



Education International
Internationale de l'Éducation
Internacional de la Educación

In Pursuit of Quality Education, In Pursuit of Shared Sustainable Goals: The Need to Align SDG 4 (Education) with SDG 3 (Health) for the Benefit of the Child

A Joint Statement from Education International and ASCD

In Pursuit of Quality Education

In February 2016, Education International (EI) and ASCD released a statement applauding the establishment of the stand-alone education goal (Sustainable Development Goal 4) as part of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) ratified at the United Nations on September 25, 2015.

In addition, the statement—“The 2030 Sustainable Development Goals and the Pursuit of Quality Education for All: A Statement of Support from Education International and ASCD”—defined a Quality Education as one that places the needs of the child at the fore.

Access is not enough. We must ensure a quality education for every student. A quality education is one that focuses on the whole child — the social, emotional, mental, physical, and cognitive development of each child 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.

If a quality education is one that addresses the needs of the whole child—and every student—we must ensure that both students are ready and their environments are conducive to learning, growth, and development. We must ensure that the health and well-being of students are taken into consideration just as we must ensure that their environments are able to support and aid effective teaching and learning.

In Pursuit of Shared Sustainable Goals

We release this statement—“The Need to Better Align SDG 4 (Education) with SDG 3 (Health) for the Benefit of the Child”—to call for joint discussion, planning, and goal and systems development across the SDGs to ensure that the needs of the child are at the fore. In particular, we call for the alignment and integration of planning, policies, and procedures for SDG 3 (*Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages*) and SDG 4 (*Ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning*).

In order to ensure that environments are safe, healthy, and supportive, *education and health* must work in harmony. *Education and health* are symbiotic, and what affects one affects the other. The healthy child learns better just as the educated child leads a healthier life. Similarly, a healthier environment—physically as well as socially and emotionally—provides for more effective teaching and learning. Policies, starting at the SDG level, must be crafted and adapted to commit to alignment and integration.

If we create systems that only work in silos, we fail the intent and objectives of the goals and we fail to ensure a concerted, unified, beneficial future for our children. Our risk in forging ahead with 17 goals is that we forge ahead with 17 actions, 17 systems and 17 competing forces. It is time to put the child – and all students - at the center and array resources – including systems, goals, and policies – around that child.

This is not a new nor unique perspective. We have long understood the need to focus on the child and align resources for that purpose – the issue has been have we had the will to do it. The most recent UNICEF Report *The State of the World's Children*, released June 6, 2016 stated that *the world has made tremendous progress in reducing child deaths, getting children into school and lifting millions out of poverty...[y]et as the data in this report show, unless we accelerate the pace of our progress in reaching them, the futures of millions of disadvantaged and vulnerable children – and therefore the future of their societies – will be imperiled.*

But it need not be so... for the most part, the constraints on reaching these children are not technical. They are a matter of political commitment. They are a matter of resources. And they are a matter of collective will – joining forces to tackle inequity and inequality head-on by focusing greater investment and effort on reaching the children who are being left behind. (UNICEF, 2016)

Child at the Center

In 2006, ASCD convened a Commission on the Whole Child. It was an effort to redefine what a successful school, successful student, and successful education system should be. Based on Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs ASCD declared that it was time to ensure that students, adults, and their learning environments were not just safe but also healthy, supportive, and conducive to learning, and that it was the responsibility of all sectors, agencies and stakeholders to ensure success.

We call on communities—educators, parents, businesses, health and social service providers, arts professionals, recreation leaders, and policymakers at all levels—to forge a new compact with our young people to ensure their whole and healthy development. We ask communities to redefine learning to focus on the whole person. We ask schools and communities to lay aside perennial battles for resources and instead align those resources in support of the whole child. Policy, practice, and resources must be aligned to support not only academic learning for each child, but also the experiences that encourage development of a whole child—one who is knowledgeable, healthy, motivated, and engaged. (ASCD, 2007)

We must place the child at the center and align resources around that child. The SDGs have the opportunity to do the same now on a global scale—that is, place the child at the center and set up the goals and their procedures, processes, and policies around that child. To fail to do so is to recreate silos, build barriers, and create systems of inequity.

The Sustainable Development Goals have numbers, but no goal is separately achievable. Poverty, hunger, health, education, gender equality, and stewardship of the planet's natural resources are inseparable, as are the 11 other goals the world has set for ourselves. Nowhere is this more evident than in regards to health and education. Healthy bodies and minds and communities are a foundation for learning. And quality education is a direct indicator of survival and health sustainability. The Whole Child, the Whole Student, this is the direction of leadership on the SDGs and Education International is proud to join with ASCD in this work.

—Fred van Leeuwen, General Secretary, Education International

It is imperative that sectors work together. We must place the child in the center of our work and decisions and array align resources around that child—and - every child. To do less will short change our children, their well-being, and their futures. We call on all organizations targeting the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals to work toward the common goal of doing what's best for every child. Education International and ASCD are unified in achieving this goal and achieving a Quality Education for all.

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

References

ASCD. (2007). *The learning compact redefined: A call to action*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.

UNICEF. (2016). *The state of the world's children 2016: A fair chance for every child*. New York: UNICEF.

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 to learn more about programs that keep all students healthy, safe, engaged, supported, and challenged. Visit www.ascd.org to learn more about ASCD programs, products, services, and membership.

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