.

## Introduction

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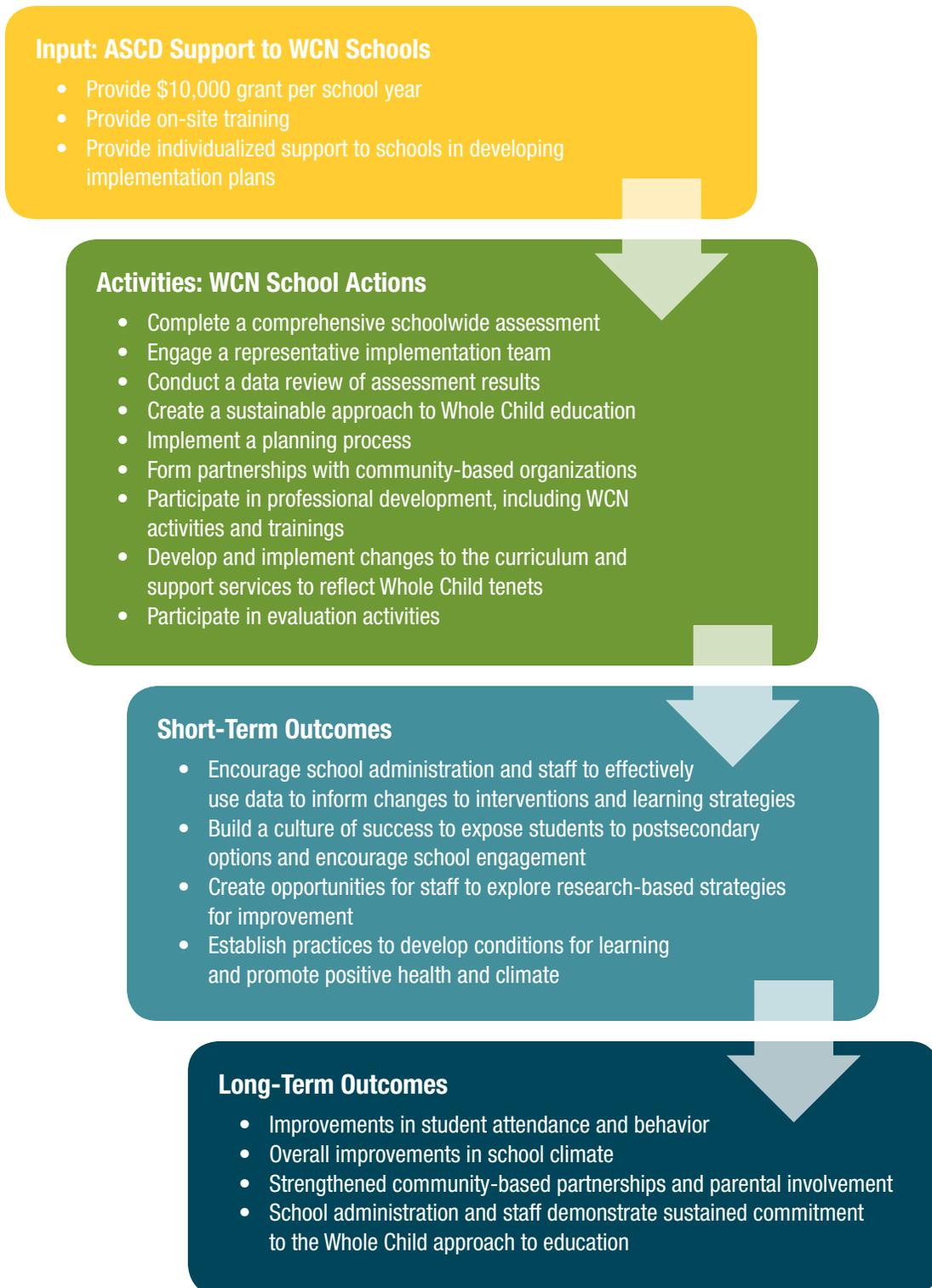
In 2007, ASCD (formerly known as the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development) launched its Whole Child Initiative. This initiative—which was renamed the ASCD Whole Child approach in 2015—has sought to recast “the definition of a successful learner from one whose achievement is measured solely by academic tests, to one who is knowledgeable, emotionally and physically healthy, civically inspired, engaged in the arts, prepared for work and economic self-sufficiency, and ready for the world beyond formal schooling.” (Learning Compact, p. 4)

In the ensuing years, ASCD developed the five tenets of its Whole Child approach—healthy, safe, engaged, supported, and challenged—to help stakeholders recognize and achieve this new definition; provided services and resources to help districts and schools implement the approach; developed indicators to shore up each tenet; and launched an online School Improvement Tool to aid the implementation process.

ASCD is a global community dedicated to excellence in learning, teaching, and leading. ASCD’s Whole Child approach is an effort to transition schools, communities, and families from a narrow focus on academic achievement to one that promotes the long-term development and success of children.

In May 2012, ASCD selected 10 schools—out of 142 nominations—to participate in a three-year WCN study examining the ASCD Whole Child approach implementation process, to gauge likelihood of sustainability, and to measure outcomes. The schools committed to a comprehensive school improvement process using the five tenets and their indicators to develop a sustainable Whole Child approach to educating their students. This approach organized their improvement efforts around the school components of school climate and culture, curriculum and instruction, leadership, family and community involvement, professional development and staff capacity, and assessment. Each school also received financial and customized professional development support from ASCD, including ASCD institutional memberships and five complimentary attendance waivers for ASCD annual conferences during the years of the project. Figure 1 illustrates the implementation pathway that ASCD provided to each school.

**Figure 1. Developmental pathway of implementing the ASCD Whole Child approach**



ASCD contracted AIR to collect implementation data from the selected WCN schools that were both qualitative (i.e., interviews and focus groups) and quantitative (i.e., surveys and extant data). The three-year study aimed to ascertain if implementing the Whole Child approach resulted in long-term, sustainable changes to the educational philosophy and climate of the schools, as well as the development of specific programs and activities, to create a holistic, attentive, and responsive environment where children, families, and teachers feel healthy, safe, engaged, supported, and challenged. Specifically, the study addressed four evaluation questions:

1. Are schools implementing the Whole Child approach according to prescribed ASCD strategies?
2. Is implementation addressing each of the five tenets of the Whole Child approach as well as strategies for sustainability?
3. To what extent is each school implementing its proposed Whole Child initiative as planned?
4. Is there evidence of improved outcomes for students (i.e., attendance, behavior)?

In addition to the data and statistics gathered, this report includes narratives from the participating WCN schools, sharing their experiences with the implementation process and how the program has affected the culture of the school and the well-being of the students, families, and educators. ASCD expects to use the results of the WCN program, as documented and analyzed by AIR, as a source for future advocacy and influence efforts in the promotion of its Whole Child approach to education.

The American Institutes for Research (AIR) is one of the world's largest behavioral and social science research and evaluation organizations. Their overriding goal is to use the best science available to bring the most effective ideas and approaches to enhancing everyday life. Founded in 1946 as a not-for-profit organization, AIR conducts work with strict independence, objectivity, and nonpartisanship.

## Implementing the Whole Child Approach

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Guided and supported by ASCD expertise and resources, each school participating in the WCN specifically and intentionally implemented an approach to education aimed at addressing the needs of the whole child to ensure that each child receives an educational experience that is healthy, safe, engaged, supported, and challenged. For an overview of this implementation process, see Figure 1 on page 3.

To help WCN schools implement the approach, ASCD provided to each participating school a \$10,000 grant for the 2012–13 school year, with a renewal of a \$5,000 grant for the next two consecutive years, as well as customized support and an ASCD Institutional Membership for the duration of the project. In addition, five team members from each school received trips to ASCD's 2013, 2014, and 2015 Annual Conferences. Each school team, comprising building administration and school practitioners, participated in an array of WCN and ASCD institutes, meetings, and professional development sessions to learn strategies and methods for implementing the ASCD Whole Child approach to education in their schools.

Using the results of ASCD's School Improvement Tool—a self-assessment tool for schools based on the Whole Child tenets and indicators of the Whole Child approach—and school visits by ASCD faculty and AIR personnel, ASCD worked in concert and consultation with each school to design a SIP that would address identified deficiencies and amplify areas of strength. Each plan included

- customized face-to-face trainings, tools, and products to address the needs identified during the initial school assessment,
- instructional program improvements,
- job-embedded professional development,
- student support programs and strategies,
- health and safety plans, and
- effective teacher leader training.

The long-term plans aimed to ensure that implementation was not only successful, but sustainable—that is, invisibly embedded in the enduring culture and educational mission of each school.

## Timeline for Implementation

Upon acceptance into the WCN program in May 2012, schools began a three-year cycle of professional development that included conferences, consultation, and visits by both ASCD faculty and AIR personnel.

<b>Year One: 2012–13</b>	
July 2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ASCD conducts WCN Summer Institute to introduce its Whole Child approach to participating schools</li> </ul>
September–November 2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ASCD and AIR visit each school to assess the school's alignment with ASCD's Whole Child approach</li> </ul>
December 2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ASCD develops initial reports that capture each school's baseline Whole Child status for comparison and offer individualized SIPs</li> </ul>
January–February 2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ASCD conducts video conferences with each school</li> </ul>
March 2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ASCD develops Year One reports that capture each school's progress in Whole Child implementation and modifications to each school's SIP</li> <li>• WCN schools meet before ASCD Annual Conference to review first-year implementation strategies, successes, and challenges with peers in the program</li> </ul>
April–June 2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ASCD and AIR visit each school to assess its progress implementing ASCD's Whole Child approach</li> </ul>
<b>Year Two: 2013–14</b>	
July 2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ASCD conducts WCN Summer Institute to help schools plan for the 2013–14 year.</li> <li>• WCN school leadership attends ASCD Leader to Leader (L2L) conference</li> </ul>
September–November 2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ASCD visits each school to assess its progress implementing the Whole Child approach in an individualized school report.</li> </ul>
January–February 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ASCD conducts video conferences with each school</li> </ul>
March 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ASCD develops Year Two reports that capture each school's progress in Whole Child implementation and modifications to each school's SIP</li> <li>• WCN schools meet before ASCD Annual Conference to review second-year implementation strategies, successes, and challenges with peers in the program</li> </ul>
April–June 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ASCD visits each school to assess its progress implementing the Whole Child approach</li> </ul>
<b>Year Three: 2014–15</b>	
July 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ASCD conducts WCN Summer Institute to help schools plan for the 2014–15 year.</li> <li>• Teams from WCN schools attend ASCD's L2L conference</li> </ul>
September–November 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ASCD visits each school to assess its progress implementing the Whole Child approach in an individualized school report.</li> </ul>
January–February 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ASCD conducts video conferences with each school</li> </ul>
March 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ASCD visits each school to assess its progress implementing the Whole Child approach in an individualized school report.</li> <li>• WCN schools meet at ASCD Annual Conference</li> </ul>
April–June 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ASCD visits each school to assess its progress implementing the Whole Child approach and offer final recommendations for sustainability.</li> </ul>

## Whole Child Needs Assessments

Before embarking on their first year in the WCN, each school used ASCD's free School Improvement Tool (<http://sitool.ascd.org>) to evaluate its alignment with ASCD's Whole Child approach to education. Based on the ASCD Whole Child tenets, the ASCD School Improvement Tool measures progress regarding tenets and sustainability, as well as indicators of the school improvement components—school climate and culture, curriculum and instruction, leadership, family and community engagement, professional development and staff capacity, and assessment. Each WCN school completed the assessment in fall 2012 as a baseline assessment, and again in spring 2013, 2014, and 2015.

“The ASCD school improvement tool data results have guided our professional development by highlighting the need for a more challenging curriculum.”

—*Finegayan Elementary School WCN team*

In consultation with ASCD, schools used the results from the ASCD School Improvement Tool to identify areas of focus for school improvement and to develop professional development and progress plans. AIR used the School Improvement Tool in conjunction with their own measurement strategies to gauge progress and recommend SIPs.

## Support and Professional Development Opportunities

Because schools would be embarking on a new mission and direction for their staff, students, and communities, ASCD prioritized ongoing professional development to ensure that all stakeholders understood and shared the vision for its Whole Child approach. As part of their commitment to the schools, ASCD provided free participation for school teams at ASCD's 2012, 2013 and 2014 WCN Summer Institutes and ASCD's 2013, 2014 and 2015 Annual Conferences, with a customized full-day WCN preconference and opportunities for school leaders to present. Throughout the lifecycle of the implementation plan, schools received tailored school visits and on-site professional development sessions as well as regular virtual meetings with ASCD and all WCN school teams as a group.

### WCN Summer Institutes

To help schools develop and maintain ASCD's Whole Child implementation strategies, ASCD held summer institutes each year of the program. The first institute in 2012 aimed to convey a common language and mindset for ASCD's Whole Child approach, review the implementation timeline, discuss the roles of staff and the school community throughout the process, and detail the variety and depth of assistance available to each school in the network. Subsequent institutes provided a venue for school teams to interact, to learn from one other, and to modify plans according to new knowledge and with input from their colleagues in the WCN. Armed with the information gathered from each summer institute, school teams developed and presented full-day, on-site training sessions, facilitated by ASCD's Whole Child Programs staff, to introduce the Whole Child approach and methodology to the school community.

“We felt like people were stuck in a negative mind-set; there was dissention, and we didn’t think it would be possible to break that. After returning from the WCN Summer Institute, we felt empowered.”

—Holly Glen Elementary School WCN team

### **ASCD Annual Conferences**

Each school team also received complimentary attendance to ASCD’s Annual Conferences in 2013, 2014, and 2015, with a full-day preconference meeting and agendas customized to their school; by 2015, school teams were conducting group and individual concurrent sessions at the conference. Participation at this event allowed each school to learn more about ASCD’s Whole Child approach and to share their experiences and stories of implementation, strategies at the whole school and classroom levels, and results and outcomes.

### **School Visits and Off-Site Support**

Each year of the implementation process, ASCD staff visited each school twice. Designed to complement the broader scopes of the conferences and institutes, these visits provided schools with nuanced and specific professional development training, guidance, and support. ASCD supplemented the site visits with ongoing support via telephone and online meetings and conversations. By the start of the second year of implementation, the WCN school teams began to see how ASCD’s Whole Child approach positively influenced their schools, districts, and communities. To accelerate implementation, ASCD offered focused staff development sessions to each school. These sessions covered such topics as learning targets, classroom culture and climate, classroom connections, child development, leadership strategies, and techniques for building relationships and rapport with students to establish a more conducive learning environment.

ASCD’s work with each of the WCN schools supported key leaders and team members as they created and implemented long-range, customized, and sustainable plans to teach the whole child across all aspects of the school experience.

### Select Tools and Activities

To support and bolster professional development efforts in the WCN schools, ASCD identified or developed various tools and activities. In addition to ASCD's School Improvement Tool, these resources helped schools contextualize the Whole Child approach, its concepts, and its benefits, while learning how to best monitor their progress during implementation.

- **Logic Model:** a systematic and visual way to understand the dynamic, ongoing relationship among a school's resources to operate a process, its planned activities, and the changes or results experienced. It describes the sequence of activities linked to the implementation process that will bring about change.
- **Making Change Happen (The Network, 1998):** a board game that introduces players to the concepts of change. WCN participants played it at the 2013 WCN Summer Institute to prepare for Year Two.
- **Indicator Tool Game:** a matching game created by ASCD to simulate an in-depth comprehension of the Whole Child tenets, indicators, and school components.
- **Data-Dialogue protocol:** information-gathering strategy that facilitates open-ended questions for data-driven decision making.
- **Critical Friends protocol:** information-gathering strategy that facilitates effective group discussion and reflection.
- **ASCD and AIR data and comprehensive data reviews:** analyses to help schools evaluate their work under the umbrella of ASCD's Whole Child approach.

Many of these tools that were provided are available in an ongoing capacity, so schools can continue to use ASCD's resources as they enter the sustainability phase of the Whole Child implementation.

## Key Findings

AIR's final report in 2015 summarized responses and self-reported ratings from focus groups, interviews, and surveys conducted among instructional and support staff, students, and parents across the WCN initiative, and provided data trend findings related to attendance and suspension rates.

### Implementation

Based on staff, student, and parent surveys, AIR identified areas of success and areas for improvement for each of the five tenets underlying ASCD's Whole Child approach to education.

#### Healthy

The majority of schools made positive changes during the three years of implementation, including **increased health awareness, nutritious meal options, access to physical activities, and a focus on positive mental health for staff and students**. Survey participants observed a moderate (3 schools), moderate-to-major (3 schools), or major (3 schools) affirmative impact on students' healthy eating habits, opportunities for physical fitness, and positive mental health. Most staff reported supporting students in nutritious choices, exercise, and managing stress. Most students reported being physically active and enjoying overall positive emotional health. The majority of parents indicated that their child maintains a healthy diet and physical activity, and does not experience much stress or anxiety.

“Aligning our programs to the tenets allows us as a faculty to identify and evaluate whether the program in question will be effective for our school. In doing this, we are able to identify and address our gaps which allows for a healthier and safer environment for everyone on our campus.”

—Mark Toole, Teacher

#### Safe

The schools that achieved the most success with this tenet introduced additional safety measures and programs, resulting in major differences in **school climate**. Survey participants observed a moderate (4 schools), moderate-to-major (1 school), or major (3 schools) affirma-

tive impact on students' experience of a physically safe environment, positive behavior and peer interactions, and a positive school climate. A majority of staff reported that they were prepared to keep **students physically and emotionally safe**, and students in all grade levels indicated that they felt **physically safe in- and outside of the school building**. The majority of parents also stated that their child feels physically and emotionally safe in- and outside of the school building, and that students are not bullied at school.

### Engaged

Teachers at most schools adopted new techniques to **increase student engagement**, schools were provided professional development opportunities towards improving student engagement, and staff experienced a **shift in their thinking to make engagement a high priority**. Survey participants stated that they observed a moderate (1 school), moderate-to-major (3 schools), or major (5 schools) impact on student engagement in the classroom, in the school, and in the community. Across all nine schools, a majority of staff reported they were prepared to help students engage in learning and encouraged students to be active in school. Most **students reported being engaged in learning** at school and active in community activities or clubs, with a higher percentage of older students participating in community-building activities outside of school. The majority of parents indicated that their child likes school, participates in activities, tries to learn as much as possible, and participates in school and community activities.

“The most valuable realization we had during our partnership with ASCD was that a Whole Child approach to education is about a school's philosophy, not a particular school program. Throughout our experience as a WCN school, we came to understand that each decision we make about school policy or programs should be done with the whole child in mind, and that policies or programs that don't help our students to be healthy, safe, engaged, supported, or challenged are off-target for the work of our school building.”

—Stacy Carpenter, School Counselor

### Supported

The majority of schools experienced an **increase in feelings of support among staff and increased connections** between staff and students through supportive strategies. Survey participants stated that they observed a moderate (4 schools), moderate-to-major (2 schools), or major (3 schools) impact on students receiving emotional support through social-emotional programs, access to a caring adult, and academic support. Across all nine schools, a majority of staff reported that they are prepared to **support students to do well in school** and help them feel valued and respected. Students at all grade levels reported that their teachers support their learning with different strategies, and they perceived that **adults in the school care about them** and their **academic progress**. The majority of parents reported that teachers and other adults provide academic support and care about the well-being of their child.

## Challenged

**Academic rigor improved at many schools.** Additional changes to make school more challenging for students included **new grading policies, learning targets, project based learning, and technology** resources. At seven schools, participants stated that there had been a moderate (5 schools) or major (2 schools) impact on the academic rigor, challenging curriculum, and college or career readiness support provided to students. Most students reported that teachers expect them to do their best and encourage them to be creative. The majority of parents indicated that their child's school is academically rigorous and teachers expect their child to do his or her best all of the time.

“I think [the rigor] has stepped up tremendously. You can see a little bit of the frustration in the students when they're learning, but then when they finally start putting it all together . . . you can see the light bulbs go on and you can see that they're so elated, excited about learning and excited about what they figured out on their own.”

—Elementary-level Teacher

The teams used data to uncover their priority needs, guide discovery and decision making, and plan carefully for intended outcomes. While areas for improvement varied across sites, common issues centered around student health, safety, and voice. These issues included the need to focus more attention to providing healthy food, discouraging bullying behaviors, and empowering students through school advocates.

“I think the learning targets are helping us with Challenged, because it's focusing our instruction with the kids and it's helped us to see exactly what our expectations of them are. . . it's also helped the teachers make sure that the projects that they're coming up with [and] are being incorporated into the classrooms have a purpose.”

—Secondary-level Teacher

## Impact

AIR compiled the following impact findings on self-reported ratings from the Year Three focus groups and interviews as well as the survey data collected from staff, students, and parents throughout the three-year project period. Focus group and interview respondents rated the minimal, moderate, or major impact of ASCD's Whole Child approach on the progress of each tenet within the school. To assess statistical change over time for the surveys, AIR compared Rasch-derived scale scores, highlighting statistically significant changes highlighted for each group surveyed.

A **moderate-to-major** impact was seen on **staff** related to the **supported** and **engaged** tenets at all nine schools, on the **challenged** and **safe** tenets at seven schools, and on the **healthy** tenet at six schools.

A **moderate-to-major** impact was seen on **students** related to the **engaged, supported** and **healthy** tenets at all nine schools; on the **safe** tenet at eight schools; and on the **challenged** tenet at seven schools.

There were **significant increases** in the level of involvement of **instructional staff** in supporting students related to all **five WCN tenets** at the end of Year Two (spring 2014) and the end of Year Three (spring 2015).

There were **significant increases** in the level of involvement of **support staff** in supporting students related to all **five WCN tenets** at the end of Year Two (spring 2014).

There were **significant increases** in **Grade 6–8 students'** levels of **engagement** and **feeling supported** at the end of Year Two (spring 2014), and a **significant increase** in their **feelings associated with being safe** at the end of Year Three (spring 2015). There were no significant differences for the other grade levels.

There was a **significant increase** in **parents'** assessments of **student health** at the end of Year Two (spring 2014).

## Outcomes

To show trends in student outcomes over time, AIR collected data related to attendance and suspension rates from three years prior to the WCN initiative (school years 2009–10 to 2011–12) compared with the three years during WCN implementation (school years 2012–13 to 2014–15).

### Elementary-Level Outcomes

Attendance **improved or remain constant**. For the four elementary schools included in the analysis, attendance rates either remained the same or slightly increased over the course of the WCN initiative in comparison with previous years. **Attendance rates at all schools were above 90 percent.**

Similarly **suspension rates either decreased or remained the same**. One elementary school experienced a clear decrease in suspensions after the introduction of the WCN initiative (from 6 percent to 2 percent). All but one elementary schools saw a decrease in suspensions, but to a lesser degree. One school saw its rates remain stable.

### Secondary-Level Outcomes

Attendance rates **remained constant** across the network. All attendance rates at WCN schools remained above 90 percent except for one school that remained in the 80th percentile prior to and throughout the study.

**Discipline rates<sup>1</sup> decreased** over the course of the project. One school experienced a significant **decrease of 60 percent in disciplinary actions** from 165 incidences at the start of the study to 66 at the conclusion of the three years; another school saw a **decrease of 69 percent in suspensions** from a high of 49 the year prior to the study to 15 at the conclusion. This data fits with implementation findings that more students across all grade levels reported that they felt **physically safe in- and outside of school** and the impact findings that grade 6-8 students experienced significant increases in **levels of engagement and feeling supported** (Year Two) and **feelings associated with being safe** (Year Three).

<sup>1</sup>Suspension data was available for two of four secondary schools for the time of the WCN study.

## School Stories

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### **Drew Freeman Middle School**

Prince George's County Public Schools in Suitland, Maryland

Drew Freeman Middle School is a public school that serves grades 7–8 with 657 students and 64 staff. During its time in the WCN, this school restructured each mandate, program, initiative, and system within the school to “connect the dots” and create a common framework based on the five Whole Child tenets. Within this framework, schools were able to develop collaborative teacher planning sessions, a Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports program, a Response to Intervention process, a mental health advisory class, and other programs. The WCN team in this school has embraced the Whole Child approach as a tool to refocus current activities, rather than creating new programs.

#### **Our School's Story**

As a result of the Whole Child implementation process, we were able to focus on the needs of our students by providing wraparound services through an Extended Learning program and a dedicated Boys and Girls Club. We promoted healthy lifestyles and prosocial behaviors through activities led by teachers, administrators, counselors, support staff, parents, and community partners. We also provided a mobile dental office, asthma screenings, and Falcon Friday school spirit activities. The biggest highlight of all was our work around engagement and how we tied it all together with our schoolwide “Grit-a-thon.”

Grit helps us to do what no one else thought we could; to stay the course to get done all of those things that we need to do no matter what; and it is the encouragement, determination, perseverance, and the skills that gets things done. Once our teachers got on board, they immediately began this work with our students, who participated in our Grit-a-thon. Every student, teacher, and staff member that participated in this event came back to the school with an outstanding sense of accomplishment and ready to take on the world.

By implementing the Whole Child process, we were able to begin changing the culture at Drew Freeman Middle School that will become everlasting over time.

“As a turnaround school, we were provided many initiatives, programs, and services in order to increase student achievement. Some of them were mandated by the district. Whole Child provided a framework in which to organize, focus the work, change the culture, and begin the process of turning around the school. By considering the tenets and indicators from the Whole Child framework, we were able make intentional decisions for the benefit of our students and teachers. In addition, this work helped us to make connections between programs, supports and services already in practice at the school rather than seeing them in isolation. Whole Child became our “umbrella” for connecting and organizing everything that we did.”

—Angela Hamilton, Assistant Principal

## **Finegayan Elementary School**

**Guam Department of Education in Dededo, Guam**

Finegayan Elementary School is a public school serving grades K–5 with 87 staff members and almost 1,000 students. The faculty at this school have become more intentional about carrying out its School Improvement Plan after it was updated to include the tenets and indicators of the Whole Child approach. Assessing academic and behavioral data allowed staff to incorporate more developmentally appropriate strategies in early elementary grades that addressed school weaknesses and leveraged school strengths. Staff conducted a book study using ASCD’s *Understanding How Young Children Learn*, which, in conjunction with a coordinated Whole Child approach, resulted in increased academic achievement and decreased classroom behavioral challenges. The school’s professional development offerings reflect its overall shift toward implementing activities and functions that are cohesive and student-centered. Community partnerships continue to develop and bridge gaps between the school and community.

## Fredstrom Elementary School

Lincoln Public Schools in Lincoln, Nebraska

Fredstrom Elementary School is a public school that serves grades K–5, with approximately 500 students and 59 staff members. As a result of ASCD's professional development training to incorporate gaming, humor, and social-emotional wellness into teaching, student engagement has increased in and out of the classroom. Building administration has championed the Whole Child approach at the school and district levels by creating an ongoing professional development plan with new strategies for increasing student engagement and strengthening relationships with the broader community. The school has developed two new student advisory groups and 15 afterschool clubs, and a total of 20 teachers received Whole Child professional development training. The Whole Child approach continues to provide the framework for a unified vision of all programs and initiatives, and correlating student achievement with a Whole Child approach has allowed the school to become increasingly sustainable in its implementation.

### Our School's Story

As Fredstrom Elementary began the Whole Child journey, we anticipated that Engagement would be one strength. However, after reviewing our results from ASCD's School Improvement Tool, it was obvious that actual student engagement in the classroom and outside of school hours could be increased. We had our first tenet on which to focus our school improvement efforts!

We studied the research and determined that teachers needed to be trained in cooperative learning to impact student achievement. Selected staff members were sent to workshops and provided training for the rest of the staff. As all teachers became familiar with the expectations and the structures, they incorporated cooperative learning as a primary instructional strategy in all content areas. Three years later, 20 teachers have received formal training in cooperative learning, and all staff are able to implement it in ways that increase group engagement and individual accountability.

Student engagement outside of class has also been a focus, and we have been intentional about listening to students and what they want to see at their school. A student advisory council was created and the students' first initiative was to survey classmates as to what clubs they would be interested in if offered after school. The students compiled their results and created a proposal, which they presented to the Fredstrom PTO. Two PTO members worked with the student advisory group, the community, and five new after-school clubs. Scholarships were also offered to students who needed support with the fees. That same spring, the staff worked to offer

a fitness/healthy snack club at no cost to the families and had over 100 students sign up! PTO clubs have continued to thrive and over 20 different clubs have been offered, the fitness club has grown every year, students are engaged in their school after hours, and the whole child benefits!

We are proud of our Whole Child efforts and the way that engagement in and out of class has increased. Students are excited and know that what they do in school matters. They are accountable for their own learning, in ways that matter to them. They can also extend their learning day through clubs and activities.

“Fredstrom Elementary has used the Whole Child approach to educate stakeholders and the community about the Whole Child philosophy, empower teacher leadership, and bring clarity to the school improvement process.”

—Vicki Schulenberg, Principal

## Holly Glen Elementary School

Monroe Township Public Schools in Williamstown, New Jersey

Holly Glen Elementary is a public school serving grades preK–4, with 51 percent of its students receiving free and reduced-price lunch. A pilot breakfast program serving 130 students has resulted in fewer classroom interruptions, fewer office referrals, and fewer nurse visits. This breakfast program proved so successful that it has been adopted as a districtwide initiative and was expanded to include bag lunches on half days. The school also addressed attendance rate challenges by increasing collaboration with families in the school through weekly phone calls and e-mails, implementing a monthly attendance award to students, and encouraging families to synchronize their personal clocks with school clocks. These initiatives to increase family engagement have allowed Holly Glen to become the only school in its district to consistently meet the state’s minimum daily average attendance requirement. The WCN team at Holly Glen continues to meet regularly to plan new and ongoing efforts to incorporate the Whole Child approach in school activities and programs.

### **Our School's Story**

Through the School Improvement Tool and ASCD's professional development supports, Holly Glen was able to objectively review our situation to recognize that poor attendance was a significant barrier to our students' performance. And if the kids aren't in school, they're not learning. A lot of times it's not the student's fault, so the Whole Child approach encouraged us to focus on engaging parents, too.

In our state, schools must show 96 percent attendance rates to receive Title 4 funding, so we started this initiative by focusing on these eligible students. As the vice principal, I started calling home when students were arriving to school tardy to remind them of the importance of being at school on time. The school also posted a clock on the outside of the building so parents could synchronize their own clocks. The class with highest attendance rates gets their grade's banner in their classroom for the entire month (there is one banner for each of the five grades). This class banner has become a strong incentive as classes have become really competitive with each other about who gets the banner each month. Every month this year, the school has been close to or at 96 percent attendance and the best in the district. We've even had other district schools call and ask how we've improved our attendance rates so significantly!

“In conjunction with the new attendance initiative, Holly Glen also introduced a new breakfast program. We realized that a lot of kids were coming in to school hungry; with almost 50 percent receiving free or reduced-priced lunch, a lot of students don't get meals at home. Kids were frequently visiting the nurse's office because their stomachs hurt from being hungry. After providing breakfast in the classrooms every day, visits to the nurse decreased.”

—Pam Capasso, Media Specialist and Character Ed Co-Advisor

## Le Sueur-Henderson Middle School/High School

Le Sueur-Henderson Public Schools—Independent School District #2397 in Le Sueur, Minnesota

Le Sueur-Henderson is a rural public school serving grades 6–12, with more than 550 students and 68 staff. Joining the WCN has created a philosophical shift within Le Sueur-Henderson, enabling staff to more sustainably support each student. The school has improved efforts to meet students' health and safety needs through enhanced collaborations with mental health service providers, expanded food service programs, and a new student-teacher advisory program. A teacher peer coaching program, advanced art education opportunities, and improved student-engagement learning activities ensure that the school is engaging, supportive, and challenging for both students and educators.

### Our School's Story

We know that challenging each student to reach his or her potential is a lofty goal and an area in which we will continually be trying to improve. We've harnessed this need for continual improvement by creating a peer coaching program that helps our staff members better challenge each student in order to prepare them for the next stage of their lives.

Through a partnership with a local university, 25 percent of our staff have been trained in peer coaching, peer observation, and peer mentoring. Each staff member at our school is matched with a peer coach who meets with him or her at least five times annually to discuss goals and conduct peer observations. While the dates of coaching meetings must be documented for each staff member's evaluation, all other details of the coaching sessions are confidential. This allows staff members to feel comfortable sharing their struggles with a peer coach in order to gain insights about their classroom techniques and set goals for improvement. As part of the peer coaching process, each staff member develops individual goals, is observed by a peer coach, and observes another teacher who they have identified as being successful in the classroom. The teacher and his or her peer coach meet bimonthly to continue assessing progress and to document student engagement throughout the school year. At the end of our last school year, 91 percent of staff reported that working with a peer coach contributed to their overall growth as a professional. Through this process, each of our teachers is encouraged to continuously improve as they work to challenge each student in each class.

“Our small, rural middle and high school has long prided itself on knowing our students well and being able to adapt to meet a student’s needs. If an individual student was running into trouble with the system that was in place, our teachers and administrators worked hard to find a way to get that student what he or she needed. However, by joining the WCN, our school has learned ways to move away from just helping an individual student who struggles with the educational system towards building an entire school that fits the needs of each of our students. For our school, this work began by finding ways to better meet students’ basic needs for health and safety, especially in areas like mental health support, food service programs, and sustaining students’ connections with teachers. As our school has continued to work towards creating an engaging, supportive, and challenging environment, we’ve focused on things like teacher growth and on expanding options for students to meet their learning goals.”

—Stacy Carpenter, School Counselor

## Martinsville High School

Martinsville City Public Schools in Martinsville, Virginia

The population of Martinsville High School includes 91 staff members and 665 students, with 75 percent of students receiving free and reduced-price lunch. Upon joining the WCN, Martinsville recognized opportunities for improvement in how each of the five Whole Child tenets play out in the school’s culture and work. The school first set goals to improve the health programs and activities for students and faculty and has now transitioned to incorporating the Whole Child philosophy into the school’s mission and vision statements and schoolwide activities. Whole Child Tenet Teams led by teacher leaders continue to spearhead the school’s progress by collaborating with educators throughout the school; integrating the Whole Child tenets in staff meetings; and strengthening relationships with the community, students, and families.

### Our School’s Story

During the initial year of the Whole Child process at Martinsville High School, the school staff, through surveys and discussion, revealed that the Healthy tenet and its School Culture and Climate component should be the focus of our early efforts. Consequently, the Whole Child team planned several initiatives. For example, our cafeteria manager joined the extended team to work on breakfast and lunch ideas. A community partnership with an area pharmacy led to a donation of pedometers for all students and staff members. Our major focus, however, became a fitness room.

The team worked with our physical education department for suggestions on what type of equipment to purchase and seek as donations. The school division's maintenance department worked hard to renovate an area that was once the student health clinic. Several individuals in the area donated equipment and entertainment features such as televisions, DVD players, and various exercise DVDs. Today, we are proud of a fitness room that is utilized before, during, and after school hours by many students and staff members. The emphasis on physical fitness has proven to be a terrific stress reliever for many individuals.

“Going through the Whole Child process has benefited our school in many ways. It helped us as a faculty and staff to focus in on the main tenets of educating the whole child. It brought these tenets to the foreground in both creating and implementing programs in the school, as well as planning for daily classroom activities. There has been a noticeable difference in the school climate and culture after going through the Whole Child process. The expectations of the faculty are higher, the students feel safe in their environment, and there are multiple opportunities for faculty, staff, and students to participate in healthier activities and eating healthier meals. It allowed us as a faculty and staff to organize and identify the strengths and weaknesses in our current programs.”

—Mark Toole, Teacher

## Odyssey Community School

Santa Clara County Office of Education in San Martin, California

Odyssey Community School is an alternative school that serves grades 9–12. The population is small, with only 43 students and a staff of 11. This school has created a student breakfast program, incorporated healthier school lunch options, and hosted community outreach dinners. A focus of the Whole Child approach in this school has been to increase staff voice and student engagement; as a result of such efforts, staff have initiated conversations and provided input to revise school intake processes, classrooms embrace project-based learning, and students receive awards to recognize their individual progress. Despite significant staffing adjustments, the school administration has been able to continue work toward a Whole Child approach because it prioritized sustainability when incorporating changes into the school's climate and culture.

## PS 9, The Teunis G. Bergen Elementary School

New York City Department of Education in New York, New York

Public School (PS) 9 is a public community elementary school serving grades K–5, with 594 students and 72 staff members. Upon joining the WCN, PS 9 first aimed to improve student health and safety during recess by initiating a partnership with Playworks to train staff in conflict resolution and safe and healthy play. The school then provided training to both educators and families using a strengths-based model to support students' social and emotional development. In the third year of implementation, PS 9 continued to improve the health and wellness of the whole school community by introducing new nutrition and wellness programs. Behavioral challenges, discipline problems, and rates of childhood obesity in the school have all decreased. Staff and families understand the connection between healthy bodies and healthy minds as the entire school embraces the Whole Child approach, which has created a common language within the school community.

### Our School's Story

Public School 9 has become a beacon for servicing the whole child. We have utilized the five tenets to provide a safe and risk-free environment for our children, parents, families, and staff. We have created a beautiful culture where our parents are happy to visit, to share, to come together, and provide support on many levels. Our Wellness committee is headed by parents who have been able to create a Wellness Guideline for healthier eating. Our monthly movie nights now have organic popcorn, organic hotdogs, water instead of juice, seaweed, sweet peppers, and other healthy snacks. Our children have all decreased the amount of juice they consume and our birthday parties are even healthier. We have opened our doors to families and we have given voice to our students and we have found a common language to use within the Nurtured Heart Approach and the Sanford Harmony Program, both of which strengthen the social and emotional base of our school.

“Public School 9 has become a place for families.”

—Sandra D'Avilar, Principal

## Urban Community School

Diocese of Cleveland in Cleveland, Ohio

Urban Community School (UCS) is an independent faith-based school serving grades preK–8, with approximately 500 students and 42 staff members. This school has linked lesson planning to each of the Whole Child tenets and has incorporated technology to reduce teacher stress and increase opportunities for staff collaboration. Faculty have been trained on strategies of emotionally intelligent learning and, as a result, have incorporated humor as a tool to increase staff and student engagement. Teachers have learned how to establish learning targets with their students so that they meet the educational needs of diverse learners, and students are held accountable for their learning.

### Our School's Story

As part of the WCN, UCS staff started looking at how we teach our students through the lens of ASCD's Whole Child tenets. The WCN grant provided us with annual AIR surveys and analysis. With the assistance of the WCN personnel, the UCS staff studied the results of the School Improvement Tool and the AIR surveys, noting areas of surprise, positive results, and areas needing attention for each tenet. We utilized the School Improvement Action Plan as the framework for identifying strategies, action steps and activities, resources, responsible parties, and evidence of completion. The WC team continually revisited and updated this action plan over the years.

Through our work with the logic model process tool, our WC team was able to chart our progress against established goals. One of the outcomes of our work within the WCN has been the cohesion it has brought to our work schoolwide. While we were accomplishing many great things, these improvements were in isolation. Now, they are more coordinated and connected. For example, our schoolwide committees are organized around the tenets.

The WCN has reminded Urban Community School of the need to focus on each child, not just every child thereby forcing us to look at the tenets as we develop, plan, and implement classroom instruction.

“The tenets of the Whole Child approach allow us to maintain our commitment to the mission of Urban Community School as well as to educate, support, engage, and love the next generation as we prepare them to lead productive lives in which they contribute to society as a whole.”

—Natalie Celeste, Middle School Vice Principal

## **Albert Harris Elementary School**

**Martinsville City Public Schools in Martinsville, Virginia**

Participation in the WCN ended during Year One due to change in the school's administration.

## Pathway to Sustainability

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Across all schools, respondents stated that the structure of the WCN initiative and the data that went along with it had been extremely helpful, and they wanted to continue using the Whole Child approach after the grant period ended. According to respondents to AIR's Year Three survey, the WCN initiative had fundamentally changed the schools in at least one of the five tenets, and they planned to maintain those positive changes going forward. The rest of the findings are summarized below, showing the ways in which schools were affected and planned to continue with activities related to ASCD's Whole Child approach.

### Distributed Leadership

Survey respondents stated that their schools practiced distributed leadership, which they expected to continue the next year. Administration fostered open communication with staff, provided within-school support to build leadership skills, and encouraged a climate where teachers feel empowered to take responsibility for planning and implementing ideas. Respondents also indicated that teacher leaders played an important role in the schools by providing support to colleagues, leading training sessions, and serving on teacher committees and taskforces.

### WCN Team

Respondents emphasized that a dedicated WCN school team was essential to ensure successful implementation of ASCD's Whole Child approach. The WCN school team communicated the purpose of the initiative to administrators, staff, and parents, provided presentations and training to school staff, and took ownership to embed ASCD's Whole Child approach in school goals and school improvement plans. The WCN school team held regularly scheduled meetings that encouraged the participation of both new and experienced staff, and school communities looked to WCN team members as leaders. Most of the schools indicated that they would maintain the WCN team to facilitate the transition to the postgrant period; some schools indicated that they planned to reconfigure the WCN team, but that the core members would support the WCN team concept as members of other committees at the school.

## Data Use

Respondents indicated that the principal and staff regularly used data to inform decision making related to the WCN initiative. To track goal progress, school staff regularly reviewed and discussed student data from such sources as state assessments, grades, reading levels, attendance, and health rates. The data were used to inform student grouping, target interventions for struggling students, and influence school goals and improvement plans. Respondents specifically mentioned that the WCN surveys administered in Year One helped to highlight strengths and areas for development and provided guidance for focusing their efforts during implementation. Schools will continue to promote staff data literacy and determine ways for staff to use data responsibly as the basis for their decisions.

## Staff Voice

Survey respondents stated that there were multiple venues (e.g., faculty meetings, team meetings, surveys, and informal conversations) for teachers and staff to provide input and feedback related to such items as desired professional development topics and major school-wide changes. Most respondents indicated that staff felt like their opinions were valued, but in a few cases, it took a little time to build trust and rapport with new administrators. It was important to staff that decision making was transparent, and that they could see their input in action to feel like they had made a valued contribution.

## Student Voice

Respondents stated that school staff made efforts to involve students in school decisions through such structures as surveys, student councils, student advisory committees, and meetings between student leaders and administrators. Some schools gave students responsibility with activities such as student-led assemblies and clubs, and dedicated time to discuss opinions in classroom meetings. In addition, respondents stated that students found a defined process for feedback most helpful, so they could see the results in action.

## Community Involvement

Respondents indicated that the schools had developed strong partnerships with community groups to provide support and activities related to ASCD's five Whole Child tenets with direct funding, services, and activities. All respondents stated that the grant and ASCD staff had provided active, valuable support during implementation, but that they were examining options for additional community funding sources. Some schools had already identified specific grants to help them support continued WCN structures and activities.

## Conclusion

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The WCN three-year study sought to answer several key questions.

1. Are schools implementing ASCD's Whole Child approach according to prescribed ASCD strategies?
2. Is implementation addressing each of the five tenets of ASCD's Whole Child approach as well as strategies for sustainability?
3. To what extent is each school implementing its proposed whole child initiative as planned?
4. Is there evidence of improved outcomes for students (i.e., attendance, behavior)?

Ultimately, we found affirmative responses for each of these questions. With data gleaned from their own needs assessment and guidance from ASCD staff, WCN schools were able to construct personalized professional development and planning processes that incorporated the philosophy and tenets of the Whole Child approach seamlessly into their ongoing school improvement processes. Several schools were able to use the process to reinvigorate their staff—and their communities—in focusing their talents and energies on the success of each child.

Schools followed the ASCD Whole Child approach as they engaged their communities in discussions around the purpose and value of education. They sought to ensure that each child in their school experienced a healthy lifestyle, felt safe and secure, engaged in the learning process, felt supported by caring and qualified adults, and was challenged to succeed, to extend, and to achieve, not just academically, but in every aspect of their lives in- and outside of school.

At the end of the three-year study, schools measurably increased health awareness, nutritious meal options, access to physical activities, and a focus on positive mental health for staff and students. Each school climate experienced major improvements, with students feeling physically and emotionally safe. Teachers at most schools adopted new techniques to increase student engagement, and staff shifted their thinking to make student engagement a high priority. Across all nine schools, a majority of staff reported that they felt prepared to support students to do well in school and help them feel valued and respected. Students at all grade levels reported that their teachers support their learning with different strategies, and they perceived that adults in the school care about them and their academic progress. Rigor

improved at many schools, with changes implemented to challenge students, including new grading policies, learning targets, project-based learning, and the thoughtful use of technology. After schools implemented ASCD's Whole Child approach, staff and students perceived greater respect for their voices, attendance improved, suspensions and disciplinary actions decreased, and local communities and families found greater value in school partnerships. In addition, AIR reported that the WCN initiative helped the schools achieve positive changes across all of the five tenets of ASCD's Whole Child approach.

All nine schools plan to continue using ASCD's Whole Child approach after the study's conclusion.

After three years of implementation and rigorous data analysis, ASCD and the participating schools in the WCN learned that addressing the needs of the whole child through programmatic and school climate changes requires commitment to the following strategies:

- **Build Strong, Multilevel School Teams**

Ensure full staff buy-in to the program by developing a team that includes building leadership, such as the principal and assistant principal, administrative staff, and practitioner and teacher leaders.

- **Base Decision Making on Data**

Incorporate the use of data, data dialogues, and data decision-making guides.

- **Distribute Leadership Across the School and Community**

Broaden the reach of implementation by distributing leadership across the school, which simultaneously promotes ASCD's Whole Child approach to the staff and community.

- **Encourage Staff and Student Voices**

Provide a platform for staff and student voices. Show them their opinions are being heard—and valued.

## What You Can Do

### **Use the Free ASCD School Improvement Tool to Start Your School's Whole Child Journey**

Measure your school's or district's performance on ASCD's Whole Child tenets, indicators, and components of school improvement. The tool provides instant results and recommendations for next steps. The tool provides a guide for progress and options for relevant publications and faculty assistance.

**Visit the tool to get started at [sitool.ascd.org](http://sitool.ascd.org)**

### **Learn More About the ASCD Whole Child Approach**

ASCD's website offers additional resources, including examples of schools that support its Whole Child approach and podcasts on Whole Child topics.

**Access additional resources at [www.ascd.org/wholechild.aspx](http://www.ascd.org/wholechild.aspx)**

### **Sign Up for the ASCD Whole Child Professional Development Online Course**

Compare and contrast your current professional practices with ASCD's Whole Child approach through assessments, articles from *Educational Leadership*, original readings, videos featuring noted education experts, and applications to implement new ideas for sustainable classroom and school improvement.

**Register for the course at [pdo.ascd.org/wholechild](http://pdo.ascd.org/wholechild)**

### **See How Well Your State Aligns With the Whole Child Approach**

Compare your state's progress with that of the nation for the healthy, safe, engaged, supported, and challenged tenets via the ASCD Whole Child Snapshots.

**View the snapshots at [www.ascd.org/programs/whole-child-snapshots.aspx](http://www.ascd.org/programs/whole-child-snapshots.aspx)**

### **Start a Conversation About the Whole Child with Your School and Community**

Discuss the Whole Child approach with your colleagues, community members, and policymakers. Get ideas by listening to the "School Improvement Success: School Leaders Discuss the ASCD Whole Child Approach" podcast episode.

**Listen to the episode at [www.ascd.org/wcpodcastjun15](http://www.ascd.org/wcpodcastjun15)**

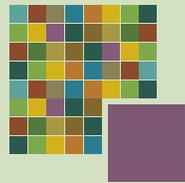
### **Get a Whole Child Resolution Introduced in Your State**

Watch ASCD's webinar about how to get a Whole Child resolution introduced by your state policymakers.

**See the webinar at [www.ascd.org/wcresolutionwebinar](http://www.ascd.org/wcresolutionwebinar)**

## Reference

ASCD. (2007.). *The Learning Compact Redefined: A Call to Action: A Report of the Commission on the Whole Child*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.



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