



# Whole Child Skill Development

## *Building Foundations for Success*

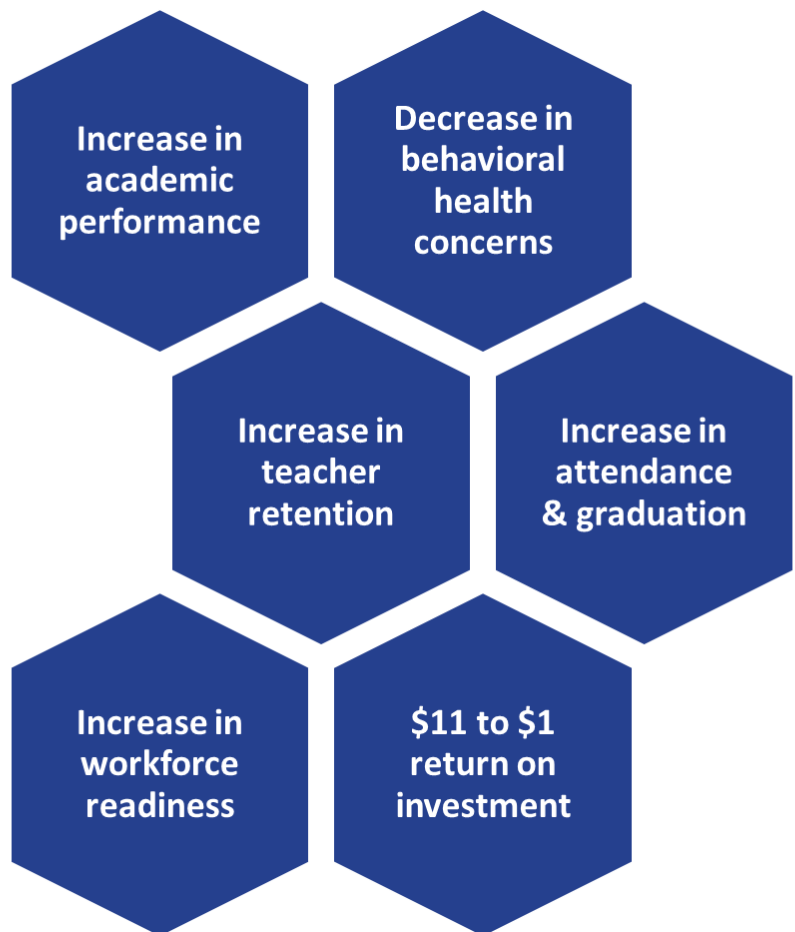
### What are Whole Child Skills?

Developing *Whole Child Skills* are essential to student success inside and outside of the classroom. *Whole Child Skills* include:

- **Self-awareness:** The ability to identify emotions, recognize personal strengths, develop self-confidence and self-efficacy
- **Self-management:** The ability to control impulses, manage stress, practice self-discipline, set goals, and display organizational skills
- **Social awareness:** The ability to understand the perspectives of others, show empathy, appreciate diversity, and show respect for others including those who are different from oneself
- **Relationship skills:** The ability to communicate effectively, pro-socially engage with others, develop healthy relationships with others, and collaborate with others
- **Responsible decision-making:** The ability to identify and analyze problems, resolve problems and challenges, and make and responsible choices

Whole Child Development Skills can be taught, practiced, and strengthened in everyday interactions in school, at home, and in the community.

### Benefits of School-based Whole Child Skill Development:



The Office of Public Instruction is working with stakeholders from across the state, including Montana educators, parents and caregivers, and child development experts, to support school-based strategies that build whole child skills and support educators.

You can find more information at the OPI's [Whole Child Supports](#) and [Safe and Supportive Schools](#) websites.

# Benefits of Whole Child Skill Development (WCSD) for Montana Schools and Communities:

## Increase in student academic performance

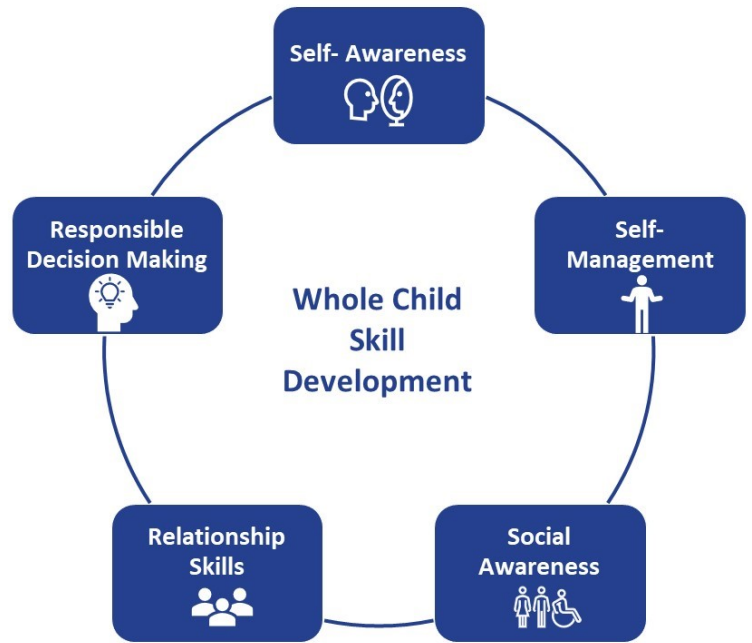


Studies show students who attend schools who implement strategies to foster whole child skills increase their academic performance by an average of 11 to 17 percentile points.<sup>1</sup>

## Decrease in behavioral health concerns



In 2021, 41% of Montana high school students report feeling sad or hopeless and approximately 2 out of every 10 students (21.7%) report seriously considering suicide. Montana high school students also report higher rates of alcohol consumption and binge drinking compared to any other state. WCSD has been shown to help students better manage stress and reduce feelings of depression and these positive effects on behavioral health tend to carry over into adulthood.<sup>1,2</sup> The skills gained through school-based WCSD also protects against substance use in teens and reduces the risk of substance dependency in adulthood.<sup>2</sup>



## Increase in teacher retention



When WCSD strategies are implemented, teachers report improvement in classroom management; this results in lower discipline referrals and high quality work environments for all students and school staff.<sup>3</sup> Teacher wellbeing is an essential part of teacher retention; schools with school-based WCSD report higher rates of teacher satisfaction and higher teacher retention rates.<sup>1,3</sup>

## Increase in school attendance and graduation



Academic achievement and graduation gaps exist in various student groups across the state. Studies show school-based WCSD is an effective strategy for preventing student dropout and increasing school attendance and graduation.<sup>4</sup>

## Increase in workforce and college readiness



Strengthening whole child skills in school-aged children increases their readiness to enter the workforce and postsecondary education. According to the National Association of Colleges and Employers (2020), whole child skills are what many employers value the most in addition to job-specific skills.

## High return on investment and sustained positive impacts



The positive effects of school-based WCSD strategies are long-lasting. Youth who attend schools with a WCSD focus often continue to perform better occupationally, have fewer behavioral health concerns, and are less likely to need public assistance as adults.<sup>4,5</sup> WCSD pays for itself as the average return on investment of \$11 for every \$1 spent.<sup>4,5</sup>

### Sources:

1. Durlak, et al. (2011). *Journal of Child Development*, Volume 82 (1), 405-432.
2. Committee for Children, 2022
3. Aldrup, et al. (2020). *Frontiers in Psychology*
4. Jones, D.E., Greenberg, M., Crowley, M. (2015). *American Journal of Public Health*
5. Belfield, C., Klapp, A., Bowden, B., Levin, H.M. (2015). *Journal of Benefit-Cost Analysis*