



# **Strategic Briefing Report Whole Learning**

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August 2019



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# STRATEGIC BRIEFING REPORT: WHOLE LEARNING

## OVERVIEW

### Rationale: Engage the Whole Learner

Rather than chase the latest education trends, Upper Arlington Schools has maintained a relentless commitment to a whole child philosophy. This demands that we pursue equitable practices that cultivate the diverse gifts, talents, interests and identities of every child as they learn how to serve, lead and succeed. The Upper Arlington school district has been on this journey for quite some time. **There is no finish line – just a contagious drive to make our whole child philosophy a daily reality for every student.**

The UA whole learning strategy centers the instructional framework, student well-being supports, and continuous improvement systems around a clearly defined learner profile (academic and life-ready knowledge and skills necessary to serve, lead and succeed). Together, we collaboratively build and align curriculum, instruction, assessment and professional learning around the learner profile. Our whole learning aspirations are attainable when educators, students, families and the larger community contribute to the daily successes and opportunities that enable UA students to serve, lead and succeed.

## APPROACH

The existing Teaching and Learning Team (TLT), composed of staff and administration representatives from all buildings and district offices, was charged with developing whole learning recommendations for the strategic plan. The TLT engagement process was organized to maximize both learning and curiosity – every staff member involved was both a learner and designer. The charge to the TLT and guiding questions are defined below.

### **Charge:**

*Inform the development of the strategic plan regarding learner and learning-centered culture and the instructional framework as well as provide feedback on well-being and continuous improvement recommendations as they are developed.*



## Guiding Questions

1. What is the **operational definition** of whole learning?
2. What is the **current state** of whole learning in the district? What philosophies, policies and practices currently influence this framework?
3. What does the current **research and literature** tell us about the implementation of a whole child philosophy?
4. What are the **conditions and principles** that support and shape a whole child approach?
5. What is the **desired state** of a whole child philosophy in the district? What does it look like, sound like and feel like?
6. How will we know when we have achieved our desired state? What are the indicators, and how will/can they be **monitored and measured**?
7. What is our evidence-based **theory of action**? What should we **stop, start and strengthen**?

## LEADERSHIP

The TLT was guided by Keith Pomeroy, chief academic officer for Upper Arlington Schools, with facilitation support from Brad Mitchell of Battelle for Kids. Primary and initial focus was on clarifying basic elements of a district-wide instructional framework (targets, assessments and differentiation).

### Targets

- Develop a learner profile
- Define time and strategies to collaborate and communicate standards
- Make standards useful for students and teachers

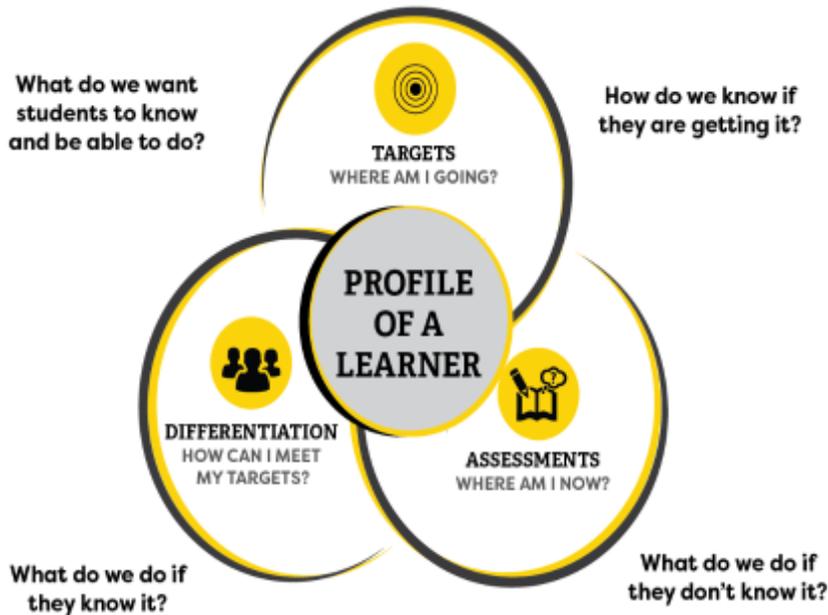
### Assessments

- Develop a shared understanding of what we believe and value
- Need a variety of quantitative and qualitative assessments that are differentiated, formative to understand a child's story
- Time to administer, create, analyze, plan and develop an understanding

### Differentiation

- Professional development for Tier 1 and Tier 2 in classroom
- Instructional coaches in buildings

The visual below highlights the basic elements of the instructional framework.



## PROCESS AND TIMELINE

The TLT dedicated time to the whole learning focus during four regularly scheduled meetings from January through May 2019. Initially, the group focused on generating recommendations around five priority areas – creating a profile of an engaged learner; ensuring instructional framework aligned with clear targets, assessments and differentiation strategies; promoting student, staff and family engagement as a main driver of learner success; aligning professional learning with actionable goals and plan; and collecting and using data for continuous improvement. This process generated over 40 draft action items. Through a modified consultancy process the five priorities and over 40 action items were reduced to three priorities and nine action items.

In May, the TLT focused their work on providing feedback on recommendations from the well-being and continuous improvement groups. Using a modified consultancy process, the members of the TLT shared their thoughts to prioritize and reduce those draft recommendations as well. The timeline below reflects the activity of the TLT over the four meetings.



Date	Process
January 2019	Meeting to orient TLT members to overall strategic planning process and timeline, gather feedback on specific charge to TLT
February 2019	Share feedback gathered, analyze and finalize input priorities, particularly around instructional framework
March 2019	Review and refine whole learning priorities to be included in strategic plan
May 2019	Provide feedback on draft recommendations of well-being and continuous improvement priorities; and finalize whole learning recommendations

A summary of prioritized whole learning recommendations was documented and shared with the Strategic Coordination Group (SCG) between the second and third TLT meetings. At the same time, Battelle for Kids (BFK) completed a field review of top performing school systems from around the country focused on whole and/or deeper learning approaches.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### PRIORITY: WHOLE LEARNING

#### *Engage the whole learner*

Together, we build on our strengths to make our whole-child philosophy a daily reality. This means greater integration of rigorous academic content with deeper learning skills through a variety of engaging experiences, environments and relationships.

### ACHIEVEMENT

- a. Create a profile of an engaged learner that spans early childhood through graduation
- b. Ensure a guaranteed and viable curriculum
- c. Strengthen the value and purpose of curriculum cycles for all grade levels, including early childhood education

### DIFFERENTIATION

- a. Create job-embedded, personalized and peer-based professional learning
- b. Ensure a high-quality, balanced assessment system



- c. Strengthen Multi-Tier System of Support (MTSS) expectations, structures and processes

## **AGENCY**

- a. Create conditions so that learning is the constant and time is the variable
- b. Ensure collaborative instructional leadership around shared expectations, homework and grading practices
- c. Strengthen student-staff relationships