

Introduction

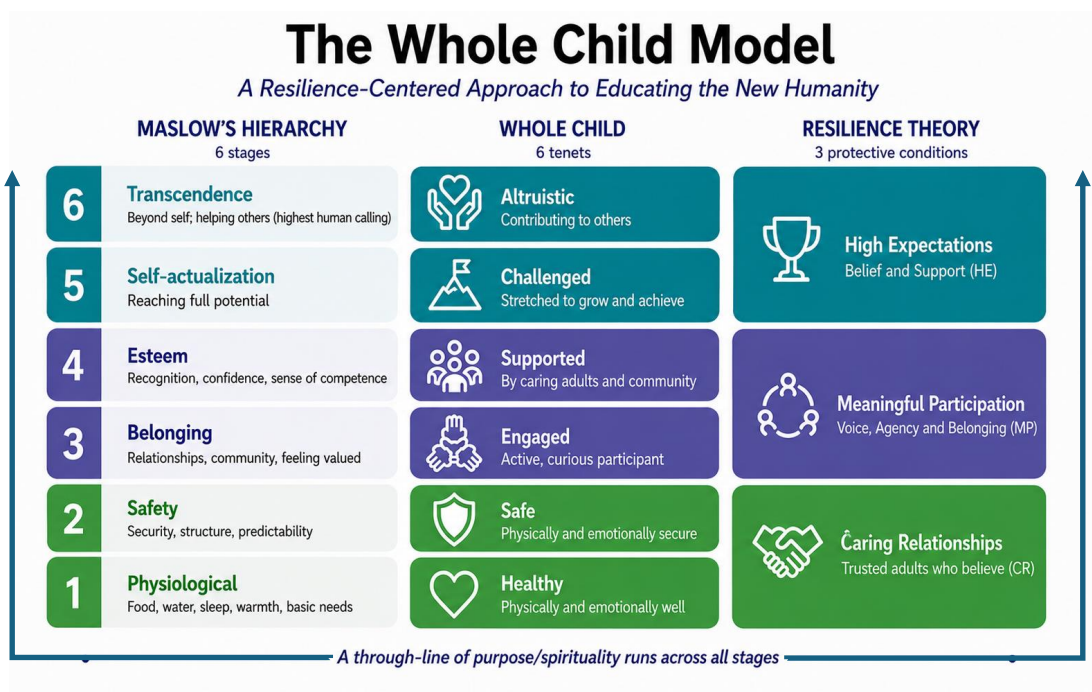
The Whole Child Model

A resilience-centered approach to educating the new humanity

In 2026, we are launching our Whole Child Model, building off the original five tenets (CDC, ASCD) and aligning it to Resilience Theory (Benard). Based on Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, this model adds a sixth stage (Altruistic) to align with Maslow's later addition, and ties the model back to purpose.

We do not educate the whole child until we create space, not only for how students learn and relate, but for who they are becoming, what gives their life meaning, and how they will live that meaning in the world.

We offer four aligned yet separate series of professional learning to suit and support all stakeholders and span the Whole Child, Whole Educator, and Whole School & Community - all sharing the same Whole Child Model.



Developed by EDLINKS founder, Sara Truebridge, and Whole Child expert and lead Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child Model (CDC, ASCD) lead developer, Sean Slade.

Understanding the Whole Child

A deep grounding in the three complementary frameworks that together describe what every child needs to thrive — and what every school must build.

SETTING THE SCENE

Education has never lacked frameworks. What it has often lacked is a coherent understanding of how they fit together — and what that coherence means in practice for children and the adults who serve them.

This series starts where every other series should but rarely does: with the theoretical foundations. Not as abstract background, but as the living architecture that shapes every decision a school makes about how it organizes time, structures relationships, and measures what matters.

"We do not educate the whole child until we create space not only for how students learn and relate — but for who they are becoming, what gives their life meaning, and how they will live that meaning in the world."

Three frameworks, explored in depth, brought into alignment — and then made actionable. This is the foundation that makes everything else possible.

THE THREE FRAMEWORKS

The Whole Child Approach

Six tenets — Healthy, Safe, Engaged, Supported, Challenged, and Altruistic — that place the child, not the curriculum, at the center. Grounded in Maslow and extended through a spiritual through-line that runs across every stage of development.

Maslow's Hierarchy & the 6th Stage

The foundational map of human need — from the physiological to the transcendent. Maslow's sixth stage, Transcendence, reframes self-actualization not as an endpoint but as a beginning: the turn toward contribution, meaning, and altruism beyond the self.

Resilience Theory

Drawing on the research of Bonnie Benard and Dr. Sara Truebridge, Resilience Theory identifies three conditions — Caring Relationships, Meaningful Participation, and High Expectations — that allow young people to adapt, grow, and thrive in the face of adversity. Resilience is not a fixed trait. It is built.

1. FOUNDATIONS · THE WHOLE CHILD

What Does it Mean to Educate the Whole Child?

An introduction to the Whole Child approach — its origins, its six tenets, and why it reframes the purpose of education. Participants explore the shift from content delivery to genuine human development, and what that demands of a school.

2. MASLOW · HIERARCHY & THE 6TH STAGE

Beyond Self-Actualization — Maslow's Unfinished Thought

A close reading of Maslow's original framework, including the largely overlooked Transcendence stage from his final writings. Participants examine what it means when education's horizon becomes not just achievement, but contribution and meaning-making.

3. THE SPIRITUAL DIMENSION · THROUGH-LINE

The Thread That Runs Through Everything

Spirituality in education is not religion — it is the domain of meaning, purpose, identity, and connection. This session explores why the spiritual dimension is a through-line across every stage of development, and why leaving it out of schooling leaves children incomplete.

4. RESILIENCE THEORY · CONDITIONS

Resilience is Built — Not Born

An exploration of Resilience Theory grounded in the research of Bonnie Benard and Sara Truebridge. Participants examine the three core conditions — Caring Relationships, Meaningful Participation, and High Expectations — and what it means for a school to genuinely embody each one.

5. FRAMEWORK ALIGNMENT · CONVERGENCE

Three Frameworks, One Child

A deep dive into how the Whole Child approach, Maslow's Hierarchy, and Resilience Theory align — not as competing models but as complementary lenses on the same child. Participants identify gaps and opportunities in their own context.

6. ALTRUISTIC · FROM UNDERSTANDING TO ACTION

From Theory to the School You Want to Build

Participants move from conceptual understanding to practical intent — identifying the conditions they need to strengthen, the beliefs that need to shift, and the first actions that will bring the frameworks to life. A foundation for everything that follows in Series 2, 3, and 4.

Whole Child Approach to Education

From foundational understanding to practical application — what does a Whole Child approach actually look like in the classroom, the curriculum, and the culture of a school?

1 — The Frameworks

2 — The Learner

3 — The Educator

4 — The School

SETTING THE SCENE

The frameworks are only as powerful as their translation into practice. This series moves from the theoretical grounding of Series 1 into the lived experience of students — asking what it means, concretely and daily, for every child to be healthy, safe, engaged, supported, challenged, and altruistic.

It is not enough to believe in a Whole Child approach. Educators and leaders need to be able to see it, name it, and design for it — in every lesson, every interaction, and every decision about what schools prioritize and measure.

"Is each student healthy, safe, engaged, supported, challenged — and moving toward contribution? And what are we, as a school, doing to make that possible?"

This series bridges philosophy and practice. It is where the frameworks become tangible, and where the work of change becomes real.

WHAT THIS SERIES ADDRESSES

From Tenets to Indicators

What does each tenet look like as observable, designable practice? Participants move from understanding the six tenets to identifying the specific conditions, behaviors, and structures that make them real in their context.

Mindset Before Method

Shifting a school's approach to student development requires first shifting what educators believe is possible for every child. This series roots practice change in belief change — which is the only kind that lasts.

Global and Local Relevance

The Whole Child approach applies across cultures, systems, and contexts. This series explores what it means to educate whole children in an interconnected world — and in the age of AI.

1. FOUNDATIONS · THE FIVE TENETS

A Whole Child Approach to Education

An introduction to the Whole Child approach and its six tenets, building on the framework grounding from Series 1. Participants examine what each tenet means in the context of their school and students.

2. FROM PHILOSOPHY TO PRACTICE

Tenets to Indicators

The tenets come to life through indicators — the observable, measurable conditions that tell you whether a child is genuinely healthy, safe, engaged, supported, challenged, and altruistic. Participants begin mapping indicators to their own context.

3. EMBEDDING FOR THE LONG TERM

Growing Sustainably

Change that sticks requires more than good intentions. This session examines the conditions under which a Whole Child approach takes root — and how schools avoid the cycle of initiative fatigue and short-term thinking.

4. GLOBAL CONTEXTS · CULTURAL ADAPTATION

Whole Child for the Whole World

The Whole Child model applies across cultures and systems — but its expression must be locally relevant. This session explores what it means to educate whole children in diverse and interconnected global contexts.

5. SHIFTING BELIEFS · SHIFTING PRACTICE

Starts with Mindset

Practice change without belief change is fragile. This session surfaces the assumptions and beliefs that shape what educators think is possible for every child — and examines what it takes to shift them permanently.

6. HUMAN-CENTERED LEARNING IN A TECH WORLD

Whole Child in the AI Era

As AI reshapes the cognitive landscape of education, the Whole Child approach becomes more essential, not less. This session examines what human-centered learning looks like when machines can handle content — and why the spiritual dimension and altruism become the distinctly human domain.

Whole Child Needs a Whole Teacher

A Whole Child approach cannot succeed without first attending to the whole educator. This series applies the same frameworks to the adults in the room.

1 — The Frameworks

2 — The Learner

3 — The Educator

4 — The School

SETTING THE SCENE

Schools ask educators to develop the whole child — to attend to health, safety, belonging, growth, purpose, and contribution. But they rarely ask whether the educators themselves are experiencing those same conditions. They cannot give what they do not have.

This series applies the Whole Child tenets and Resilience Theory directly to educator experience. It is not a wellbeing add-on. It is the recognition that the conditions that allow children to thrive are the same conditions that allow adults to thrive — and that building those conditions is a leadership responsibility.

"Promoting resilience in others requires that we first attend to our own wellbeing. You cannot pour from an empty vessel — but more than that, you cannot model what you have not experienced."

This is professional learning that takes the whole educator seriously — not just their technical competency, but their capacity, their wellbeing, and their sense of purpose.

WHAT THIS SERIES ADDRESSES

Educator Wellbeing as Strategy

Wellbeing is not a nice-to-have. When educators are not supported — physically, emotionally, relationally — children pay the price. This series makes the case and provides the practice.

The Tenets Applied to Adults

What does it mean for an educator to be healthy, safe, engaged, supported, challenged, and altruistic in their professional life? The same framework that guides student development becomes a lens for adult professional growth.

Leadership and Culture

The principal shapes the conditions experienced by every educator in the building. This series examines how leadership behavior either enables or undermines a whole-educator culture — and what it takes to lead differently.

1. EDUCATOR WELLBEING AS A STRATEGIC PRIORITY

Taking Care of the Caregivers

The research is clear: educator wellbeing directly affects student outcomes. This session makes the strategic case — not just the human one — for investing in the whole educator, and examines what that investment actually requires.

2. APPLYING WHOLE CHILD TO ADULT LEARNING

What Do the Tenets Mean for Educators?

The six Whole Child tenets apply to adults as much as to students. This session explores what it means for an educator to be genuinely healthy, safe, engaged, supported, challenged, and altruistic — and what a school that takes this seriously looks like.

3. COLLABORATIVE STRUCTURES · SHARED PRACTICE

Strength in Numbers

Isolated educators cannot sustain a Whole Child approach. This session examines the collaborative structures — teams, communities of practice, shared inquiry — that allow educators to grow together and hold each other accountable to the work.

4. SELF FOR EDUCATORS · EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

Utilizing, Not Managing Emotions

Emotions are information — not obstacles to manage. This session explores emotional intelligence as a professional competency, and examines how educators who understand and work with their own emotional life are better equipped to support the children in their care.

5. THE PRINCIPAL AS WHOLE EDUCATOR

Why Leadership and Culture Matters

No single person shapes school culture more than the principal. This session examines what it means for a leader to embody the Whole Child tenets themselves — and how leadership behavior, more than any initiative, determines whether a whole-educator culture takes hold.

6. COLLECTIVE EFFICACY · CONNECTED PRACTICE

Building a Team by Breaking Down Silos

Schools that educate whole children are built by teams — not individuals. This session examines how to move from a collection of capable individuals to a genuinely connected professional community with shared beliefs, shared practice, and shared accountability.

Developing a Whole Culture of Health, Wellbeing & Community

The school as a whole-child environment — where leadership, structure, community, and culture align to support every member of the school community.

1 — The Frameworks

2 — The Learner

3 — The Educator

4 — The School

SETTING THE SCENE

Individual educators can adopt a Whole Child mindset. Individual classrooms can become whole-child spaces. But neither is enough on its own. The conditions that allow every child to be healthy, safe, engaged, supported, challenged, and altruistic must be embedded in the culture and systems of the whole school.

That requires leadership that prioritizes culture alongside curriculum. It requires structures that support collaboration, community partnership, and shared ownership. And it requires the courage to measure what actually matters — not just what is easy to count.

"Culture eats strategy for breakfast. Even the most well-designed initiative will stall if the prevailing school culture does not align with its intent. This series is about changing the culture — not just the strategy."

This is the culminating series — where the frameworks, the educator, and the student come together in a whole-school commitment to genuine development for every child.

WHAT THIS SERIES ADDRESSES

Leadership as Culture Building

School culture is shaped by everyone — but no single person has greater influence than the principal. This series places leadership at the center of whole-school change, examining how leaders create the conditions for the Whole Child approach to take hold.

The WSCC+C Model in Practice

The Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child model — extended with the dimension of Culture — provides the structural framework for whole-school action. This series moves it from diagram to daily reality.

Community as Co-Educator

Children do not develop in isolation. Families, health services, and the wider community are not supplementary to a school's work — they are integral to it. This series examines what genuine community partnership looks like in practice.

1. THE LEADER AS CULTURE BUILDER

Why Leadership and Culture Matters

School culture does not happen by accident — it is built, day by day, through the choices leaders make about what they prioritize, model, and hold others accountable for. This session examines leadership as the primary lever for whole-school culture change.

2. CROSS-FUNCTIONAL COLLABORATION · SHARED OWNERSHIP

Building a Team by Breaking Down Silos

Whole-school change requires the whole school — not just teaching staff. This session examines how to build cross-functional teams that share ownership of student wellbeing, and how to move beyond the structural silos that fragment a school's capacity to act.

3. FROM FRAMEWORK TO SCHOOL-WIDE ACTION

The WSCC+C Model in Practice

The Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child model — extended with the dimension of Culture — provides the blueprint for coordinated, school-wide action. This session moves participants from framework understanding to practical implementation planning.

4. FAMILIES, HEALTH SERVICES, AND THE WIDER COMMUNITY

School-Community Partnership

A school cannot educate the whole child without the whole community. This session examines what genuine partnership with families, health services, and community organizations looks like — and how to build the trust and structures that make it sustainable.

5. ENVIRONMENT, SPACE, AND THE HIDDEN CURRICULUM

Designing for Wellbeing

Every physical and social environment communicates something to the people within it. This session examines how school spaces, routines, and the hidden curriculum either support or undermine the conditions for whole-child development — and how to design with intention.

6. SYSTEMS, ACCOUNTABILITY, AND LONG-TERM CULTURE CHANGE

Sustaining the Whole School

Initiatives fade; culture endures. This final session examines how to embed the Whole Child approach into the systems, structures, and accountability mechanisms of a school — and how to sustain the work across leadership changes, policy shifts, and the inevitable pressures of the school year.

This series relates directly back to the CDC/ASCD Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child Model and adds in the additional focus on Culture led by Leadership (Slade, 2022)



Adapted from the CDC-ASCD Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child Model, 2014

Design and delivery

Each series is available as a stand-alone or as part of a journey

DESIGN PRINCIPLES

One Framework Per Session

Each session introduces one core idea — no firehose of theory. Rich depth underneath a clean surface.

One Provocation to Leave With

Every session closes with a question that travels home — and stays. Between-session work is where the real learning happens.

Participants Are Never Passive

Educators work, reflect, and build throughout. The arc of every session — opening, action, input, reflection, bridge — keeps them in the work.

DELIVERY OPTIONS

Introductory Session

Virtual · 60 min

Virtual Keynote

60–90 min

Virtual Masterclass

90 min × 6 sessions

In-Person Workshop

Half-Day × 3 or Full Day

MORE INFORMATION

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