



Education International  
Internationale de l'Éducation  
Internacional de la Educación

## The 2030 Sustainable Development Goals and the Pursuit of Quality Education for All: A Statement of Support from Education International and ASCD

Education International (EI) and ASCD<sup>1</sup> applaud the establishment of the stand-alone education goal as part of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) ratified at the United Nations on September 25, 2015.

*Goal 4: Ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning.*

It is the intent of this statement to declare our joint support for a quality education that places the needs of the child at the fore. A quality education is one that focuses on the whole child—the social, emotional, mental, physical, and cognitive development of each student regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, or geographic location. Based on the pillars of providing excellent teaching; utilizing and providing access to developmentally appropriate and effective learning tools; and establishing supportive learning environments, a quality education provides the outcomes needed for individuals, communities, and societies to prosper.

### **Background**

Our members—educators—are some of the most optimistic people in the world.

Educators cannot work with young people every day without a belief that they are making today and tomorrow better than yesterday. For decades, as global advocates for quality education and equity of opportunity, we have pursued education policies that promote and advance the development of each child regardless of circumstance.

Our duty to students, and to the educators that serve them, is to stand for goals that are meaningful beyond simple metrics and to support goals that are commensurate with what we know. Education reduces poverty and hunger across generations and improves health outcomes, especially for mothers and children. In addition, education improves the economic health of nations, enhances civic participation, and raises the likelihood of peaceful resolution of conflicts.

Our young people must be afforded equity in a common future.

That is why we join together to add our voices in support of the United Nations SDGs and pledge our shared effort on behalf of students, teachers, families, and communities for quality education.

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<sup>1</sup> ASCD was formerly known as the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development represents a victory for the education community and all advocates of quality education. Education is now a stand-alone goal and an explicit priority under several additional goals. It was not so long ago that the idea of an education goal was a fanciful notion, but sustained pressure and hard work across the many regions and educators represented by EI and ASCD has paid off.

Education is a right. As stated by the SDGs, a quality education is an imperative because it is not enough to attend school; rather, all children must be able to fully benefit from the experience.

*There is no more powerful transformative force than education—to promote human rights and dignity, to eradicate poverty and deepen sustainability, to build a better future for all, founded on equal rights and social justice, respect for cultural diversity, and international solidarity and shared responsibility, all of which are fundamental aspects of our common humanity.*

—Irina Bokova, Director-General of UNESCO

### **But What Is Meant by a Quality Education?**

There are those who argue that the threshold of quality is literacy and numeracy. But the SDGs are a recognition that this definition is insufficient and outdated. Education is not simply a content delivery system; rather, it is a system designed to help all children reach their full potentials and enter society as full and productive citizens. UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon set the SDG process in motion in 2012 by declaring that every child must be in school, and the quality of those schools must improve so that students are prepared to be productive citizens, ready to lead the future.

*Education must fully assume its central role in helping people to forge more just, peaceful and tolerant societies.*

—Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-General of the United Nations

A Quality Education is one that focuses on the whole child—the social, emotional, mental, physical, and cognitive development of each student regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, or geographic location. It prepares the child for life, not just for testing.

A Quality Education provides resources and directs policy to ensure that each child enters school healthy and learns about and practices a healthy lifestyle; learns in an environment that is physically and emotionally safe for students and adults; is actively engaged in learning and is connected to the school and broader community; has access to personalized learning and is supported by qualified, caring adults; and is challenged academically and prepared for success in college or further study and for employment and participation in a global environment.

A Quality Education provides the outcomes needed for individuals, communities, and societies to prosper. It allows schools to align and integrate fully with their communities and access a range of services across sectors designed to support the educational development of their students.

*The Sustainable Development Goals related to education give the world a chance to build on some real success. Already in this century, millions more students have access to education. Our challenge now is to complete that access and provide the quality teaching, tools and environments for learning for every student. Highly qualified teachers are critical to this work and EI is proud to be working closely with ASCD, which has made continuous professional development for teachers a global mission.*

—Fred van Leeuwen, General Secretary, Education International

*Quality Education must not be left to chance. It is the foundation upon which countries base efforts to improve overall health, well-being, and economic vitality. The ratification of an educational goal in the Sustainable Development Goals for 2030 is our opportunity to engage the world in conversations to ensure that the term Quality Education is synonymous with an education that serves the needs of the whole child. ASCD commends EI and their Unite for Quality Education campaign for leading the way in establishing education as a global goal and is honored to be working alongside EI in advocating for quality and equity in education.*

—Deborah S. Delisle, Executive Director and CEO, ASCD

A Quality Education is supported by three key pillars: ensuring access to quality teachers; providing use of quality learning tools and professional development; and the establishment of safe and supportive quality learning environments.

- Quality Teachers

Each child, in each school, in each community deserves to be to be educated by a qualified teacher. The 2030 SDGs rightly recognize the centrality of qualified teachers to quality education. Students who are taught by well-trained, professionally qualified, motivated, and supported teachers perform better and remain in school and the education system longer. A strong consensus has formed around the critical importance of highly competent teachers. We should accept nothing less than all children being taught by qualified teachers.

- Quality Tools

Quality teaching requires quality tools and ongoing professional development throughout the career of the educator. The phrase *quality tools* refers to the use of teaching and learning materials and resources, as well as the training in effective pedagogy that accompanies them. A flexible curriculum that is able to adjust and suit the levels and interests of each learner and designed through an inclusive process that guarantees teachers' participation is highly desirable. Likewise, educators want appropriate, state-of-the-art tools to assess student learning in order to inform teaching strategies. Formative assessment that is diagnostic and developmental, focuses on developing the whole child, spans the whole school, and is supported by conditions both in and out of school can be used to support teachers to improve learning.

- Quality Environments

Quality teaching and learning, even when supported by essential resources and tools, can only be effective if conducted within environments that are safe, supportive, and conducive to effective teaching and learning. The SDGs recognize that a quality education cannot take place without safe and inclusive learning environments. Schools must establish the conditions for learning that span from ensuring access and inclusivity to establishing the climates conducive for effective teaching and learning. Safe physical structures and locations are fundamental, but we must also demand the establishment of environments that boost the learning process, encourage staff and student voice, and promote social and emotional development.

The SDGs reflect a global consensus in our young century that education is a human right and a public good that is critical to the health and future of the world. But ours is a world of severe challenges, with millions of students under fire, unsettled and unschooled due to conflict and governments globally failing to meet their funding commitments to education, especially with regard to their poorest citizens. Education advocates have a responsibility to promote policies that integrate schools, communities, and nations into a system that supports development of the whole child, ensuring that each student is healthy, safe, engaged, supported, and challenged.

Together, Education International and ASCD pledge to advocate for the policies and resources to provide every student access to quality teaching and quality tools and environments for teaching and learning, setting a standard for comprehensive, sustainable school improvement and provides for long-term student success.

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ASCD is a global community dedicated to excellence in learning, teaching, and leading. ASCD's innovative solutions promote the success of each child. Visit [www.ascd.org/wholechild](http://www.ascd.org/wholechild) to learn more about programs that keep all students healthy, safe, engaged, supported, and challenged. Visit [www.ascd.org](http://www.ascd.org) to learn more about ASCD programs, products, services, and membership.

Education International represents organisations of teachers and other education employees across the globe. It is the world's largest federation of unions, representing thirty million education employees in about four hundred organisations in one hundred and seventy countries and territories, across the globe. Education International unites all teachers and education employees. Learn more at [www.ei-ie.org](http://www.ei-ie.org)