
WHOLE SCHOOLING

An Approach to Universal Education
That Links Excellence and Equity



A Self-Assessment for Teachers

Whole Schooling is an approach to building effective schools in which diverse students *learn well together* that is based Six Principles and associated practices.

This document provides a tool by which teachers may engage in self-assessment regarding their skills in implementing practices associated with the Six Principles of Whole Schooling.. In addition, administrators may use this tool for evaluation of the skills of teachers. The self-assessment may be used to set professional development goals.

To complete the survey, place a rating of 1 – 5 in each box based on the scale on the survey. Analyze strong and weak areas and use this information to set targets and strategies for improving your skill and practice.



For more information on Whole Schooling, go to our website:

www.wholeschooling.net

Or contact us at:

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1	2	3	4	5
Very poor	Poor	Good	Very good	Excellent

1. Empowering citizens for democracy. The purpose of schooling should not be a test score but to help children become active, effective citizens for democracy. This means that sharing of power and decision-making is an integral part of the culture of the classroom. As teachers we constantly work to help children learn to make decisions and give them opportunities to exercise choice and impact on the class. Below are examples of good practice.

- As a teacher I operate primarily as a leader and facilitator, rather than a disciplinarian, assigner of work, and awarder of “consequences (positive or negative, including grades).
- Students set many of their own goals and performance standards (with teacher, staff, and peer assistance as appropriate)
- Intrinsic rather than extrinsic reward systems are emphasized in the class.
- Students help arrange the classroom to facilitate most effective learning.
- Students share responsibility for social interactions and structure in the classroom
- Students engage in problem-solving related to their own learning and the learning of others in the class.
- Students make choices and work in collaborative working groups in which they make decisions.
- Class meetings provide an opportunity for students to share and discuss issues and needs.
- The ideas and contributions of all students are valued and encouraged.
- We are made to connect students with members of other cultures, ethnic groups, and socio-economic status.
- Students study the local community to identify patterns of equity and inequity, power relationships, and cultural patterns.
- Students are encouraged to identify and study local, state, national, and international issues and to take action to have input in solving problems.
- Students are provided opportunities for community service as part of the curriculum.

2. Including all. For a democracy to function, by definition, all children must be there. For students to learn well, to be prepared to function in a diverse society, they must be exposed to people with diverse characteristics. Thus, as teachers, we work to welcome all students into our classroom so that children of great differences learn together – across differences of culture, ethnicity, language, ability, gender, & age. Below are examples of good practice.

- Children are grouped heterogeneously in our classroom and stable ability groups are avoided.
- All students are welcomed into my classroom including . . .
 - students with severe disabilities (students who have severe mental retardation, physical disabilities, multiple disabilities, severe emotional impairments);
 - Students with moderate disabilities (students who have educable and trainable mental impairment);
 - Students who have limited hearing, vision, and mobility;
 - Students with mild disabilities (students with learning disabilities, ADD/ADHD, mild emotional impairments);
 - Students who are bilingual or have limited English speaking abilities;
 - Students served through special programs for economically disadvantaged students (such as Title I in the USA);
 - Students who have been identified as “gifted”.
- Multiage instruction, teaching teams, and school-wide projects allow for interactions and mutual learning among students across age groups are used.
- Pull-out services are minimal and resisted. Supports are provided using a push-in approach.
- As a teacher I can articulate the reasons for the commitment to inclusion and are willing to struggle, learn, and seek answers when it doesn’t seem to be working for a particular child.
- I am working to eliminate segregated special education and other classes for students with special needs.

1	2	3	4	5
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- Stable ability groupings are not used when small groups are formed; flexible grouping by ability, interest, and other factors are used where students are not identified and labeled by ability.
- Students are empowered to provide each other assistance in participating in classroom activities or carrying out personal care activities
- All members of the classroom community learn to ask for help, offer help, refuse help, and acknowledge help in socially appropriate ways.
- Students and adults consciously work to include all members of the classroom community in all aspects of the classroom social structure.

3. Authentic, multi-level teaching. For such schooling to work, instruction cannot be monolithic and traditional one size fits all. Rather, we expect students to function at a range of ability levels, each being supported and encouraged to move to their next level of competence, yet without ability grouping or segregation. In such schools teachers design instruction for diverse learners that engages them in active learning in meaningful, real-world activities at multiple levels of ability, providing scaffolds and adaptations as needed.

- Student interests are a centerpiece of teaching and the curriculum
- Active, authentic learning in which students learn skills through active engagement in meaningful activities is a core instructional philosophy and approach.
- Every attempt is made to maintain a school staff that represents the diversity of the nation, including hiring staff members with disabilities.
- The physical plant of the school is maximally accessible, not only with respect to the ADA but with making the school easy to negotiate for visitors and people with sensory or cognitive impairments.
- Drama, art, music, & physical education is integrated throughout the school curriculum.
- Thematic / integrated instruction is used within and/or across classrooms.
- Teachers use multiple intelligences approaches to design instruction.
- Teachers use cooperative learning (not just small groups without facilitation individualized expectations, roles, and products)
- Literacy instruction strategies are used that give students an opportunity for peer support and authentic use of language.
- Literacy skills are seen to comprise the integration of reading, writing, speaking, and listening, along with other communication channels used by students with and without disabilities (body language and other behavior, sign language, picture communication, and so forth).
- The primary goal of literacy is seen to be interpersonal communication and instruction and activities are embedded in communicative contexts.
- Project based learning allows students to work together to struggle with actual materials and Drama, art, music, & physical education is integrated throughout the classroom curriculum.
- Instruction is connected to the community through mentorships, service learning, community projects, and other strategies.
- The school intentionally seeks to design its learning practices to accommodate a wide range of styles, abilities, cultures, and other human differences.
- Adaptations & modifications are made in the curriculum expectations and learning activities for specific students.
- Standardized testing, include state proficiency tests, is kept within proper perspective. Content and skill-related mandates and testing guidelines are embedded in the curriculum without sacrificing adherence to the Whole Schooling principles.
- The teacher has formal and informal techniques for fostering the view that all students are sometimes experts and that every student can learn from every other student.
- Students learn to evaluate the quality of information they are learning and to judge for themselves the truth or value of what they read, hear, and see.

1
Very poor

2
Poor

3
Good

4
Very good

5
Excellent

4. Building community. Effective schools that serve truly diverse students in authentic and democratic learning must work together to build a community and provide mutual support within the classroom and school. When students engage in behaviors that are challenging, staff understand that these are expressions of underlying needs of students and seek to help students find positive ways to meet their needs. Staff make commitments to caring for and supporting such students in their school.

- A philosophy of building community in the classroom is a central focus.
- Emphasis is placed in helping students develop emotional & interpersonal skills.
- School staff have valuable professional development and the development of collaborative, professional learning communities.
- The school works hard to present a welcoming, inviting atmosphere – bright posters work of students in the halls, pleasant interactions among staff.
- School staff work to build a caring community with each other. They work together in study groups, flexible teaming arrangements. Staff enjoy being with one another.
- Teachers focus on building cooperation and community in the classroom, moving away from competition as the central educational model.
- Instruction based on social interactions – cooperative learning, peer partners, group projects, sharing chairs, etc.
- Peer support is used informally and formally in the school and classroom through peer mentorships, peer tutoring, circles of support, and related strategies.
- Classroom management is a shared responsibility of students and adults
- Student privacy is respected in all areas, including grades, behavior plans, medical needs, personal information shared with teachers and students (in both writing and speech), and any other area considered private by an individual member of the classroom community.
- Students and staff work together to create and maintain a mutually-supportive learning environment in the classroom
- Students can initiate or shape both the content and process of central classroom activities.
- Both formal and informal mechanisms exist for meeting individual social and emotional needs.
- The classroom community develops defining features including formal organizational structures, rituals, symbols, and so forth.
- School staff commit to working with and supporting children with significant emotional needs and behavioral challenges as part of the learning community.
- Positive behavioral support is utilized in the school as a key organizing approach for dealing with serious behavioral challenges.
- When children have behavioral, school staff struggle to understand what need the child has that is not being met and to provide more positive alternatives for meeting that need.
- Conflict resolution programs help students learn how to solve difficulties.
- Teachers works against labeling and use of Ritalin and other medications seeking alternative supports.

1	2	3	4	5
Very poor	Poor	Good	Very good	Excellent

5. Supporting learning. Support in learning is needed by teachers and children alike. Schools use specialized school and community resources (special education, title I, gifted education) to strengthen the general education classroom. Support personnel collaborate with the general education instructor to include children with special needs in classroom activities and to design effective instruction for all students. They avoid ability grouping or teaching children at the back or side of the room. All struggle to provide proactive supports to meet needs of students with behavioral challenges.

- A building-based support team is used to provide support to children, families and teachers related to academic learning and social, emotional, and behavioral needs.
- Staff engage in formal and informal collaborative consultation to discuss students who are having difficulties and challenges and provide support and assistance to teachers.
- Structures are in place for planning time between teachers and specialists.
- Teachers engage in team teaching, co-teaching, and consultation with other teachers.
- Special education teachers and related services personnel (OT, PT, speech therapist) provide in-class support for students with disabilities, gifted students, second language learners, and others with special needs within the context of on-going classroom activities.
- Paraprofessionals are viewed as supporting entire classrooms, even when one or two individual students require substantial portions of their time and attention.

6. Partner with families & community. educators cannot and should not seek to build such a school alone. In a Whole School, educators build genuine collaboration within the school and with families and the community; engage the school in strengthening the community; and provide guidance to engage students, parents, teachers, and others in decision-making and direction of learning & school activities.

- As a teacher I reach out to resources in the community to build connections.
- Parents of students with special needs are included in all typical activities of the school.
- Parents and community members are seen as valuable resources and potential partners in the education of the community's children.
- Many community individuals and organizations are involved in instructional and after school programs in the school – artists, musicians, violence prevention, mental health, Big Brothers – Big Sisters.
- Teachers are involved in community-based activities and organizations.
- The teacher involves children and staff, as part of their learning, in contributing to efforts to strengthen the community.
- Parents and other community members are involved in classrooms providing instruction and support.
- Teachers routinely encourage students to seek out family and community resources in the course of their school-based projects
- Students explore their communities as an on-going part of the school curriculum. Much student learning goes on in projects in the local neighborhood and community.