



## Washington State Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development

“The Practitioner’s Best Friend”  
[www.wsascd.org](http://www.wsascd.org)

### ‘Critical Questions’ Series August 2015

#### What Do We Mean by ‘Whole Child’?

When talking with educators, it is clear that everyone believes in educating the ‘whole child.’ It is almost as if saying anything less would be a self-incriminating statement of “I teach to the test” and risk being shunned by the professional community. In this way, the whole child is interpreted as simply something more than just teaching content. This is unfortunate because the whole child is much more than that. Therefore, it is time we delve into the important question: What do we mean by the ‘whole child.’

In an effort to change the conversation about education from a focus on narrowly defined academic achievement to one that promotes the long term development and success of children, ASCD has been developing and implementing the [Whole Child](#) approach to education since 2007. The Whole Child approach aims to prepare students for the demands of the 21st century by addressing students' comprehensive needs through the shared responsibility of students, families, schools, and communities through the following five tenets:

#### Whole Child Tenets

- Each student enters school [healthy](#) and learns about and practices a healthy lifestyle.
- Each student learns in an environment that is physically and emotionally [safe](#) for students and adults.
- Each student is actively [engaged](#) in learning and is connected to the school and broader community.
- Each student has access to personalized learning and is [supported](#) by qualified, caring adults.
- Each student is [challenged](#) academically and prepared for success in college or further study and for employment and participation in a global environment.

The term ‘whole child’ is often over-simplified and misunderstood. It is not simply the antithesis of teaching to academic standards; it is teaching to those standards and addressing the other needs necessary for students’ long-term development and success.

To this end, this year Washington State ASCD’s monthly Critical Questions will cover a wide range of topics to foster a better understanding of one or more of these Whole Child tents. Please join the conversation with your comments, questions and experiences as we continue to work toward developing the whole child in Washington State and beyond.

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