WHOLE CHILD

WHAT
When we think of a child having a caring and engaging learning environment, we need to look at the “Whole Child,” beyond the child as a student in our schools. The Michigan Department of Education (MDE) has defined the whole child as “a unique learner comprised of interacting dimensions such as cognitive, physical, behavioral, social and emotional.” The whole child lives within multiple and interconnected environments including home, school, and community.

WHY THIS IS IMPORTANT
MDE believes caring for, supporting, and educating the whole child is an essential part of promoting academic achievement and excellence throughout the Prenatal Through Age 20 (P-20) system. Having a common definition and understanding of the whole child sets the stage for action. The practical aspects of promoting the whole child requires an approach that encompasses evidence-based practices. MDE supports the Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child Model (WSCC), a leading national model. The WSCC model was developed in collaboration by education and public health practitioners (ASCD and the Centers for Disease Control).

HOW YOU CAN ENGAGE YOUR DISTRICT
Focus investment on implementing evidence-based Integrated Student Supports (Whole Child).

These supports can be provided in collaboration with community partners who place staff in schools to facilitate access to community resources for clothing, nutrition, physical, behavioral, social-emotional, mental health, post-secondary access, career readiness, tutoring, mentoring, and other supports necessary for students to stay in school, be promoted, and graduate on time. Early childhood organizations, county human and mental health services organizations, churches and others in your community are great partners for discussion in this area.

Examples of this includes:

- Full implementation of all requirements of the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) meal patterns, regulations, including school breakfast, lunch, and afterschool snacks and supper.
- Encourage eligible schools to participate in Community Eligibility Provision (CEP).
- Encourage access to school health services via expansion for school nursing, school mental health and school-based health centers.
- Expand specific coordinated P-20 partnerships and initiatives with other state, local, and private agencies with proven evidence-based practices, with the goal of expanding access to coordinated service programs and family advocacy supports. Priority given to programs proven to increase attendance, positive behaviors, and improved coursework.

There are several more strategies in Michigan’s Top 10 in 10 plan that address the whole child and can be accessed on the MDE Top 10 in 10 web page (www.michigan.gov/Top10in10).


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