

Alicia Henderson

Statement of Educational Philosophy

A Commitment to Every Child, and a Commitment to the Whole Child

Every child comes to our schools with a unique circumstance and a unique potential. Our challenge, and our imperative, is to recognize and to respond to this - for every child, with a comprehensive *whole child* approach.

Every Child

Each child comes into the world, and then into our schools, with a unique endowment to learn. It is most productive to view differences among students from an asset versus a deficit framework, because then education can build upon the strengths that each child brings to the task of learning.

In order for education to respond to the different needs of students, it is important to have meaningful information about each child. This includes information about how students are learning academics, social-emotional skills, along with health and well-being. Sometimes it is important to obtain information about the student's world outside of school.

It is not sufficient to collect information about each child. It is necessary to provide a response to this information. The amount and type of support provided to each student should be differentiated based on identified needs and should build upon strengths.

It is important to build capacity so that every child receives a quality instructional program, which is designed to regularly check the pulse of learning for every student. When needs arise, support is given. Waiting for students to fail is unproductive, and it is harmful.

All students need some type of support in order to reach their potential. This includes highly able students who may need extensions that deepen or exceed grade level expectations.

The Whole Child

Learning does not occur in a vacuum, nor should it be narrowly defined. Learning occurs in the rich context of a child's life, and includes content and skills beyond academics.

Developing a climate that supports learning requires attention to the health and well-being of children. This includes healthy food and physical exercise on a regular basis. It includes providing information to families about the importance of routines and sleep for children.

In order to optimize learning, a system with clear expectations for student behavior should be in place and consistently utilized. Attention should be devoted to social-emotional development, which may include specialized instruction.

Students should have multiple opportunities to access and engage with the school community. This includes extra-curricular activities such as the visual and performing arts, athletics, and clubs. Students who feel connected to "the world of school" are more likely to reach their potential in school and beyond.

It is important to cultivate a growth mindset with students. When students believe that persistence and effort make a difference, they achieve at higher levels.

Providing opportunities for service and contribution benefits both students and the community. Providing opportunities that cultivate creativity and innovation benefits both students and the world.