

AN ADVERTISING SUPPLEMENT TO THE WASHINGTON POST

# EDUCATION REPORT

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## How to Break the Cycle of Poverty Through a Whole-Child Approach to Education

Nearly one out of four children lives in a household earning below the federal poverty level. They often have to go without critical basics such as a well-balanced meal or reading glasses, putting them at a severe disadvantage when they enter school. And all too often they experience emotional and behavioral issues that negatively affect their ability to succeed in an academic environment.

The Milton Hershey School (MHS), a tuition-free private boarding school in Hershey, Pennsylvania, has worked for more than 100 years to provide students from low-income backgrounds with an exceptional education and a strong foundation for continued success. Over the years the school found that the best way to help students overcome low-income barriers was through a holistic or “whole-child” approach to education. This means offering academic and career development resources and various support services needed to address physical, emotional, and behavioral issues. Here are four ways schools can achieve this:

### 1. Invest in health and wellness.

Many low-income children may have damaged immune systems due to the overuse of stress hormones, as well as chronic diseases, poor dental care, lack of nutrition, behavioral and psychological problems, and other conditions. These children need a well-rounded offering of health and wellness services to lower the amount of difficulties they face before, during and after class.

Milton Hershey School serves the whole child by enforcing a 1:19 ratio of student-to-health professionals, administering medications, and providing health screenings, sports assessments, immunizations, dental care, and individual and group psychotherapy—all cost-free to students.

“Because our students come from low-income backgrounds, investing in this kind of holistic healthcare is a necessity for our students to reach their full potential,” MHS President Pete Gurt '85 said.

### 2. Help students develop social and emotional skills (SEL).

A school's social environment is one of the largest factors affecting students' academic success and behavior. If a student doesn't feel safe and healthy in school, they are more likely to drop out or behave badly. For students coming from low-income backgrounds, schools must find ways to teach children how to manage their emotions, build character, deal with conflict and persevere through challenges.

Milton Hershey School provides year-round programs to enhance students' core social and emotional skills through character and leadership building activities. Students also live in group home environments with a caring and nurturing married couple who emphasizes the importance of structure and self-management skills.

### 3. Offer career or technical certifications.

An education is not an automatic guarantee that students are prepared for specific trades or career paths—unless schools begin to offer career concentrations and technical certifications. Students who concentrate on a specific career path and learn hands-on skills tend to do better in all areas of high school. Career concentrations can also be ideal for students who are still deciding whether they want to further their education or enter the workforce immediately.

MHS students have the opportunity to choose from 11 career pathways starting in 9th grade. For the last four years, 100 percent of graduating seniors earned at least one industry-recognized certification.

### 4. Spark a greater dialogue in the community.

If businesses and organizations in the community understand the importance of the whole-child approach, schools will have increased potential to create partnerships and opportunities for students. “Students have gained valuable skills and relationships through our partnerships with hospitals, nonprofits, corporate businesses and other businesses in the area,” said President Gurt.

No matter what kind of resources are available to schools, strategic relationships and increased dialogue can spur more holistic learning—such as leadership opportunities and internships for students.

### A Unified Approach to Holistic Education

The whole-child approach to education shouldn't be left only to private schools. Children from all income levels can benefit from an education that focuses on their intellect as well as health and well-being. Private and public schools must work to become more unified, create more dialogue about practical strategies, and connect with the community.

Since every school has varying budgets and standards to meet, making progress towards holistic health and wellness initiatives can begin at a higher level. Sharing knowledge with other schools about solutions and failures can help schools prioritize their next steps.

Learn more about how the whole-child approach to educate children from poverty here.

For more information, visit: [mhskids.org/schools-can-help-break-cycle-poverty-whole-child-approach/](http://mhskids.org/schools-can-help-break-cycle-poverty-whole-child-approach/)

### ABOUT THIS SECTION:

This special advertising section was prepared by an independent writer for the Milton Hershey School. The production of this section did not involve the news or editorial staff of The Washington Post.



“We all have the ability to be the one person in the life of a student who makes the biggest difference—who inspires them to dream, to achieve, to serve others, to be compassionate, to leave a legacy.”

— Peter G. Gurt '85

MILTON HERSHEY SCHOOL PRESIDENT



Milton Hershey School, providing a whole child approach to education for 107 years.

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