COMMENTARY

Current Circumstances Accentuate the Need to Educate the Whole Child



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How many times have you heard the chorus, "We need to educate the whole child?"

That is the call by scientists and researchers who have studied child development, the science of learning, the history of education, and labor market projections. It is the plea of counselors and school psychologists who attend daily to students suffering from the ill-effects of bullying, academic pressure, racial violence, and school yard shootings. It is the advice of educational leaders who are concerned that an overemphasis on standardized tests and admissions to elite colleges has narrowed the curriculum.

Parents and teachers see and experience the whole child on a daily basis and inherently know that one cannot separate intellectual advancement from social, emotional, and physical development.

In fact, few argue with the benefits of, and need for, educating the whole child. While we may have reached a tipping point of *thought*, our collective *action* lags far behind. The rapid spread of Coronavirus and its sudden, dramatic impact on schools gives us a much greater sense of urgency.

YOUNG PEOPLE FACE NEW DEMANDS

At this moment, our children are being called upon to be resilient, adaptable, and empathetic. We need them to step up and be compassionate, civically minded and ethically responsible. Teachers expect them to demonstrate their digital literacy and communicate effectively across platforms. Parents expect them to be independent learners, self-directed, intellectually curious, and resourceful. We all hope that they will exercise curiosity, creativity and critical thinking to identify and approach real world problems that just weeks ago were unanticipated and unpredictable. And, now more than ever, we pray that they maintain a healthy mind and body. All of these competencies (and more) result from educating the whole child.

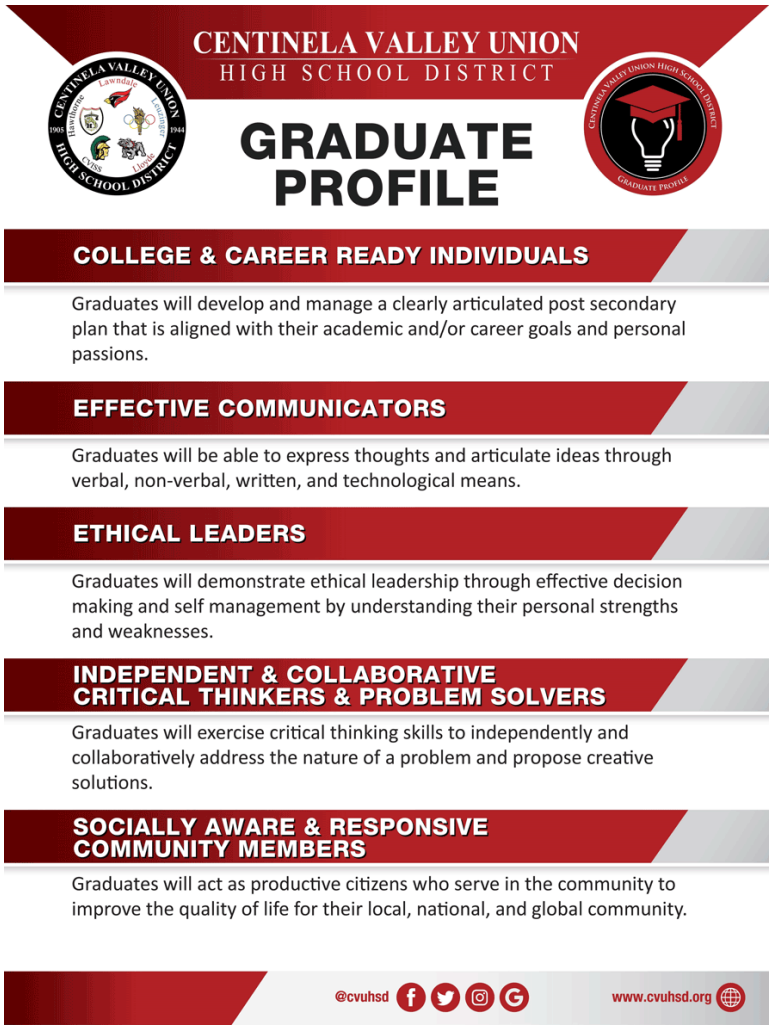
This moment of disruption is also an opportunity to stop and ask how best to educate the whole child. While we continue to explore possibilities, many school districts have already taken a first step by engaging community stakeholders to create a **Graduate Profile**—a succinct, one-pager defining the skills, competencies, and mindsets necessary for future success in college, career, and civic engagement.

Leaders of these districts recognize that the measures contained in our state accountability system *may be necessary*, but *are far from sufficient* to catapult our young people into an unknown future or prepare them for the unexpected.

A NEW COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE EXPLORES STRATEGIES

A pioneering group of school districts that recognize the power and potential of a Graduate Profile have joined a new California partnership called Scaling Student Success. Together, they have formed a **Community of Practice** in order to operationalize their Graduate Profiles and hold themselves collectively accountable for assuring that each and every student has an opportunity to develop and demonstrate the competencies articulated in their respective Graduate Profiles. They know that moving "from poster to practice" is hard work and takes years, but is worth pursuing in order to meet the needs of the students they serve.





Created by San Leandro Unified School District, 2018

The Scaling Student Success Community of Practice operates as an improvement network, sharing promising practices and lessons learned, leveraging available tools and resources, pushing each other's thinking, experimenting with new strategies, promoting continuous improvement, identifying and supporting enabling policies, and more. The districts are surrounded by a curated group of expert support providers who can help them with every step of the process to operationalize their Graduate Profiles, whether it's adopting common rubrics against which to assess student progress on Graduate Profile outcomes, strategizing ways to support those outcomes through extended learning opportunities, or building out college and career pathways as a contextualized structure for promoting them.

The challenges our students and schools face in the midst of this pandemic put immediacy behind the changes so many communities have already endorsed through the development of these Graduate Profiles. Educating the whole child is even more of an imperative today than ever before; it's one many districts are taking on with growing zeal and determination.

Roman Stearns is the founder and executive director of Scaling Student Success, a new California partnership dedicated to educating the whole child. This commentary originally appeared on the Scaling Student Success website

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