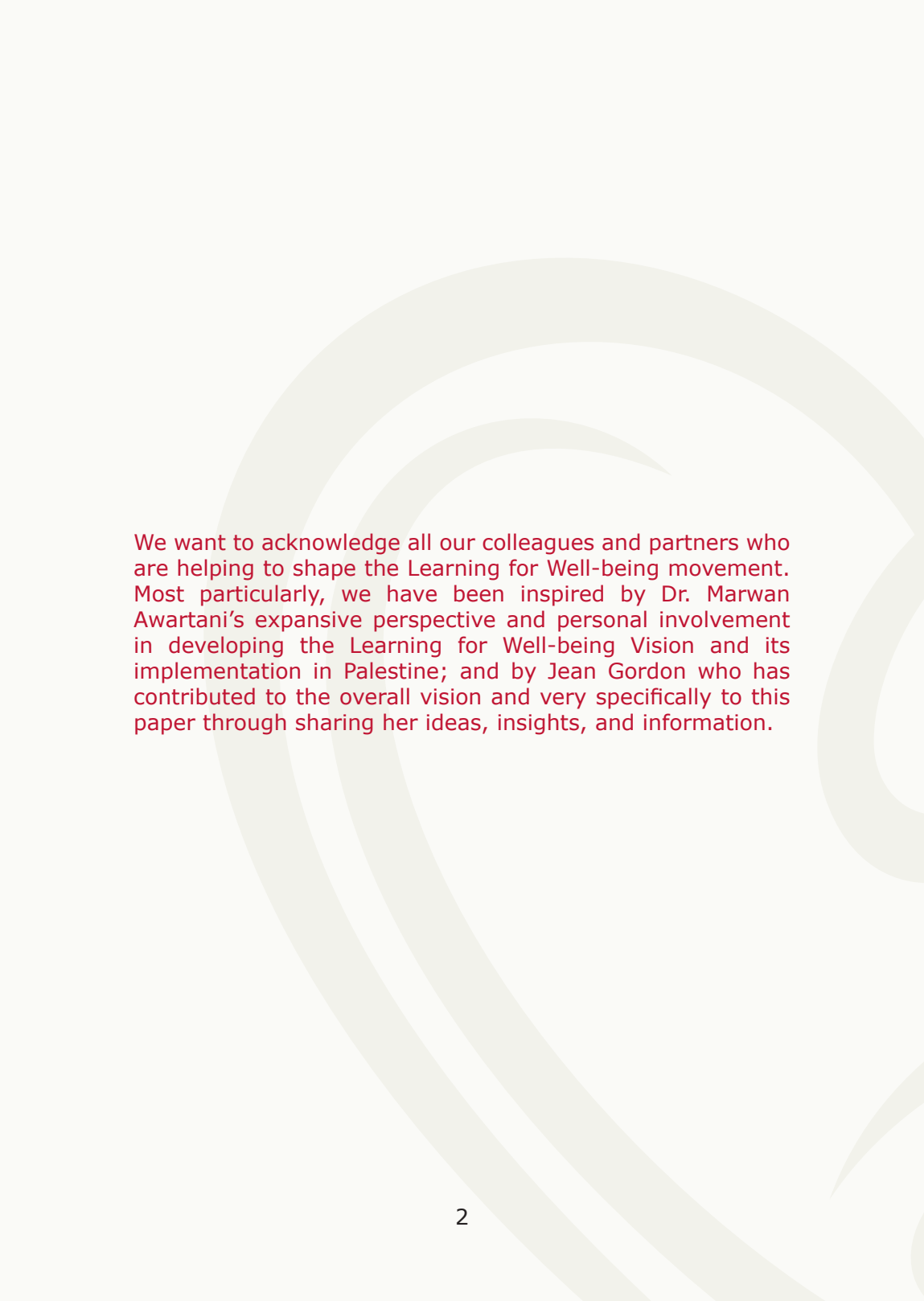

**CHANGING PARADIGMS
SHARING OUR HEARTS
BEGINNING A DIALOGUE**

2012

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Universal Education Foundation



We want to acknowledge all our colleagues and partners who are helping to shape the Learning for Well-being movement. Most particularly, we have been inspired by Dr. Marwan Awartani's expansive perspective and personal involvement in developing the Learning for Well-being Vision and its implementation in Palestine; and by Jean Gordon who has contributed to the overall vision and very specifically to this paper through sharing her ideas, insights, and information.

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LEARNING FOR WELL-BEING

“Real learning gets to the heart of what it means to be human. Through learning we re-create ourselves. Through learning we become able to do something we never were able to do. Through learning we re-perceive the world and our relationship to it. Through learning we extend our capacity to create, to be part of the generative process of life. There is within each of us a deep hunger for this type of learning.” – Peter Senge

Learning for Well-being is the process of fully engaging and expressing who we are as individuals within the contexts of our common humanity. It inspires us to find ways for being our becoming – living in our present moment while developing, challenging and creating ourselves for the future.

We dream of seeing education and health care systems working with media, communities, national governments – indeed, with all of society -- towards a shared vision of supporting human development, recognizing that well-being is its fundamental expression.

The Council of Europe has described well-being as a universal human right, using the phrase “well-being for all” to encompass individual well-being as well as societal and global well-being, extending to future generations. In alignment with this strategy, UEF has chosen to focus on **Learning for Well-being as a process** through which well-being can become available to all, with particular emphasis on children and youth. As a vision for both individuals and for society, **Learning for Well-being aims at realizing our unique and full potential through developing our physical, emotional, mental and spiritual aspects in relation to self, others, and the environment.**

The purpose of this paper is to elaborate the Learning for Well-being vision and to offer a framework for enhancing our capacities and practices so that, as individuals and groups, we embody learning for well-being in relationship with our families, communities, societies, and our world.

We also want to **develop and share a new story** of what we can create together because building a different world requires **imagining new possibilities**. Narratives are universal to human experience; historically and across the globe: gather even a few people together and they will begin telling one another stories. Stories contribute to a sense of identity – how we see ourselves and the sense we make of our lives. They can also define how we see our external reality. Nic Marks, founder of the Centre for Well-being, New Economics Foundation (NEF), points to the stories that most recent films tell of the future of humanity as apocalyptic and nightmarish. He cites the example of the environmental movement, focusing primarily on problems, not solutions, and observes that using fear to generate attention inevitably leads to a “freeze or flight” response in the audience – turning away from the issues, feeling helpless, having a numbing sense of inevitability of future states.

We join with Marks and NEF in asking: how can we develop and share a narrative that will inspire us, build on existing knowledge and information, and allow us to make different choices for the well-being of children and youth?



SECTION ONE

**FOUNDATIONAL
CONCEPTS**

FOUNDATIONAL CONCEPTS

Our dream is to give rise to a movement that will change current mindsets to ones that are more conducive to well-being for all, and specifically enhance the lives of children and youth, and to do this through catalyzing the development of consortia of people and organizations working together through co-creation.

Organization of paper

In the first section, we identify concepts that are foundational to Learning for Well-being as a vision and as a movement – the shifts we need to make in existing mindsets and current themes in understanding learning. We are proposing these ideas can best be understood within several contexts, including that of a living systems perspective.

Second, we offer a definition of well-being that aligns with the key concepts we've identified and links to existing research and practices in the field of learning, both in formal and non-formal educational environments. This definition is at the heart of our Learning for Well-being framework.

In the third section, we describe inner diversity, which is foundational for understanding the ways in which humans function. It is a vital concept in addressing the needs of young people. Since it is a topic that is largely underrepresented in learning and research initiatives, we stress the need to focus on the possibility for children, youth and adults to learn more about the ways in which they learn, communicate and develop most naturally.

The final section summarizes our framework for developing capacities and enhancing practices, and how we are working with others to support the Learning for Well-being movement.

It is our hope that this paper contributes to an open dialogue with all our partners.

Looking back at Learning to be: the world of education today and tomorrow, published by UNESCO in 1972, we see that needs and issues raised forty years ago remain relevant, such as “Education suffers basically from the gap between its content and the living experiences of its pupils ... link education to life ... invent or rediscover an education system that fits its surroundings – surely this is where the solution must be sought.” (page 69) OECD’s Nature of Learning (2010) stresses the enormous growth of research on learning and the cognitive neurosciences, while pointing to the fact that this information remains largely unused in practice in schools and other educational environments. The reasons for the lack of transferability between research, innovation, and common practices are complex. We do not pretend that a single approach can offer all that is necessary, but we do know that changing our mindsets can create new perspectives leading to new ways of being in the world.

There are numerous examples of shifts that have occurred – ideas that were once considered radical or unwieldy, which are now widely accepted: rights of women to vote; extension of public schooling to all; participation of people in their own governing.

We dream of shifting how we think about children, about education, about learning, about health. [See Sir Ken Robinson’s speech on changing paradigms about education and learning: www.thersa.org/events/vision/archive/sir-ken-robinson]

Shifting how we think about children

In the agrarian and industrial ages, children were treated as small people – either economic assets who went straight from infancy into learning to work by serving as apprentices or helpers of adults, or in need being shaped and developed as a moral agent. Childhood as a separate developmental stage is a fairly recent concept. In the late 19th and 20th centuries, at least in western industrialized countries, children stayed

in schools longer to prepare for entering adulthood, the work force, and citizenship. A byproduct of this longer period of education was that children were viewed as incapable of autonomous decisions, needing to be guided by adults. More recently, there have been movements towards the acknowledgment of children's rights, epitomized in the United Nations Charter of Children's Rights. There remains a tendency to objectify children and youth – to act on their behalf and to allow them to be recipients of these rights rather than participants in shaping them. The extent to which data on children is collected through proxy is an example of this way of positioning children and youth. Today young people have the means, through Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and the media, to participate in their learning in ways that could not be imagined even a few years ago. **We dream of a world in which children are listened to and respected for what they can contribute to a shared vision of our future.**

Shifting how we think about education

Standardized education is an outcome of the industrial revolution when a need for skilled workers to function, in some sense as interchangeable parts of industry, created a system designed to provide generalized information and basic skills that would “prepare” young people for their lives. As numerous contemporary thinkers have observed, schools are still operating in many instances along the lines of factories – processing students in batches, at set speeds, with content (input) divided into discrete categories (subject matter) addressed only by those assigned to that responsibility. The required shift is for education to follow the learners' competences, abilities, interests and requirements throughout their lives. Necessarily this implies a focus on individual differences, recognizing that each child needs support in following his or her own unique path. What children crave most is to be seen and embraced for who they are, not judged for who or what they are not. **We dream of a world in which learners are active participants and engaged in understanding and following their own unique ways of learning.**

Shifting how we think about learning

We need to close the gap between our educational practices/policies and the research from the neurosciences, cognitive sciences, and learning sciences that indicate that the emotional, physical and cognitive dimensions of learning are inseparable. Overwhelming evidence suggests that our thoughts impact how we learn but equally so do our bodies and our feelings. Still, when you ask children and adults where learning takes place for them, they point to their heads, and the dominant way we expect to learn is through a focus on cognition – understanding and rationality. **We dream of engaging the full range of human experience in every learning experience, never forgetting that intuition, play, and imagination are key elements of being alive and learning.**

Shifting how we think about health

In both the education system and health care system, the central focus is curing the “disease” – solving the identified problem. This approach leads to fragmented interventions, often resulting in unintended consequences for the system and its participants – both those providing and those who are served. Occasionally we learn about prevention of various diseases or conditions; only rarely does the focus shift to questions of promoting well-being. Learning has an important role to play in health -- learning how to care for yourself and to live so that you can create balance, or shift imbalances, as an ever-expanding process. In fact, when educational systems are functioning, they are the best health care delivery system in the world! How do we engage people so that they want to feel more and more well, rather than in a state of not being sick? How do we create environments in which all participants in the education and health systems – students, teachers, nurses, lab technicians, patients – are consulted about and take more and more responsibility for their own learning, their own health, their own well-being? **We dream of a world in which health and individual well-being are synonymous so there is greater desire, consciousness and knowledge to be fully well and vital.**

Peptides, shown to be correlates of emotion, interconnect the endocrine, nervous, and immune systems in a way such that neurotransmitter researcher Candace Pert, regards them as a single network. Thus she writes: "I can no longer make a strong distinction between the brain and the body."(2008, p32)

Creating these shifts in mindset is only possible through gathering a critical mass of partners, including children and youth, to participate in a vision and a movement.

Envisioning a movement centered on Learning for Well-being

How do you envision, develop and sustain a movement so that a focus on well-being is at the heart of education, health care, and all our social institutions?

A **central response** is that it requires **engaging in long-term and diverse partnerships** across as many sectors and disciplines as possible, including media, families and communities. Currently UEF has three core partnerships, with three independent and interlinked programs: the 'Learning for Well-being' Elham Palestine, the 'Learning for Well-being' Consortium of Foundations in Europe, the 'Learning for Well-being' Youth movement in Europe, and others to come. As an example of the central importance of partnerships: Elham Palestine, a core partner with UEF, has focused on helping transform the school environments to be more conducive for the well-being of all participants. [www.elham.ps] Elham brings potential partners together for the sake of the Learning for Well-being vision and listens to them in genuinely open and transparent ways: How do we build on what is already present? How do we move towards what we genuinely desire – not simply what we think is possible to achieve, but what we believe is the right thing to do, see, feel? Ministries of Health, Education, Welfare, Youth and Sports, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNWRA), private and public sector organizations, and youth have worked together to identify approaches, structures, and processes that can be further

developed and mainstreamed.

In addition to the need for genuine, diverse and healthy partnerships, other key elements in **developing the Learning for Well-being movement** include:

- Continually consulting and partnering with young people and youth organizations (through the Voice of Children Toolkit for qualitative and quantitative research and through processes such as involving the Learning for Well-being Youth Movement in developing Learning for Well-being recommendations to European policy makers);
- Building on existing research, innovation and practices, from every avenue including Eastern traditions, indigenous cultures, as well as Western sciences, while encouraging the development of new transdisciplinary approaches;
- Proposing policy recommendations to deciders at all levels of responsibility, based on taking a multi-sector approach so that policy addressing children and its implementation are comprehensive across all the fields that affect their lives.;
- Developing methodologies for assessing well-being from the personal perspective of the child/young person that can contribute useful, relevant and reliable data to the evidence base for policy formulation, implementation and evaluation;
- Engaging from the broad range of human experience – using our minds, but also our spirits, hearts and wills;
- Opening ourselves to spontaneous interactions that produce unexpected results -- to hear other people's language, to listen with respect and curiosity, and to be willing to experiment with new ways of doing things;
- Focusing on a simple and shared vision that can be embraced in multiple ways through independent actions, interdependent relationships, and diverse expressions.

These themes will be repeated throughout this paper because only through partnering in these open and inclusive fashion can the Learning for Well-being movement contribute to the necessary shifts in our policies, beliefs, and actions.

UEF Areas of focus

While our partners will engage in multiple and diverse activities related to Learning for Well-being, we have chosen to focus our attention on children and youth in the following areas. We are aiming to make a difference in these areas because **young people, through surveys, focus groups, and conversations, have told us repeatedly that these factors are critical** to their well-being.

Uniqueness: Inner Diversity

By natural design, every child is unique, and it is the right of every child to be seen and respected for that uniqueness. We pay specific attention to individual processes through which children learn, communicate and develop. These are the “inner differences” – the ways in which children uniquely frame their perceptions and understandings – that are often not so readily apparent. Respecting these inner differences is at the heart of a vision centered on learning and the individual learner. All of us desire to be seen for who we are, rather than being judged for who we are not.

At UEF, we pay particular attention to inner diversity as foundational to our understanding of how we function as individuals. Since we find that this factor is often underrepresented in discussions of education, learning, and well-being, we share additional thoughts on inner diversity in section 3 of this paper.

Relationships: Communication

As human beings, we are hardwired for social interactions and apparently even for empathy as recent findings on the existence of mirror neurons have suggested. [see www.thersa.org/events/vision/animate/rsa-animate-the-empathic-civilization.] We learn primarily through our relationships with other people – family, peers, teachers and other adults in our learning environments. The nature and quality of those relationships is critical to our well-being. We must continue

to listen to one another's stories and share our own. We also learn through our relationship to the non-human creatures and natural environment. Of particular importance is the relationship to self from which self-esteem, self-confidence, and self-expression stem.

Engagement: Participation

To learn, a child must take ownership for his or her own learning outcomes and be an active participant in that learning. Adults can act as catalysts for helping to create diverse environments for the benefit of children, but well-being is sustainable only when chosen and acted upon by young people. Internalizing the value and practice of well-being is the beginning of choice, responsibility and action. In a very real sense, we are each the author of our own lives.

Yet adults continue to hold particular responsibility for enabling the kind of environments that allow full engagement of youth, and support well-being in all its manifestations.

Facts about the brain: we create our own lives

Integration of the mind and brain has three profound implications:

First, as your experience changes, your brain changes (example: brains of pianist as thicker in the areas of fine motor function);

Second, as your brain changes, your experience changes (example: activating the left frontal regions leads to a sunnier outlook and more positive mood);

Third, in hundreds of ways, large and small you can deliberately use your mind to change your brain to benefit your whole being – and everyone else whose life you touch.

-- Rick Hanson (2008)

As adults, wanting to act with children and youth as mentors, teachers, guides and nurturers, we need to discover and model well-being through practices of the behavior and attitudes that we want our children to embrace. If, as parents and teachers, we are to be role models for children, surely we must ask ourselves: are we healthy, learning, feeling energized, and making choices that support our own well-being? A willingness to share perceptions and act on those understandings is critical for both young people and adults, including the willingness to accept children and young people as “fellow human beings, each with unique points of view and distinctive contributions to make ... who occupy the same life space – not existing in separate hierarchical domains.” (Petrie et al, 2009, p. 7)

A context for Learning for Well-being

The first decade of the 21st century has been an exciting and challenging time for what has become known as the learning sciences. There are several areas to note as a backdrop against which the Learning for Well-being movement can be viewed: the comprehensive and influential UNESCO report on Education for the 21st century; the emergence of brain imaging technique and robust research in cognitive neuroscience that supports and enhances our understanding about learning; and the challenge to create a new transdisciplinary Science of Well-being that will provide a foundation for scientific research to address the whole human experience.

Learning: The Treasure Within

Learning for Well-being is realizing our full and unique potential within our common humanity. This statement builds on the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child, it supports the World Health Organization definition of health: Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being not merely the absence of disease or infirmity, and it aligns with the Council of Europe’s platform of achieving social cohesion and mutual responsibility through their well-being for all strategy. It also reflects the four

pillars defined by the report to UNESCO of the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century: Learning: The Treasure Within.

The Delors Commission, responsible for Learning: the Treasure Within, undertook to describe the critical components of learning that are necessary for individuals and societies to thrive in the contemporary world. They identified four distinct types of learning which they defined as “four pillars.” Briefly:

- Learning to know is concerned primarily with the mastery of learning tools; it implies “learning how to learn by developing one’s concentration, memory skills and ability to think.”
- Learning to do extends well beyond occupational training to involve broad-based personal competence, the capacity to innovate, and the leveraging of interpersonal skills.
- Learning to live together addresses our need to be aware of our similarities and interdependence as human beings and to recognize our individual differences and the diversity of the human experience.
- Learning to be addresses the inner life of the individual: “to give people the freedom of thought, judgment, feeling and imagination they need in order to develop their talents.”

These pillars represent both an inner journey of self-discovery and an outer journey of self-expression.

Together, they argue for balance, and a focus on the role of education in human development and the capacity to make choices to exert control over one’s life. As the report states: “A broad encompassing view of learning should aim to enable each individual to discover, unearth and enrich his or her creative potential, to reveal the treasure within each of us. ... in order to achieve specific aims ... that emphasize(s) the development of the complete person...” (Delors et al., 1996)

Our perspective is that **Learning for Well-being relates to all four pillars of learning.** It provides a short phrase that captures the need to understand how to use one’s physical,

mental, emotional and spiritual resources to enhance, deepen and develop one's capacities for inner and outer action. In supporting the definitions of the UNESCO report we are aligning the Learning for Well-being movement with the consensus of United Nations organizations, bringing together the broad representation of many countries and disciplines to focus on the linked issues of learning and education within a socio-political context.

Cognitive and learning sciences

There has been an enormous amount of research in the past decade focused on the intersections of neuroscience, education, and learning – well beyond the scope of this paper to even summarize. OECD's 2007 publication is entitled: "Understanding the Brain: the Birth of a Learning Science," and indeed a new field has been created in the last few years. The OECD project aimed at reaching a better understanding of how the brain processes information over an individual's life cycle. It established a dialogue between the neuroscientific community and the education community, bringing together policy-makers, teachers, researchers, students, parents, and others in order to reply to questions of a technical and scientific nature, of a social and economic nature and of an ethical and political nature. The impact of brain imaging has offered a tremendous breakthrough, providing concrete evidence on learning with many implications for education policy and practice.

Key conclusions of the research project with relevance for Learning for Well-being include:

- Deepening the knowledge base of what constitutes learning, as a central aspect of human and social life;
- Developing means for revealing hitherto hidden characteristics in individuals;
- Using holistic approaches based on the interdependence of body and mind, the emotional and the cognitive;
- Informing how best to design and arrange different educational practices, especially in contrast with how education is conventionally organized.

The project has also usefully dispelled certain myths around brain functioning and cautioned against overstating or simplifying the research findings in terms of educational applications.

A second OECD publication, "The Nature of Learning: Using Research to Inspire Practice" (2010) provides a series of in-depth reports and discussions highlighting innovations in educational practices, specifically linking evidence-based research to the role of diverse learning environments such as families, communities, and technology/media. Their conclusions suggest that an effective learning environment is one that:

- Makes learning central, encourages engagement, and in which learners come to understand themselves as learners;
- Is where learning is social and often collaborative;
- Is acutely sensitive to individual differences including in prior knowledge;
- Promotes horizontal connectedness across activities and subjects, in and out of school.

Neuroscience, using brain imaging techniques which allow tracking of individual's responses to various stimuli, clearly has much to offer our understanding of Learning for Well-being. Likewise, research on innovative educational practices, particularly the need for engaging diverse learning environments, actively supports certain premises related to well-being: specifically that well-being must be contextualized in relation to self, others, and the environment.

OECD states an aspiration for its report on brain functioning: "to harness the burgeoning knowledge on learning to create an educational system that is both personalized to the individual and universally relevant to all." (2007, p 18) Learning for Well-being echoes this aspiration, and adds another in this regard: as we have seen the birth of a Learning Science, we also would welcome the birth of a new science centered on well-being and its relation to learning.

Toward a science of well-being

A Science of Well-being must necessarily be transdisciplinary – by using this term, we mean that multiple disciplines use each other's data and processes to improve their own capacities, and through those interactions, information is exchanged and transformed. A new field is created through the intersections of the various disciplines. Clearly, this process is represented in the emerging field of Learning Sciences which involves collaboration among research with genetics, neuroscience, cognitive psychology, and education. (OECD, 2007.) It is a vital model for the type of whole human functioning that must be engaged for the emergence of a Science of Well-being. One point that seems clear is that this new field must include, as a central topic, consciousness and a relationship to spiritual considerations.

Robert Cloninger, perhaps best known for his Temperament and Character Inventory (TCI), has been working for decades to synthesize findings from the neurosciences, psychological theory, clinical psychiatric practice, philosophy, and his own research into the development of different levels of self-awareness in healthy individuals. His goal is the development of a Science of Well-being that will focus primarily on human self-aware consciousness (2004.) In describing the unfolding of consciousness as the fundamental drive of humans towards self-awareness, Cloninger echoes other disciplines such as quantum field theory and non-linear system dynamics, as well as philosophical and spiritual traditions. Indeed, a number of contemporary thinkers, including physical scientists, point to the gradual rapprochements of science and spirituality through the central consideration of consciousness within quantum theory (Miller, 2000; Newberg, 2008.)

Researchers have suggested that spirituality is a physiological need and that human brains are hard-wired towards spiritual experiences. We know that transcendent experiences can actually be identified and measured in the brain (Newberg, 2008). Educators and policy makers alike have stressed the

importance of fostering in students a quest for meaning and values that can only come through exploring the universal questions that are traditionally the domain of spirituality (Kessler, 2005; Miller, 2000.) The need to resolve the tension between the spiritual and the temporal in contemporary education has been raised in both the original Delors Commission report and highlighted as one of the critical issues in the follow-up conference proceedings (Learning throughout Life, 2002, p. 153): "... commission members feared that under cover of neutrality it is possible to neglect people's spiritual values ... Resolving this tension is the responsibility of teachers and institutions where young people are taught." This renewal of connection between scientific and spiritual concerns reflects yet another fundamental shift in how we think of learning, education, and well-being.

An additional powerful context for Learning for Well-being is the living systems perspective. It has particular significance because it underpins how the social, educational, and scientific paradigms intersect, and it provides another significant view on well-being and the three UEF focus areas, particularly that of Inner Diversity.

Living Systems Perspective

The broad idea of living systems has been increasingly applied in such diverse fields as complexity theory, cognitive biology, open space technology, and organizational learning. Indeed, in the last 50 to 100 years, we have been witnessing and participating in a major change in the scientific worldview, including our understanding of the universe and of systems dynamics in particular. Starting with quantum physics, this shift has moved into other arenas such as biology, ecology, brain physiology, and mathematics. Depending on the particular field, it is referred to by different names, sometimes complex adaptive systems, whole systems perspective or a living systems perspective. Regardless of the terminology, the basic perspective asserts that life is a process, built on relationships and relating, not a product or end state. Nature

itself, **and everything in it*** , works as a living *whole system*. Examining the three shifts in mindset we considered earlier, we see they all relate to this fundamental movement from what is sometimes called a Newtonian worldview to a quantum perspective (or, from a mechanistic model to a biological one.) This movement, which is not theoretical but grounded in multiple scientific disciplines, changes our view of the way the world works, the nature of reality, our understanding of humans functioning within a web of living relationships. These systems are self-organizing, self-constructing, and self-stabilizing, impacting the processes and activities of all human systems. However, most of our personal frames of reference and social constructs have yet to catch up with this revolution in knowledge.

All living systems are self-organizing wholes that are greater than the sum of their parts. One implication is that there are qualities, properties, and characteristics that could not be found in the elements - just as hydrogen and oxygen do not predict the properties of a molecule of water. The characteristics of the system can only be understood through the patterns of interactions that are occurring within the system, in response to both internal and external relationships. Although the living systems perspective applies equally to galaxies and molecules, let us consider three basic attributes of self-organizing living systems from the perspective of human beings and their activities: uniqueness; interdependence; and diversity. [There are multiple ways of expressing the attributes of living systems – the following is a synthesis from a number of thinkers in diverse fields including Harrison Owen, Humberto Maturana, Thomas Johnson and many others cited in the reference list.]

People create unique and stable identities

All individuals define and sustain their own unique identity, even as they constantly adjust and adapt themselves to their internal needs and to the forces and conditions in their

* Therefore, a cell, a child, a group of children, and a planet are all living systems.

environments. The dynamic balance of this capacity for self-organizing provides stability, integrity, and a sense of patterned order. Individual differences are reflected in each person's interaction with his/her personal experiential world, and with how this is represented by the person.

People adapt through interdependent interactions with others

Everything in nature is inextricably connected, engaged with, and communicating to every other element – within its own system and outside of it. This leads to flexibility and communication between individuals and between individual systems. Distinctions between systems emerge as a result of these interactions, occurring in a horizontal sense – that is, that all elements of a system are related to all other elements within that system (e.g., each student in a classroom is connected to every other student in the room), and in a vertical sense – any process is both a whole – a complete system – and an element existing within a larger system (so that a student is part of the classroom which is part of the school.) Relationships between systems are strengthened through their interactions.

People diversify, create, express, and change through self-organizing activities

Diversity is a direct consequence of the interactions among self-organizing individuals, and it reflects the challenges and the collaborations of those activities. It represents the endless generation of new details, innovations, actions, movement and growth. It continually creates new forms, literally leading to transformation.

In the process of self-organization, humans as living systems receive feedback from what has happened in their interactions with others and their environments, but they also provide what motivational psychologists call feedforward (instructions and intentions about what one wants to have happen) so that

there is both reactive and proactive information in a dynamic balance contributing to decisions and choices impacting behavior.

Self-organization as a guiding principle

Self-organizing – through the attributes of uniqueness, interdependence, and diversity – **is how a living system adapts to its environment and creates itself anew while maintaining a unique identity.** As living systems all human beings require space, time, interdependent connections and diversity of expression in order to thrive and become autonomous.

Unlike mechanical systems, a living system is always an open system. The internet is an example of a living system that is neither human nor part of the natural world; yet the internet functions as a living system, capable of all the functions of such a system –that is, capable of self-stabilizing, self-organizing, and self-constructing. An important consideration in relation to individuals as living systems is that an open system is learning all the time, in relation to its environment, but the structures and controls for this learning come from within rather than from outside the system (Owen, 1998). Applying this principle to a school setting, for example, suggests that **any disruption** in this self-organizing process – such as **attempting** to assert control from an external force– will have a direct impact on the quality of learning and the well-being of the individual.

A concrete and significant implication of how these principles of self-organization interact is that young people, as living systems, will learn despite what educational systems do, but they may not learn what educators and society would like them to learn. However, as with all living systems, youth define their identities through interactions and relationships. To the extent that the system can provide optimal circumstances, taking account of the whole child, and allowing the locus of control to be internal (for example, following the interests,

motivations, and enthusiasm of the individual child), then it is possible to capitalize on the potentials and possibilities.

Several years ago, a computer scientist, Dr. Sugata Mitra, had an idea. What would happen if he could provide poor children with free, unlimited access to computers and the Internet? Mitra launched what came to be known as the hole in the wall experiment. Dr. Mitra heads research and development at a leading computer software company in New Delhi. Mitra decided to place a high-speed computer in the wall that separates his office from a poor neighborhood, connect it to the Internet, and watch who, if anyone, might use it. To his delight, curious children were immediately attracted to the strange new machine. "Within minutes, children figured out how to point and click. By the end of the day they were browsing. Given access and opportunity," Mitra observes, "the children quickly taught themselves the rudiments of computer literacy." After the success of the first hole in the wall, Mitra replicated his unique experiment in other settings, each time with the same result. Within hours and without instruction, children began browsing the Web, gaining information, knowledge and confidence. Watch the video: www.youtube.com/wallhole09

Thus, at the level of the individual child, a living systems perspective implies that learning for well-being occurs through:

- connecting to and fostering the children's own essential internal and external identity, providing a sense of self-empowerment and autonomy;
- providing opportunities for interaction, communication and developing relationships with others – as peers and as role models and mentors;
- supporting the diverse creativity of children as learners, as communicators, as problem solvers, as human beings in ways in which youth can participate fully in what matters to them.

A living system approach provides additional understanding and nuance to any individual or system, including the three focus areas of UEF: inner diversity, relationships, participation.

As we consider the UEF activities and the framework for Learning for Well-being Capacity Building in Section Four, we will be taking account of the three focus areas **and** the principle of self-organization, as a way of expressing the importance of a living systems perspective.

The shift in the scientific worldview from a mechanistic paradigm to one that embraces the living systems perspective directly impacts how we think about issues of well-being for it changes how we think about reality and about what it means to be human.

SUMMARY

Learning for Well-being is the process of fully engaging and expressing who we are as individuals within the contexts of our common humanity.

We dream ***of shifting mindsets*** in how we think about children, education, learning and health.

As a movement, Learning for Well-being requires ***long-term, genuine and diverse partnerships*** towards a shared vision of transformation and well-being for all.

Key ***areas of focus*** for UEF are: uniqueness-inner diversity; relationships-communication; engagement-participation.

A Living Systems perspective adds the ***guiding principle of self-organization*** to the context of Learning for Well-being.

Developing the vision of Learning for Well-being has been a generative learning journey of understanding, synthesizing and making meaning of ***reports and findings*** from international organizations and different contributions to the nascent Learning Sciences.



SECTION TWO

DEFINING

WELL-BEING

DEFINING WELL-BEING

Although well-being is increasingly discussed and studied, there are few definitions of what is meant by the term. The definition UEF is proposing equates well-being with the holistic development of the individual – as a human being, as a member of society, as an inhabitant of the planet.

Well-being is realizing one's unique potential through physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual development ... in relation to self, others and the environment.

We believe that learning about being human, and being able to act in relationship to one's individual and collective experiences, is the essential purpose for education in all of its forms, and across many disciplines, cultures and environments. Positioning well-being within a living systems perspective means understanding that well-being is a dynamic process, rather than an outcome or a state to be achieved. Well-being is an active process of experiencing one's self in the flow of life and while there can be pleasure in recalling past events or anticipating future ones, well-being is experienced in the present.

In Relation to:
Self
Others
Environment

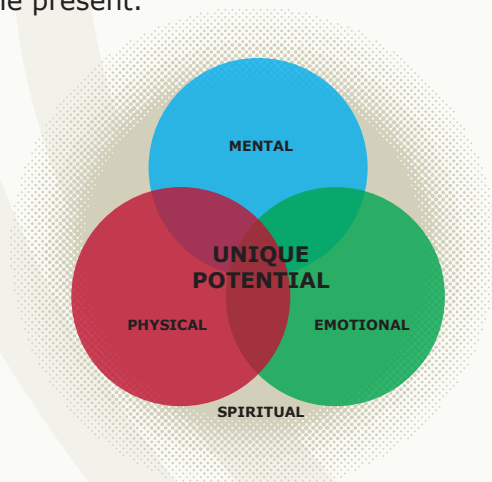


Figure 1.
Well-being is realizing one's unique potential through physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual development ... in relation to self, others and the environment.

Unique potential

The **first phrase** of the proposed definition underscores certain basic principles we have touched on. In “realizing” it says: the process of well-being is dynamic and continuous. Well-being is neither product nor an end-state.

In putting the term “unique potential” at the heart of the definition (and the graphic depiction in Figure 1) we are making a clear statement about how we see individual human beings. UEF has described this phrase as a connection to one’s specific gifts, including the sense of personal identity, innate temperament and expression of life purpose. There is a term that is simpler with more profound resonances – the soul. The advantage of using this word is that it speaks directly to our common human experience – there is universality to it. The disadvantage is that it is understood so diversely that its use has become a liability in many areas, including in some educational and social policy circles. A major issue is that “soul” has become associated directly with a variety of the world’s religions, and in that association the emphasis has been placed on religious distinctions rather than its universality. In many cultures, particularly in the west, religion is regarded as a private matter, often depicted as being in conflict with science and secular society. Clearly, a significant movement, touched on in the previous section, is a convergence of some perspectives of science and spirituality. Just as importantly is the recognition by key educators at primary, secondary, and tertiary levels of schooling of the importance of bringing soul and the sacred into education (Lantieri, 2000; Miller, 2001; Palmer et al., 2000) on a similar basis as the UNESCO Lifelong Learning Commission report.

John Miller, a professor at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) in Canada, offers this definition: “Soul is a deep and vital energy that gives meaning and direction to our lives.” He argues for an infusion of education with soul. “By bringing soul more explicitly into the educational process we can have an education for the whole person rather than a fragmented self.” (Miller, 2000, p. 9)

Six Characteristics of A Soulful School

- 1) Recognize the importance of the nonverbal
- 2) Pay attention to the aesthetic environment of the school and classroom
- 3) Tell stories about the school
- 4) Have celebrations and rituals
- 5) Encourage truth and authenticity
- 6) Nourishing voice: providing a place where people can "speak without fear"
-- John Miller

There are no recipes but we can create conditions that encourage the development of soul

A set of non-religious definitions of soul is cited by Bill Plotkin, in *Nature and the Human Soul* (2008, p.37): "We might say that the human soul is the 'morphic field' of a person (to use Rupert Sheldrake's term), or his "implicate order" (David Bohm's), his "pattern integrity" (Buckminster Fuller's) or 'the primary organizing, sustaining and guiding principle of a living being' (Thomas Berry.)" Plotkin states that these are all various ways of saying deep pattern or deep structure. From a living systems perspective "deep pattern" implies dynamic relationships rather than a fixed structure. What is clear in all of these definitions, but still needs emphasis is that the soul is the unique organizing principles of a particular individual: every person is born with innate and endless potential to be fully her/himself. In the simplest expression, **this is our unique self.**

Three aspects of human functioning

The **second part of the definition** refers to aspects of the human experience that are common to us all. First, we will address the physical, emotional, and mental aspects – always in dynamic interplay with one another, they are distinct, but not divided. Secondly, we will discuss the spiritual dimension as it relates to learning for well-being.

These particular aspects represent a traditional way of

describing the human experience. They are common to many cultures and diverse belief systems around the globe, and they have stood the test of time, from the ancient Vedic scriptures to predictions about the future of medicine in a recent article by Candace Pert, known for her work on measurable biochemical connections between mind and body at the cellular level. Pert writes: "The health that I'm predicting we'll see more of is psychosomatic well-being, involving not just the physical body, but the mental, emotional, and spiritual self as expressed in the corporeal. We can't afford to keep leaving out these aspects of the human experience in treating illness ... medicine in the future will include the whole picture." (2008, p 33) We would add that we cannot afford to leave out these aspects of human experiences in **any** endeavor.

In the writings of Plato, this is the threefold distinction of reason, emotions, and will; in the Vedic tradition, these are the "modes of natures" describing the three essential one through which life functions. The side bar shows different terms by which these three aspects are expressed in various cultures, traditions, and disciplines. For example, the line reading uniqueness – interdependence – diversity relates to the three principles of living systems discussed in the previous section; another line: stillness – activity – balance relates to the Vedic gunas or the qualities of operation of which all the activities of Nature consist. These three aspects seemingly show up at every level of whole systems, including triune brain functioning (that is, neocortex, limbic system, reptilian brain.) In some cases, the depiction is more metaphoric (e.g., head – heart – hands), but what remains worth noticing is that there is a consistent and widespread referencing of these three functions. The aspects also relate to three human energy centers which are widely known: thinking (head); feeling (heart); the body (hara – the center of balance familiar from martial arts training) which are expressed through the stability of mental concentration, the receptivity of the heart, and the sustained flow of refined quiet energy of the body. Thus, in addressing these three facets of life we

are speaking not from a single discipline but from the broad range of human expression: the neurosciences, Eastern and Western philosophical traditions, psychology, movement,

By the **physical aspect** we are relating to the physical senses, to our bodies, and to the material and natural environments. We include in this description the actions and functions of doing, building, taking apart, detailing, producing, acting, and making practical. Thus, the physical aspect relates both to sensation and performance – what we are able to do with our physical bodies and environments. As with all the aspects, these functions are sometimes under our conscious control and sometimes not – e.g., our breathing functions largely without conscious attention, but we can also train ourselves to breathe in a different way. We learn to walk and then it becomes “second nature” and we are not conscious of it until we need to be. We develop habitual ways of acting and then cease to be conscious of those habits.

Development of the physical aspect implies the cultivation of bodily awareness and healthy habits, but also healthy attitudes towards our bodies and to the physical and natural world; it includes the development of our physical senses as well as the capacity to take action, to produce, to detail, to manifest, and to complete. Development also relates to becoming aware of how to work with one’s body to release trauma and trapped energy, and to rely on the wisdom and intuition of the body.

NEF (New Economics Foundation), a U.K. think tank has research and identified five keys to well-being (NEF, 2010). These relate directly to facets of the physical aspect:

BE ACTIVE. Go for a walk or run. Step outside. Cycle. Play a game. Garden. Dance.

Exercising makes you feel good. Most importantly, discover a physical activity you enjoy and that suits your level of mobility and fitness.

KEEP LEARNING. Try something new. Set a challenge you will enjoy achieving. Take on a different responsibility at work. Fix a bike. Learn to play an instrument or how to cook your favorite food. Learning new things will make you more confident, as well as being fun to do.

By the **emotional aspect**, we mean both our intrapersonal functions – our inner feelings and motivations and our interpersonal functioning – our interactions with others.

Development of the intrapersonal functions includes the capacity to nurture an awareness of one's emotions, the ability to differentiate between them, to understand their triggers and natural cycles, and the ways in which they can, when necessary, be managed and transformed – this also suggests a widening and deepening of one's emotional range; in the interpersonal sense, development points to the ability to express feelings and needs in effective ways and to engage and negotiate with others in mutually respectful and rewarding ways; it also includes compassion, implicit and explicit, and the ability to see from others' perspectives. Development of the emotional aspect also implies accessing the wisdom of the heart which may manifest as compassion, felt intuition, empathy, and imagination.

From NEF, relating directly to the emotional aspect:

CONNECT. With the people around you. With family, friends, colleagues, and neighbors. Building these connections will support and enrich you every day.

GIVE. Do something nice for a friend, or a stranger. Thank someone. Smile. Volunteer your time. Join a community group. Look out, as well as in. Seeing yourself, and your happiness, linked to the wider community can be incredibly rewarding and will create connections with the people around you.

By the **mental aspect**, we mean our cognitive and rational processes.

Development of the mental aspect includes envisioning, planning and valuing. It involves the skills to analyze, synthesize and create knowledge, integrate, manage and communicate information, and to solve problems, assess options and scenarios, plan and organize in ways that are relevant. Of critical importance for development is to develop clarity of mind, including capacity to reflect, ability to pay attention, and the capacity to see objectively. It also includes the wisdom of the head, manifesting as intention, stillness, and concentration.

From NEF, relating directly to one facet of the mental aspect:

TAKE NOTICE. Be curious. Catch sight of the beautiful. Remark on the unusual. Notice the changing seasons. Savor the moment. Be aware of the world around you, and what you are feeling. Reflecting on your experiences will help you appreciate what matters to you.

As a way of accessing an experience of these three aspects through shifts in your attention, posture, and movement, notice what happens naturally in the following exercise:

First: Sit in a chair, facing forward, with your spine in a relaxed and upright position. Pay attention to the space above your head and follow a line all the way down to the ground. Stay aware of the dimension of up-down; as if a line of energy is running through the center of your body on a vertical axis and there is a slight pull on your attention. Register your sensations, thoughts, feelings as you look around or walk slowly around the room: what do you notice? How do you feel? How does your body want to move?

Second: Return to your chair, sitting in a relaxed yet upright fashion and shift your energy to either side of your body. Imagine stretching your arms directly to the side and pay attention to the horizontal line of energy running side to side through the center of your body, and you are experiencing a slight pull in your attention on that peripheral dimension. Register your sensations, thoughts, feelings as you look around or walk slowly around the room: what do you notice? How do you feel? How does your body want to move?

Third: Return to your chair, sitting in a relaxed yet upright fashion and shift your energy to the space immediately in front of your body and behind you. Imagine a line of energy that connects what is behind you with what stretches in front of you and runs through the center of your body. Pay attention to the movement of this energy, experiencing it as a slight pull of forward/back. Register your sensations, thoughts, feelings as you look around or walk slowly around the room: what do you notice? How do you feel? How does your body want to move?

Most of those who have experimented with this exercise, including thousands of Swedish public school children, report an increased sense of focus and perspective in the first part; a sense of experienced and desired connection in the second part, particularly with other people; and a sense of wanting to move/take action in the third part. [Bergstrom, 2004]

Development of the three aspects also includes integration, meaning the aspects function with ease in support of the unique potential and with a balance that is natural for each individual. For example in relationships with others, developing the capacity to observe objectively (mental aspect) needs to be expressed in ways that respect the perspectives of others (emotional aspect). If those capacities are operating separately, we can have some clear observations but quite difficult interpersonal dealings. Conversely, developing the ability to empathize (emotional) without objectivity (mental) can also lead to difficulties.

An additional mode in relation to the aspects is their refinement (or, as we might term it, their qualitative transformation.) By this term we mean a shift in how the aspects are expressed and for what purpose. A simple example: the capacity to negotiate with others and to respect differences might be motivated by a father's desire to have harmony within his family, or perhaps a woman's interest in furthering her career. One learns some tools and practices skills and notices when they work well. In the course of developing this capacity, several behaviors may change, but **the qualitative shift occurs when there is a different way of being** in relation to oneself and others and the environment. Following on with the above examples, the father may realize that the harmony he seeks needs first to come from his own inner way of being with his family; the woman may realize that the furtherance of her career involves service to a larger group of people than just her colleagues and clients. Such qualitative shifts almost always relate to a greater awareness of the spiritual dimension.

TERMS RELATED TO MENTAL, EMOTIONAL AND PHYSICAL ASPECTS

<i>Mental Aspect</i>	<i>Emotional Aspect</i>	<i>Physical Aspect</i>
Initiating	Relating	Manifesting
I think	I feel	I do
Seeing	Internalizing	Acting
Stability	Flexibility	Mobility
Uniqueness	Interdependence	Diversity
One point	Paired (dyadic)	Group
Head	Heart	Hands (or Hara)
Neocortex	Limbic System	Reptilian brain
Stillness	Activity	Balance
Up	In	Down

Spiritual dimension

The spiritual dimension refers to the sense of connection to all things, including the natural and manmade environments. When we recognize a connection with life beyond the material dimension, we are tuning into the spiritual dimension. There has been a trend, even in scientific circles, towards greater inclusion of the spiritual dimension, and as we noted in the last section, there have been advances in how we are able to measure aspects of spirituality. Regardless, no one can see gravity or love and yet they are nevertheless forces with real effects. So it is with spirituality.

We can distinguish between the horizontal and vertical nature of how humans experience the spiritual dimension. The horizontal reflects our impulse to connect more deeply and be of service – for example, it is the awareness of interconnectedness and awe at the beauty of nature; the vertical is less human-centred and reflects the impulse towards mystery and the mystical union with the divine. Both are sometimes referred to as aesthetic energy – the recognition or perception of something beautiful and awe-inspiring, touching a new insight. Awareness of the spiritual

dimension can be described as the universal self in contrast to the soul as the unique self. The experienced direction of the universal self is outward; the experienced direction of the unique self is inward.

It is questionable whether one can actually “develop” the spiritual dimension (or in some sense even use words to describe it since it is, virtually by definition, beyond language.)

One can access an experience with the spiritual aspect simply through following one’s breath, putting your whole attention on the steady and slow intake of your breath and then the slow and steady release of your breath. As thoughts or feelings or sensations arise, you allow them to release and stay in attention with your breath. This experience invokes what Dr. Herbert Benson (2000) calls the relaxation response and most people report as an experience of acute aliveness – a realization of themselves as vital beings and a profound sense of connection with all that is around one.

It is probably more accurate to express development of access to or awareness of the spiritual dimension through promoting practices that allow a deeper sense of the interconnectedness and sacredness of all things, a sense of awe and wonder in nature and the universe, and opportunities to experience the joy of service and expressions of mindfulness and lovingness toward all beings.

In relation to self, others, and the environment

The last part of the definition: while well-being is experienced individually by each person, the experience occurs in relation to self, others, and the environment. If we return to the living systems perspective, we recall that relatedness and interdependence are essential principles of any organism – it is what allows us to define our boundaries and through the creation of identity to know ourselves and to know others. It is through these relationships that we are able to create and act.

From countless studies – as well as from our personal experiences – we know that relationships are of central importance for adults and children in how they experience their lives. Relationships are about our interactions with other people, but they also point to our relation to self – indeed, it is in and through human relations that we can be, and become ourselves. Further, they involve how we engage with our environments. Relationships speaks to knowing who I am, to feeling secure in the world, and to contributing to that world – where I belong and where I feel at home; where I can learn and extend my capacities to create, to collaborate, and to influence; where I feel the joy of being alive and in connection with my fellow humans and the natural environments; where I can contribute fully to the community, society and world in which I live.

In addressing well-being through this comprehensive and inclusive definition, we are underlining the uniqueness of each individual, the interdependence and similarities that exist within our common humanity, and the impact and pleasures derived from all our human and natural environments. In simple terms, we see well-being as an optimal dynamic of body, emotions, mind, and spirit – a relatively pervasive sense of an individual’s capacity to grow and to develop her or his gifts, to manage life’s challenges, to care and be cared for, to influence her or his surroundings in ways that enhance life for all, and to delight in one’s enjoyment of life.

In a very real sense, children who are nurtured and grow as above are far more likely to nurture and take care of themselves, other people, and the environment, which will make all the difference in how we live as individuals and in our shared environments.

SUMMARY

Well-being is defined as realizing one's unique potential through physical, emotional, mental and spiritual development ... in relation to self, others and the environment.

Unique potential refers to an individual's specific gifts, including one's innate temperament and expression of life purpose. An alternative phrasing is to consider each of us as a soul in evolution over a life course.

The ***aspects of human experience***, physical, emotional, and mental, are always in dynamic interplay with one another – distinct but not divided.

The ***physical aspect*** relates to the physical senses, our bodies, and the material and natural environments.

The ***emotional aspect*** relates to our intrapersonal function – our inner feelings – and our interpersonal function – our interactions with others.

The ***mental aspect*** relates to our cognitive and rational processes.

The ***spiritual dimension*** relates to a sense of connection with everything – experienced through interconnectedness, awe and a sense of the mystery.

While ***well-being*** is experienced individually, it ***occurs within the context of our relationships to self, others, and the environment.***



SECTION THREE

**FOCUS ON
INNER DIVERSITY**

FOCUS ON INNER DIVERSITY

A central theme of Learning for Well-being is helping children and youth develop attitudes, competences and capacities to become aware of the unique and personal interpretations of their inner and outer environments – the ways they frame their perceptions and add meaning to them. Particularly we want to help young people recognize how these perceptions and interpretations determine how we think, feel and act in our lives. **It is critical to understand that the focus on inner diversity involves developing ways to explore one's own way of functioning rather than trying to fit oneself to some external model.** This point is directly aligned with the self-organizing principles of living systems, and represents the heart of our interest in finding a way to bring more attention to inner diversity.

Despite increasing calls in education and social policy for greater attention to be paid to individual ways of learning (OECD, 2007; OECD, 2010), our reviews indicate that the topic remains underrepresented in practice (Gordon et al., 2010.) We want to place greater attention on the issue of inner diversity because it is foundational for all of us to understand our own way of functioning, which includes how we learn. The very nature of our unique, individual and personal processing does not lend itself easily to summaries or abstractions. When we speak of generalities, they are necessarily removed from the richness and specificity of each individual.

Our proposal to address this situation is to turn over responsibility to the learner through offering ways for learners to explore and engage with their own unique ways of learning, communicating and developing.

In section three we distinguish between individual differences and the term "inner diversity," consider patterns of inner diversity, and describe an approach through which individuals can explore their unique ways of perceiving and making sense

of their world. The section concludes with examples of how this approach is useful – for learners, parents, and educators.

Individual differences and Inner Diversity

The phrase, individual differences, refers to the multiple ways in which each individual is different from some or all other people. When we hear the term “diversity,” most often we associate it with characteristics such as age, gender, ethnicity, abled/disabled, and so forth. We have done a reasonably good job in education and social policy in addressing diversity ... if the reality in practice is not yet sufficient, we are at least aware of the significance of these factors.

Additionally, there are many other individual differences, seeming to touch on both the inner and outer life of the individual – such as, learning styles, strengths, talents, multiple intelligences. All of these can be important elements of individual differences.

However, in using the phrase inner diversity we are focusing on a more foundational level: our distinct ways of learning, knowing, and processing. This is neither about stylistic preferences nor about explicit behaviors, but instead addresses the deeper internal functioning of each individual. Psychologist Alan Berkowitz distinguishes three layers of personality: the “surface layer” formed by the environment in which we live; the second, the “personal unconscious” – memories of previous experiences, childhood traumas, and so forth; the third, the inner core, is not the result of external experiences but has been present before we are born – it is in this core that what we are calling patterns of inner diversity reside (Bergstrom 2004). Inner diversity is the term we have coined to represent these inner individual differences. Alternatively, we refer to them as one’s inner “operating system” because they appear to function, as a whole system, in ways that impact how we learn, communicate, and develop as individuals. It is through these internal processes that thoughts, feelings, actions, and beliefs are filtered, organized, and given meaning.

Most of the ways in which we tend to look at individual human functioning is through addressing the component parts, such as learning styles, or learning modalities. However there are several approaches which look at whole systems of human functioning through the interactions of thoughts, feelings, and actions (the mental, emotional, and physical aspects.) Examples include the Vedic tradition of India (see Ranade, 2006, for its use in contemporary educational settings), the Enneagram (largely used in psychological circles or for deep personal growth, see Rhodes, 2009) and Human Dynamics (which has been widely used in schools and teacher training courses in Sweden and the Netherlands, see Bergstrom, 2004). Many other models offer compelling and useful descriptions of inner human functioning, but tend to focus on an end-state process in which you identify or are identified as a particular type. Our point is not to label individuals or to debate the merits of various personality systems or learning style models. Rather, our underlying desire is to offer an approach, based on our definition of well-being and a living systems perspective, that provides a way to explore one's unique ways of functioning, particularly around inner diversity patterns.

We emphasize **patterns** of inner diversity for two reasons: seeing patterns in the process of others that match your own provides a sense of legitimacy ("ah, it's not just me – others also need to know what has happened in the past before jumping into action"); as importantly, it is difficult to arrive at understanding these patterns without comparing and contrasting yourself to others. Gregory Bateson once proposed that "it takes two to know one." What he is noting is that phrase is that it is only through making distinctions that we can begin to know what we know. In the case of inner diversity, an important piece of understanding comes from distinguishing the patterns of similarities and differences in how individuals perceive reality and process those perceptions in context and through our relationships and interactions with others.

What we know about Inner Diversity

What you do and learn in life physically changes what your brain looks like – it literally rewires it.

The various regions of the brain develop at different rates in different people.

No two people's brain stores the same information in the same way in the same place.

We have a great number of ways of being intelligent, many of which don't show up on IQ tests.

www.brainrules.net

From brain imaging, we know that individual brains are organized differently (Medina, 2008; Caine, 2004; OECD, 2010.) We know that an underlying temperament can be determined shortly after birth and that many psychological attributes once thought to be the result of social conditioning are now considered innate and part of the basic structuring of the individual (Rhodes, 2009.)

We know that system theorists have found value in describing humans as having innate frames of reference as both content and process -- frames which are continually being organized and structured with incoming information (Ford, 1991.)

We know that human beings are constantly perceiving, processing, and integrating information into an individually organized representation of the external world – one that is highly personal. An individual's system of representation (his/her "operating system") governs the process of what is noticed, remembered, given weight, and expressed. [OECD, 2007]

How much are the inner differences to which we are pointing the result of experience? How much are they the result of innate ways of individuals organizing their ways of being in the world? Will we ever be able to track these inner differences – these distinctly unique ways of processing – in the organization and structure of the brain? These are questions to which we do not yet have answers.

Our Research on Inner Diversity

Our investigation of inner diversity is based largely in praxis rather than theory. The proposed approach for exploring one's individual patterns is a synthesis of nearly 30 years of research, through the windows of the Human Dynamics system (focused on identifying the dynamic interplay of mental, physical and emotional energies), living system perspectives, and the active participation of thousands of individuals. Participants have been adults, young people, and children engaged in exploring the distinctly different ways in which they learn, communicate, and develop. The research has been primarily qualitative and participative – that is, the methodology has included both objective observation, but also engagement with the subjects in a series of interviews, written and pictorial data collection, videotaped segments of structured activities, and self-reports. Respondents have varied from 5 to 80 years of age, in multiple environments and in a wide range of countries around the globe. A limited number of longitudinal studies have also been conducted.

Five basic premises emerging from inner diversity research

Understanding inner diversity is grounded in 30 years of research (see sidebar) involving over 20,000 adults and children in business, education, and community settings. From this research, and in common with other systems, certain **basic premises** are apparent:

1. People differ in how they perceive, learn, and make sense of their environments;
2. These different perceptions occur in patterns – which appear to be consistent over an individual's lifetime;
3. The patterns, as whole systems, reflect legitimate internal needs so that there is integrity in function and process in how one perceives, learns, communicates and develops.
4. Recognizing and working with these differences allows the value of contrasting perspectives to emerge for the

benefit of the individual, relationships with another, and with the group.

5. Learners – given guidance, an open environment, and opportunities to develop certain key capacities – can determine their own way of processing without the need for a test or external validation.

For example, **in terms of learning:**

There are individuals who need to stand back for awhile, to get a sense of perspective and to know why they are being asked to engage in an activity. These children are answering the question “why?” for themselves so their learning process requires time to think through the situation and to link it to their own internal values. They need to complete that process without a lot of conversation or interaction with others – as they begin a new task – or their learning process is stalled. These individuals most likely have a predominance of **mental energy**.

There are other children who absolutely need to engage in conversations and activities with others in the first place and usually in the second and third place as well. Ongoing conversation not only helps them feel comfortable with the group and the activity – talking aloud literally contributes to their learning. Without conversation – even if it’s not directly about the subject matter – it is virtually impossible for them to feel engaged and able to participate in the process of learning. These individuals most likely have a predominance of **emotional energy**.

There are still other children who rely primarily on activity with all their senses to engage with the learning. To read about it or to listen to an explanation or to watch a demonstration means very little to them unless they can actively touch, manipulate, smell, even taste the experience. It is important to know that this is not a phase in the child’s life. A child of ten who will read, see, smell, touch everything related to a specific topic that he possibly can and still does not feel he knows enough will grow into an adult who says: “Don’t get

rid of any of that information – now that I have it, I need it all!” These individuals most likely have a predominance of **physical energy**.

Our research has demonstrated that children as young as seven years old can talk about the way they learn – not just the circumstances under which they learn best, but also that they are able to describe the basic pattern of how they learn. Children this young can describe the basic needs for learning and communication of other children in their classroom and how these needs are different from their own. Perhaps most interestingly, in discussions about how their classmates learn, children tend not to talk using labels (e.g., “Sam’s a troublemaker” or “Sara’s a slow learner”), but instead, to describe the actual behavior: “Sam needs to keep busy” or “Sara likes to think awhile before she answers.”)

If children learn at a young age that there are indeed different ways of thinking, processing their emotions, using their senses, contributing to the group, and different ways that each of them can grow and develop – they will recognize their own unique ways and those of others. Each boy and girl needs to learn all of the above – about thinking, feelings, sensing senses, communicating and developing – but we need to respect how they naturally approach each of those areas. We can ask children and young people and we can listen and respond in the ways they tell us they need us to respond (for example, through offering advice, a warm smile, or a good source of information) rather than how we think we **ought to** respond.

Inner Diversity: a whole systems approach for exploration

Combining a living systems perspective with our working definition of well-being suggest a viable way for learners to explore their own patterns of the diversity of human functioning. Rather than assert or follow a particular model, we want to help young people find

ways to investigate and experience their own ways of being. If, as we have identified, living systems make themselves – construct their own reality, in a sense – then an individual must direct his/her own discovery of his unique potential. However, there are certain processes and information that can be helpful:

- Understanding the legitimacy of differences in how systems are structured, function, and express.
- Cultivating capacities that aid continued exploration and deepen the experience
- Creating environments – most particularly people in those environments – that can support continued exploration and development.

This approach focuses on understanding the physical, emotional, and mental aspects and the ways in which these energies combine to form patterns.

Looking at each individual as a whole system, one can see different angles or facets of that individual process with which we can engage. Here are three different angles that many learners, of all ages, have found useful to explore. We will consider each of these briefly:

Finding the ground (relating to the inner core processing)

Integrating the three aspects (relating to development)

Knowing my deepest aspirations (relating to deep motivations and qualities)

Finding the ground

The ground is the foundation from which one processes the inner and outer worlds. It includes the particular way in which we make sense of perceptions and sensory inputs. For each of us, it is **as if** there is **a natural balance between the three aspects**, and it appears that this inner core processing remains relatively stable over a lifetime. This does not imply that we don't all grow, develop and mature;

we do, of course. This relative stability reminds us of the first principle of living systems: individuals define and sustain their own unique identity, even as they constantly adjust and adapt themselves to their internal needs and to the forces and conditions in their environments. The dynamic balance of this capacity for self-organization provides stability, integrity, and a sense of patterned order.

Acknowledging a predominant aspect

There are two phases to exploring one's core processing. **First**, it seems as if each one of us has a strong affinity with one of the three aspects: physical, emotional, or mental. Whether science eventually links this affinity to innate temperament or brain functioning, it remains a consistent metaphor to describe differences in how individuals function. All three of the systems cited as having a whole systems perspective (the Vedic tradition, Enneagram, Human Dynamics) are independently based on the notion that humans are centered, grounded or oriented towards one of the three aspects, as are numerous other systems (de Beaufort, 1996). As importantly, the direct and sustained interactions of one of the authors of this paper (Linda O'Toole) with more than 20,000 people throughout a 30 year investigation, have demonstrated that this way of thinking about core processing is useful for exploring patterns of processing.

There is overall compatibility in descriptions of how the predominance of one of the aspects expresses. In describing this predominance, we are addressing the inner organization that relates to the inner processing patterns. These patterns of processing inform behavior, but they do represent behavioral characteristics per se. For example:

People with a **strong central relationship** to the mental aspect are attuned to ideas, and value clarity and discernment. There is often a sense of singularity and ability to focus on essential observations and facts. Their primary goal is to understand; their expression is often linear, one-pointed, and sequential in nature.

People with a **strong central relationship** to the **emotional aspect** are attuned to other people, and value empathy and engagement. There is often a sense of flexibility, interdependence with others, and an ability to express feelings and intuitions. Their primary goal is to relate; their expression is often fluid, metaphorical, and spontaneous in nature.

People with a **strong central relationship** to the **physical aspect** are attuned to action, and value pragmatism, nature, and instinctual sensing. There is often a sense of mobility and ability for comprehensive and substantial planning. Their primary goal is to ground and manifest; their expression is often factual, detailed, and systemic in nature.

For another view:

Three ways of being centered – A process orientation *

Centering in the Mental Aspect

From a consistently detached perspective, people centered in the mental aspect process in a linear, logical, sequential way, highly selected information, to clarify essential points, values, principles, and long-term goals.

Centering in the Emotional Aspect

People centered in the emotional aspect experience life relationally. Their processing is non-linear, divergent, and associative, changing course according to the subjective inner connections that they make and their interactions with others.

Centering in the Physical Aspect

People centered in the physical aspect experience the world pragmatically, as a place where things need to be done. Their process is systemic - that is, they see and sense patterns (systems.)

* Example from Human Dynamics system, Seagal, Horne & O'Toole (2002)

Determining relationships to other aspects

The **second** phase of **Finding the Ground** (that is, exploring the core processing) is the balance between the predominant aspect and the other two aspects. Imagine a person with a strong affinity for the physical aspect – experiencing the world pragmatically and processing systemically. That person also has a relationship with the mental aspect and the emotional aspect. This relationship will express in a way that is unique to that individual. It is sometimes helpful to imagine the balance as a continuum between the other two aspects. For example, people who are balanced closer to the mental aspect would exhibit more natural affinity for structure, independence, purpose; those who are balanced closer to the emotional aspect would exhibit more natural affinity for interactions, flexible and flowing connections, and relationships. To link this to a more concrete example, look at the example of inner diversity patterns provided in the sidebar. The first description of a person who is able to begin with a structure relates to someone who has relatively more energy in the mental aspect than does the second description of a person, with relatively more energy in the emotional aspect, who needs to allow links and connections to internalize before creating a structure.

The critical acknowledgement is that both of these ways of processing are natural to the individuals involved, and legitimate for their inner processing patterns. To summarize: there is a natural balance that is unique for each of us, and describes a way of processing (a frame of reference) that will sustain throughout life. Understanding our own patterns in relation to those of others allows us to become more self-aware through the distinctions and similarities we perceive, but the process of understanding the differences is not automatic. The next section describes a path for exploring.

An example of inner diversity patterns

Some people internally structure new information as they receive it. It is almost as if there is a pre-existing outline and the information gets attached to different points on that outline. In general, these people are able to provide you with an answer to a question with a specified level of detail – you can say, for example, “I need the one minute version as opposed to the 30 minute version.” Most often, you will get the level of detail you request because the process starts with his or her own individual and internal structure, around which incoming data is organized. Information that doesn’t fit the structure is often discarded as irrelevant.

In contrast, other people seem to almost swallow the information whole – it’s not differentiated for them at the beginning. Their process begins by connecting new data with existing information (all sorts of information, some of which may seem totally irrelevant to other people); that takes time, especially if the outcome is critical and/or the structure and information is new. There’s a vast resource of linked information at the beginning but there’s no inherent structure so a summary version isn’t possible – at least not in any way that would be satisfactory to the person providing the summary. For these people, the structure emerges as the information is shaped, linked, acquired and reshaped.

These simple examples reflect two distinct systems of functioning that play out in ways that appear to be consistent under a variety of circumstances and activities as well as over the lifetime of a person. It is these systems – occurring in patterns, but with individuals maintaining their uniqueness within the patterns – that we are referring to when we point to inner diversity.

A path for exploring the ground

Inevitably, you want to relate the descriptions to yourself, to ask: Where is **my** ground? The process of association,

comparison and contrast is how we learn, and also one of the principles of our approach for exploring inner diversity. From our investigations and work on individual learning, communication, and group decision-making with thousands of people, we identified seven areas with which to start a process of association, contrast, and comparison. These seven areas represent areas of differences – points of common misunderstandings between people that are largely based on inner differences in how we gather, process, and share information.

Attributes of an exploratory approach

Holistic: We need to consider the human system as a whole living system (in dynamic interplay and organization), not just as component parts;

With Curiosity: We need to explore our own functioning, and that of others, as a child views the world: with curiosity and wonder. It's less about definitive answers and more about asking generative questions (those that lead to learning.) It focuses on process rather than outcome. It's open-ended and adventurous.

Through Direct Experiencing: Exploration relies on our own direct experiencing – through all of our senses, including the imaginative and intuitive senses.

Unlike differences such as age, race, sex which are visible, inner differences are generally not given attention until conflict, frustration, or misunderstandings arise; however, they are present in every interaction we have – even, and especially, in the ones with ourselves. Inner differences are so much a part of how we see the world that we are often incapable of bringing them into consciousness – although we certainly see their results.

For example, If you have ever ...

Discussed the relevancy of a particular piece of information
That issue isn't part of this discussion!

Debated the merits of reviewing the past to understand where you are now

Let's talk about what's happening now – not three years ago!

Or argued about “the best way” to demonstrate your interest in a task

Why are we even having this discussion! What is it that you want me to do?

You have probably encountered the result of distinctly different ways of perceiving the world.

Areas of differences to consider in exploring the ground

Exploration of these points offers a way to see some of the patterns with which you operate, as distinct from those around you :*

- How you pay attention
- How you get started
- How you organize yourself internally
- How you measure movement or progress
- How you relate to time
- How you optimize your learning
- How you share your thoughts and feelings

Each phrase begins with **how** to emphasize a critical point. Quite frequently, our conversations about ourselves and others center on “whether” or “why” or “when” – “She has no relation to time”; “I couldn’t focus if my life depended on it.”; “He simply never starts -- anything!” Every human being is connected to each of these areas of differences – that is, we pay attention, we organize, we start, we finish, we gauge our progress, we relate to time, we learn, and we share our thoughts and feelings. The differences between us, at the level of inner diversity, lay in how the patterns play in us, not **whether** they do.

It's beyond the scope of this paper to go into detail on these

* These particular points have been developed in collaboration with Jon Vogen.

points of misunderstanding, but we will provide a little more information about the first two to give a sense of the kinds of questions you might ask yourself, and others.

How you pay attention

What part of the world captures your attention in the first place – do you look inward at how you are feeling in response to what is around you? Are you noticing your physical body or the environment? Perhaps what draws your attention is what has changed in the environment. Do you tend to focus on the parts or on the whole?

Some people clearly describe themselves as attending to multiple points of focus, particularly on the periphery – the boundaries condition. Others are concentrating on a centralized single focus.

A common difference related to how you pay attention is students who declare they need to have music or talking or several sources of input “in order to concentrate” as opposed to those students who have can’t focus if there are “distractions.”

How you get started

What do you need in order to begin a project or a task? We all need “enough information to get started”, but what is “enough?” When do you need information or input? How do you need it – precise and detailed (“enough detail so I know what is expected of me!”)? Approximate yet provocative (“something to get me thinking about possibilities!”)? Do you need background and sufficient context at the beginning? As you move through the project? As you request it? What factors create a sense of engagement for you?

Generating and answering questions about these common points of misunderstandings is most effective if engaged with others. However, our tendency to want to bond with one another and to find commonalities can initially skew the experience of exploring differences. Often the first response

to reflecting on the common misunderstandings is for people to exclaim delightedly to one another “I do that also!” or “I am the same way!” It is helpful in this instance to employ three strategies: first, to ask for examples of situations to test the similarity of the responses; second, to clarify, with concrete examples, the words that are being used since the meanings of words are often idiosyncratic and highly colored by the ways we have constructed our inner world; third, it is often helpful to ask questions framed around “how” rather than considering “what” or “whether” or “why.” Asking a how question doesn’t necessarily lead you to clarity but it can help refocus what is actually happening rather than assuming agreement.

This exercise of exploring differences is **surprisingly difficult with adults**. One explanation is the psychological phenomenon of anchoring in which we “assume information we are given is at least somewhat accurate and therefore use that as an anchor around which to evaluate new information or make informed guesses.”* In a similar way, while we know cognitively that other people are different from us in how they process information, we also assume that they aren’t that different from us. It’s often much easier for us to believe that someone else is rude or stupid or in some way dysfunctional than that they have a totally different way of looking at a situation. A good test of the efficacy of this approach is to imagine a variety of possible explanations for what you are observing and to ask the other person about one of these explanations (“I think you may be doing a lot of the planning/work in your head ... is that accurate?”) Even if your first guess is not accurate, the fact that you have offered another explanation will open the conversation and you will learn something new.

The good news for the Learning for Well-being Framework is that, as noted, children and young people have a much easier time shifting their mindsets to account for differences in how their peers and adults perceive and make sense of

* October 23 2006 Washington Post

their environments. Of particular interest is the ways in which young people will construct approaches and strategies for sharing information and experiences with their peers about the facet of inner diversity that we are calling **Finding the ground**, which we are relating to your core processing, within a balance that is unique and natural for you.)

Integrating/developing the three aspects

In addition to investigating the core processing pattern (through the process of finding the ground), realizing your unique potential is also related to a **way of understanding, developing and transforming the functioning of each of the aspects in relation to self, others, and the environment.**

Deepening and enlivening each of the aspects, regardless of our particular grounding process, is essential for well-being.

It provides **fundamental information about how to be human** – for example, in relation to the emotional aspect, there is awareness of how I am feeling and how I can manage those feelings for my own sense of well-being; there is an awareness of how I can express those feelings with other people and within the physical environment.

It helps us **activate our unique potential more fully through the process of exploring** and accessing **our specific ways of learning**, communicating and developing (see sidebar on metacognition.)

It offers the possibility for **greater integration of the aspects** – by which we mean that the aspects operate in alignment, and not in tension, with one another. For example, often the domain of one aspect is given precedence at the expense of the others.* A classic example is when the energies of the head (mental aspect) are overworked (e.g., long hours of

* This of course is simply a way of making a point about priorities and values – it is not literally true that one can separate the aspects into component parts.

study) without corresponding attention being given to the needs of the physical body (e.g., running around the field kicking a ball) or the needs of the emotional aspects (e.g., laughing with friends, taking some quiet time for oneself.) Clearly any mental effort is enhanced with physical exercise and loving relationship – we have known this through our own experiences and science now supports our knowing. But we need reminders and practices with integrating the aspects.

It allows **deeper expression of the aspects** so that they become more qualitative and refined, not just in relation to ourselves, but also in our relationship to others and to our world.

A Path for Exploring: Core Capacities

Integrating the aspects requires developing certain core capacities – capacities that will, in turn, allow a fuller and deeper expression of self. We list certain capacities that seem to be vital for a sense of well-being as we have defined it, but it is important that we recognize that we are talking about a broad range of human experiences which exist in a variety of contexts. In keeping with the principle of self-organization, we need to let go of any preconceived notions of the capacities that must be on this list. We recommend these particular capacities from the perspective of integrating the aspects more fully.

However, it is worth noting that the core capacities for developing practices of activating, integrating and deepening the aspects are quite similar to those suggested by Guy Claxton to support Powerful Learning, as he defines it (see sidebar.) Moreover, these are also the capacities we have found are needed for exploring one's patterns of inner diversity.

Metacognition

Learning about how we learn requires competences associated with metacognition, the practice of thinking about how one thinks, but it also requires tuning into all our own signals and the ways in which we operate in the world, internally and externally. Those signals include what we see, feel, sense, and imagine. While developing these capacities often begins with parents and teachers, it is critical that young learners also be engaged in developing these capacities as part of their everyday experiences.

Many skills suggested by Guy Claxton in his work on *Powerful Learning* are also the ones which need to be cultivated in learning how to learn [Claxton, 2004a]. He describes some basic capacities, such as paying attention, discerning patterns and pattern relationships, and reflection (which includes using imagination and intuition as supporting tools). Paying attention implies both inner and outer observation. In terms of inner observation, it might be equated with a form of mindfulness. It also implies paying attention to what is happening rather than focusing on what is not happening. Discerning relationships and patterns in your observations is another capacity to cultivate – though not necessarily one that follows simply from your overt observations since it may involve intuition, or inner observing, as well. Reflecting and imagining are two capacities that often inform one another and help children and youth relax into playing with (that is, feeling and sensing) the learning needs underlying a pattern: ‘If I had to make up a story about what I’m seeing, what might be the happening here?’ Being receptive to this kind of internal pattern-seeking and metaphor-making is central to creativity.

Core Capacities

The fundamental capacity is RELAXATION of mind, body, feelings, and spirit – allowing us to immerse ourselves fully in what Gina Ross (2008) calls the “stream of life” in which

tension, trauma, and stuck energy can be released and we have access to all our resources.

If we could offer the children of the world, indeed all people, a single capacity that would alter how we experience our inner and outer selves, it would be developing a practice of relaxation as it applies to body, mind, and feelings. For Cloninger (2006), it is the fundamental activity on which self-aware consciousness depends; for neuroscientists, it is the most critical factor in learning (OECD, 2010). In the body, relaxation allows one to be more fully present to experience all of one's senses as well as what is needed; in the mind, it allows stillness and clarity; in the feelings, relaxation is the first step in allowing one to listen to and be with one's emotions.

There are other capacities which also seem critical to encourage and support full human functioning. Again, the list might shift considerably in different contexts, but these are ones that review of the literature and our investigations with young people have suggested as being central to their experience of being human. Each of these capacities needs to be developed and expressed in the three arenas of self (the inner world), others (the social world), and the environment (the physical world):

- Cultivating sensory awareness
- Paying Attention, both outer observation and mindfulness (inner observation)
- Reflection
- Listening to one's self and to others
- Inquiring (of self and others) with respect and curiosity
- Experiencing and offering empathy
- Cultivating subtle senses – including the intuition and imagination
- Choiceful action – including planning, decision-making and self-discipline
- Somatic experiencing – listening to the wisdom of the body

- Discerning patterns and systemic processes

While it is beyond the scope of this paper to address each of these capacities, it may be useful to look at one of them in slightly more depth. As an example, let us consider **cultivating sensory awareness**. Our senses provide the raw material -- the content -- for our experiences of the world including the images with which we think, feel, and act. To be fully alive and whole, our senses must be engaged and enlivened. This implies nurturing --proper care and healing -- but also attending to our senses so that we expand and enhance their capabilities, so that we learn to see and hear and taste ever finer distinctions. Our relation to our senses seems so fundamental that we might not even consider the need to give them additional attention. Yet, there is widespread evidence that there has been significant decline in sensory abilities, particularly in children. Studies in Germany indicate that in less than 15 years young people's ability to distinguish sounds has declined from 300,000 sounds to 180,000, and in some cases to barely more than 100,000 sounds. Douglas Sloan (2005) argues that this has resulted from overstimulation, neglect of proper care, and even the amount of time that we spend in virtual worlds, or ones isolated from natural surroundings. Clearly, it behooves us to attend to becoming more discerning in all of our senses, not to see them diminished.

An example of one supportive tool to use in developing these capacities is focusing –which Eugene Gendlin describes as a technique that can be learned easily by every age group. (Focusing originated with Gendlin and has been expanded by Peter Levine as somatic experiencing and individual trauma, and applied by Gina Ross to work with the collective trauma vortex.)

The key to Focusing is being receptive to a physical or felt sense which registers subtly yet clearly in the body as a kind of physical stirring. Using a method of Focusing connects your observations, your discernment, your reflection with your senses and feelings and creates a sense of wholeness in the system. This is generally characterized by a sense of 'rightness' -- also explored as embodied knowing by cognitive biologist and practicing Buddhist Francisco Varela. Such capacities are acquired through practice but, over time, they impact the whole life of the individual.

Knowing my deepest aspirations

Exploring one's unique way of functioning involves the recognition of one's deepest aspirations. In an earlier section, we connected the term unique potential to a notion of soul as "a deep and vital energy that gives meaning and direction to our lives." [Miller, 2000] Recognizing this deep purpose, or deep capacity, is perhaps the most important facet to discover about oneself since it is the primary motivating factor for all one's inner and outer activity. It may also be the most difficult to discern from an external point of view because it represents a subtle unfolding of seen and unseen energies emerging into consciousness. It is difficult to write of this facet because it is truly more related to poetry than to prose. The myths and folk tales that are so much a part of our human traditions all speak to the inward journey of the seeker and the treasures that are found at the inner core -- the depths of the water, the darkness of the cave, and the one universal sound that contains all other sounds. **This** is where one finds pointers to one's deep capacity.

A Path for Exploring: Following the Sound

There are **many ways** to explore this facet of your unique identity. Here are three as examples.

Following the Sound, as a guide for accessing one's deepest aspirations, is a metaphor but it also touches on the particular role of sound, tones, and music in accessing the deeper inner life. As a sense organ, the ear is infinitely more subtle and inwardly tuned than the more dominant visual sense. Musician and sound educator Meg Freeling (2010) explains: "Tones and sounds provide a first-hand experience of the inner essence of a person or thing. We say something "rings true" when the inner quality sounds right to us." Following the Sound suggests that you identify a tone or sound and follow it until it is no longer apparent -- it is like ringing a bell, allowing the sound to fade and yet continuing to listen with your inner ear. It is following a thread into another level of consciousness, but using your auditory sense.

As an alternative, and more concrete, path for exploring your deepest aspirations, Hans Akerbloom (2009; www.scandinavianleadership.com) offers a process, using visualization, imagination, and clarifying questions in order to revisit a time and space when all of the aspects are enlivened and present -- often this occurs in peak moments such as hiking in the mountains and coming to a breathtaking view or holding a newborn infant and finding oneself filled with the wonder of new life. Akerbloom's process, used extensively with corporate leaders, focuses on what he calls an "outside-in" vision: "How do I want things to be in **our** world?" Using this question for the unfolding of a personal vision and definition of values, you can begin both to experience how the threads of your deepest aspirations have manifested in your life (that is, those ideas, feelings, elements to which you have been consistently drawn) and simultaneously to link these threads to the actions necessary to live more fully and in alignment with your deepest self.

Another route is through considering the qualities of an

individual that are present from the beginning of life (although they may become more or less obvious over time.) To some extent these qualities define one's disposition and seem to reflect what we are calling the unique potential of each person. They relate to how we live into our particular path of growth and our deepest aspirations; acting as a kind of alignment to one's spirit (a "north star".) Examples of qualities might include: sweetness, fierce attentiveness, curiosity, patience, integrity, detachment, and many more. These are the essential character traits and sometimes it is easier to see them in others. The Virtues Project (www.virtuesproject.com) is an approach, implemented in a number of countries, which gives teachers and students opportunities and methods to identify and communicate their "virtues" or qualities; they describe virtues as "the essence of the human spirit."

To summarize this section, the three facets of a whole systems approach to inner diversity include:

- Deepening the development and integration of all the aspects;
- Finding one's unique balance in terms of an inner core process;
- Expressing and living one's deep purpose.

Some stories: why Inner Diversity matters

Albert Schweitzer expressed, in another context, an inspiring purpose that we might borrow to define Learning for Well-being as a process for "becoming more finely and deeply human." (quoted in Carneiro, 2006) Learning for Well-being, however, is not solely about the individual. It is also about all the environments and contexts in which children learn and grow. We dream of making a difference in those environments. In that spirit, we want to offer a few stories of why a focus on inner diversity matters – for the young learner, for parents, for teachers, educators, and classrooms. These examples also illustrate the importance of developing some of the core capacities we identified a few pages earlier.

While these particular environments are most appropriate for this paper, it's worth noting that communities, businesses and other organizations have used the understanding and practicing of inner diversity principles to improve the functioning of leaders and teams with considerable success. For example, a vice-president at Intel Corporation estimated that one factory alone saved over a billion dollars in start-up costs – largely through enhanced team functioning that resulted from working with inner diversity practices. (Seagal & Horne, 1997, p 4.)

For learners

Young people need to understand the various aspects of human functioning, and to recognize their own patterns of processing, including how they learn. The key is to give them responsibility for exploring their own processes of learning, which includes learning to learn, and learning how they learn. There is a critical difference in these phrases – learning to learn assumes that there is a single standard for learning (much like one might teach study habits or test taking skills or the capacity to concentrate); learning **how** they learn assumes legitimate differences in the learning processes – differences that need to be brought into consciousness, respected, and further developed. As noted U.S. educator Jerome Bruner (1996) observes: there is a need for “redefining students as collaborative thinkers who can learn through participation in how their own and others’ minds work.” (quoted in Coffield, 2005, p 138)

Benefits for Children in Learning How They Learn:

- Develops competencies for life-long learning
- Returns responsibility to the learner
- Builds on natural desire for autonomy and agency
- Capitalizes on strengths – asking what they are doing (rather than focusing on what they are not doing)
- Removes stigma of not doing well according to a particular way, or standard
- Allows one to relax and return to his/her natural pace and timing

Despite the prevalence of research about multiple ways of learning and diverse ways of being intelligent there is still an assumption in many contemporary classrooms that students need to be fixed (i.e., there is something wrong with them). It has been called the deficit model of education in which most children – even high achievers – suffer from a belief that they are not 'enough' within the context of their schooling (Senge, 2000.)

Seemingly small differences in the way children learn – such as one child needing to talk aloud in order to reach a conclusion, whilst another needs to be silent in order to reach a conclusion and then talk – can have an enormous impact on how children experience various learning environments and how those experiences affect well-being. One can imagine many labels given to the first child: 'a distraction to others'; 'always having to show off'; 'wanting to be the center of attention'; even a 'cheater' if caught self-talking during a test. The second child could become, in the eyes of others, 'the quiet one', 'the one who never seems to participate with the others', perhaps even 'the one who is a little slow'. If it is true that, on average, teachers wait two to three seconds to get responses from questions to eight-year-old pupils, then one can imagine that the second child might never have an opportunity to respond to most questions in the classroom. Children who do not resemble their teachers or the majority of their classmates, in terms of their core processing or patterns of inner diversity, will often begin to experience confusion and

tension, which in turn creates a downward spiral of increasing confusion and lack of confidence. The child who is different starts to believe he or she is the problem.

Interestingly, there is a technique called “the three second wait” which is used as part of introducing mindfulness tools to elementary school children (Boyce, 2007). The technique asks teachers to wait three seconds before calling on a student during class discussion. This leads to more students taking part because it eliminates the bias against children who consider their response (think through their answers) before raising their hands. The incorporation of such mindfulness technique supports the belief that inner diversity can be addressed through the use of existing tools, such as those involved in metacognition, and the consciousness that these patterns of inner diversity need to be taken into account.

For parents

Parents have advantages in being able to foster environments that support their child’s unique ways of learning, communicating and developing. A disadvantage, however, occurs when learning becomes the exclusive responsibility of the educational system; a frequent concern in this regard is when a child is out of step with the rest of his/her grade level. The utterance ‘your child is a different kind of learner’, is usually interpreted by parents as a kind of warning, implying cognitive, social, emotional or sometimes physical disabilities. As noted, even young children recognize differences in how other children learn – and they will follow the lead of adults and the messages embedded in the environment in how they interpret those differences.

Parents are motivated to serve their children so they are uniquely qualified to observe and discern patterns in their learning, if they can be relaxed, observant, respectful, and communicative. Talking with a child about his/her needs goes a long way toward enabling an environment of learning and helping the child learn how to express those needs.

The following example illustrates how parents can make a difference. Some keen observation from parents allowed them to notice the differences between themselves and their son in terms of starting and finishing various projects. Both parents enjoy spontaneous interactions and thrive on scheduling changes. In contrast, their nine year old son preferred to know the schedule for the day in order to understand clearly what was expected of him. Spontaneous changes in plans were difficult for him.

Once his parents noticed the differences, they experimented with ways to support his educational process: for example, they encouraged their son to find the right time for him to tell the parents about his day and what he needed for the following day. This allowed him to “finish” his day in the way that made the most sense to him as well as providing time for him to integrate his learning. When he was assigned a specific project, his parents helped him establish context by asking about its purpose, his thinking about it, and how he saw the plan unfolding. This approach allowed him time to pace himself while his parents could remain supportive. These changes helped all of them when the family made an international move. Having recognized his need to plan and have regular scheduling, they engaged with him as early as possible, providing rationale and information. A journal kept track of his concerns and regular times were scheduled to discuss steps in the process and solicit his suggestions. By listening to him explain his needs, and respecting his contributions to the plan, they helped their son flourish in a new environment, learn how to talk about his needs and concerns, and deepened their relationship with him.

For teachers, educators and classrooms

Teachers know that children learn in different ways, but according to their own reports, they often do not know how to teach students with different ways of learning at the same time. A productive response is to allow learners to take responsibility for exploring and sharing their own

individual learning needs, and supporting this activity by creating classrooms in which learning how each child and teacher learns is a fundamental part of the curriculum and, more importantly, of the culture of the school and classroom. In order to create an environment in which differences in learners can be revealed explicitly and used constructively, it is necessary to reframe the concept 'differences in learning' in an ongoing learning process that involves all the learners in the class – students and teachers.

Educators (teachers, administrators, support staff, and teacher training programs) need to create a common language around exploring individual differences in learning allowing the experiences, observations, reflections and conversations of the learners to guide how one learns about learning. What is critical is beginning to observe what is happening rather than what is not happening so that the language for inner diversity stays neutral, non-judgmental and respectful. Students need to play a central role in the process of exploring differences in learning. Teachers can provide opportunities which will capture the attention of the learners – some reason for them to want to be engaged and a structure that will allow them a place to attach their attention. The younger the ages of the children when you begin this process, the easier it will be. The more students are involved in the process, the more responsibility they take.

An example of developing environments relates to the concept of emotional intelligence, in which children engage in learning conversations, paying attention to feelings and differences in feelings among classmates (reported in Goleman, 1996.) As a consequence, responses related to how they see, discern, and manage feelings have become more skillful, both personally and socially. A similar case can be made for learning how to learn: one can introduce a different lens so that a variety of learning processes are validated. This will have significance for teachers, but also for parents and young people.

What is clear in each of the above examples is that working with

inner diversity depends on the openness and curiosity of both adults and youth. **It is not about adding more activities, programs or techniques to the existing environment. It is about bringing more of one's essential humanity** to the environments so that how subjects are explored, the tools made available and the experience in the learning environment is transformed. We believe that placing more attention on the various facets of inner diversity provides a bridge to more respectful, open and exciting learning environments that reflect Learning for Well-being.

SUMMARY

Inner diversity is the term we use to describe inner individual differences – these are patterns that function as whole systems in how we learn, communicate and develop.

Inner diversity is emphasized in Learning for Well-being as foundational for understanding our own way of functioning but is underrepresented in other considerations of well-being.

The focus on inner diversity involves developing ways to **explore one's own way of functioning in order to enhance it** rather than trying or being constrained to fit oneself to some external model.

Combining a living systems perspective with our working definition of well-being suggest a viable way for learners to explore their unique ways of functioning; it focuses on understanding the physical, emotional, and mental aspects and the ways in which these energies combine to form patterns.

Three facets for exploration are proposed:

- Finding the ground (relating to the inner core processing)
- Integrating the three aspects (relating to development)
- Knowing my deepest aspirations (relating to deep motivations and qualities)

Regardless of the context – business, family, school, community – understanding and working with inner diversity supports the whole functioning of the individual and group.



SECTION FOUR

**FRAMEWORK
FOR ENHANCING
CAPACITIES AND
PRACTICES**

FRAMEWORK FOR ENHANCING CAPACITIES AND PRACTICES

The Learning for Well-being movement demonstrates the coherence and synergy between the following independent yet inter-related partnerships: UEF, Elham Palestine, the 'Learning for Well-being' Consortium of Foundations in Europe, the 'Learning for Well-being' Youth movement in Europe, and others to come. UEF has played a catalytic role in the co-creation of them, in partnership with other organizations that share its vision. While each initiative is managed autonomously, each promotes the 'Learning for Well-being' vision through a unique set of activities and programs.

In this last section we want to share the framework that UEF is developing for enhancing capacities and practices for those engaged in working with children and young people, particularly in the areas of health, education, and media.

As context, we recapitulate some earlier points of what Learning for Well-being implies:

- Learning is a self-directed activity – teachers, guides, and other role models are critical to the process, but it is the learner who learns
- Learning involves the whole person – mind, body, heart and spirit
- Learners have individual processes and needs which must be acknowledged and accepted – this includes what we have termed “inner diversity”
- Learning is inherently a social activity – it occurs in diverse environments and through interactions and relationships
- Learners require curiosity, openness and respect
- Learning requires the development of capacities that enable learners to engage with and express their unique potential as a fundamental part of their well-being
- Learning is optimized through self-organization, in contexts which allow the learner autonomy and choices

The Learning for Well-being Framework is centered on the working definition of well-being: **Realizing one’s unique potential through physical, mental, emotional and spiritual development in relation to self, others, and the environment.** For the framework, this definition rests in the context of four perspectives: that is, the three UEF focus areas of inner diversity; relationships and communication; participation and engagement; with the principle of self-organization, as the fourth perspective. Each of these, in turn, reflects how the individual engages with his/her self, with other people, and with the physical environment. For example, the perspective of participation involves how each of us participates in our own inner and outer lives, and so forth for the other perspectives.

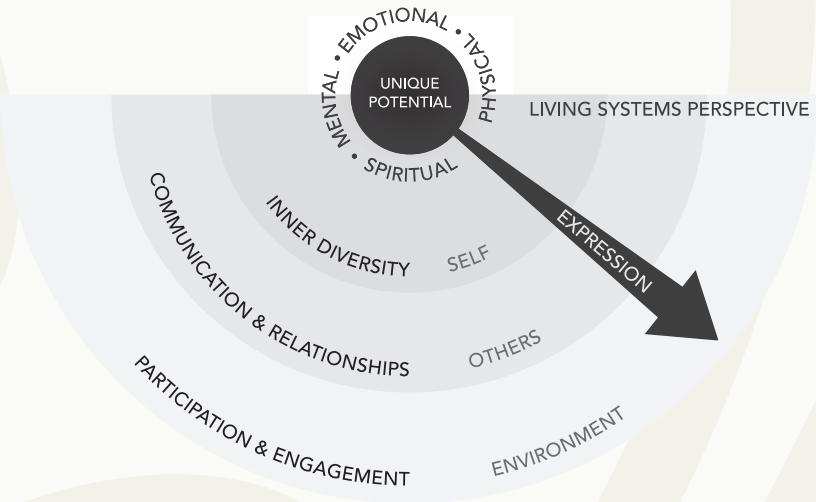


Figure 2. Learning for Well-being Conceptual Framework

Learning for Well-being requires a central emphasis on the unfolding of each person's **unique potential**, the vital energy and qualities that provide meaning, purpose and direction to an individual's life.

We believe that for this unfolding to happen, we need to understand our inner processes – our way of being in the world and how we learn and develop **(inner diversity)**.

We need to cultivate the ways in which we communicate and express ourselves -- how to create qualitative relationships with ourselves, with others, with the environment in which we find ourselves **(relationships/communication)**.

We need to understand that learning for well-being requires us to take individual responsibility, to build practices, to make choices, to take action **(engagement/participation)**.

Lastly, we need to recognize that our lives are dynamically interwoven with the systems within and around us. **(self-organization/living systems perspective)**

Activities supported by this framework

All UEF activities involve the interweaving of these four. The Universal Education Foundation acts as a catalyst for collective impact. It works in co-creative partnerships with organizations from different sectors and disciplines that share a common agenda towards Well-being for All.

In working with its partners, the role and aim of UEF is to:

- Work towards a common agenda, sharing a common language in order to lay the ground for collective action
- Share measurement system and processes
- Support mutually reinforcing activities through each of the L4WB alliances and partners

- Provide continuous communication between the actors in L4WB alliances
- Offer a backbone support organization

The following examples illustrate how the Learning for Well-being framework is embodied in various programs involving our core partnerships.

With **Elham**, we are creating multi-level and multi-sector partnerships, particularly related to the educational and health systems and the youth who are served by these systems. These relationships, involving youth, educators, policy makers, industry, and bureaucrats, are creating an open space between those who provide services and those who are served. They are built on respect for what is genuinely working in the system and for the self-initiative of individuals who have created innovative programs and processes. We are aiming **to allow the system to inspire itself** – through creating more space for self-organization. As entrepreneurial and home-grown initiatives are celebrated and mainstreamed, there is more space for still other initiatives to emerge.

With the **Voice of Children Toolkit**, we are providing methods and strategies to conduct surveys and focus groups that enable young people to express how different learning environments affect each and every aspect of their well-being. In addition to diverse ways of listening to youth and encouraging multiple forms of response, the toolkit offers communication strategies for young people to share the findings and, with adults, to advocate for changes with those people in government, education, health, media or industry who can make a difference.

With the Voice of Children Toolkit, we are opening a dialogue with young people as the essential customers of the educational system, and engaging them in co-creating their worlds. The simple act of asking questions and listening to youth is important because the scope of the questions expands their awareness of the nature of learning, of education, of being human. In a sense, through being consulted and invited into

the process of shaping their learning environments, **youth are inspiring themselves and learning critical lessons about agency, responsibility, and communication.** The Voice of Children Toolkit engages adults, too, in applying the questions to themselves and reconsidering the ways in which they relate to young people. Like Elham, the Voice of Children is both a process (of communication, participation, self-organization) and a product (information, new ideas, new ways of working together.)

With the **Learning for Well-being Policy Glossary**, developed through the Learning for Well-being Consortium of Foundations in Europe, we are providing conceptual understanding for policy makers in Europe. The glossary is focusing across sectors (e.g. health, mental health, social affairs, education, etc.), draws on state-of-the-art and multidisciplinary research on well-being and, crucially, it will propose principles for policies and ideas about how to 'make it happen'. One aim is to help create that necessary shift in mindsets and practices that can better respond to the inner diversity of individuals and their learning processes, valuing the fulfillment of individual potential, self-organization, communication, and participation. The Consortium has commissioned a specialist in the field as lead author and is organizing consultation with experts and youth organizations.

With the identification of **Learning for Well-being Indicators**, also undertaken through the Learning for Well-being Consortium of Foundations in Europe, we are using a stocktaking process to determine the types of data sets and indicators required to assess the levels of participation of children and young people in shaping their diverse learning environments, the quality of communication experienced, whether their unique ways of functioning (inner diversity) is respected in their learning environments and the extent to which there is space for self-organization.

With the **Learning for Well-being Forums**, we are offering open spaces in which youth, policy makers, educators, health

care providers, media, community leaders, and others can take stock of the opinions of youth and exchange ideas and practices through which people and organizations can evolve towards a fuller expression of Learning for Well-being. As with Elham, we aim to understand and to highlight existing initiatives that are addressing what is relevant and meaningful to young people in terms of well-being and their development, and, as with Voice of Children, to seek to expand what is possible.

With the **Learning for Well-being Mutual Learning Opportunities**, we aim to help create shifts in awareness, understanding and practices that can better respond to the diversity of individuals and their learning processes, valuing the fulfillment of individual potential. Our definition of well-being asserts the central importance on understanding human functioning, specifically in how we can help young people learn to understand, develop and express their unique ways of being – of learning, communicating, and developing. This kind of capacity building is fundamental for all those involved in the lives of young people – teachers, psychologists, film makers, sports coaches, doctors, parents, and many others, including young people. Our approach is to work through the perspectives of self-organization, communication, and participation with the central lens being that of uniqueness/inner diversity.

Through multiple partnerships – with young people, with governments, with media, with education and health care systems – we need to incorporate these same principles in our intentions and in practice. Communication, relationships and participation must occur with openness, respect, curiosity, and fully embracing the self-organizing principles of living systems. This means that as we partner with individuals and organizations groups in many different arenas, our learning will be generative. We will seek to understand, to learn, and to create with one another while each of us maintains our independent areas of focus.

Our goals

Building on current and cutting-edge research and practices in education, learning science, the neurosciences, and the wisdom of the living systems perspective, we aim to provide ways to enhance and support the work of our partners through the Learning for Well-being framework so that:

- Children and youth are more and more engaged, their voices are increasingly heard, and they are participating actively in shaping policy impacting on their learning environments.
- Through acquiring values, attitudes and practices, more and more children and young people are willing and able to make sound choices that support their well-being through their life journey.
- More and more children become aware of the unique and distinct ways in which they learn and develop (and adults listen to, encourage, and facilitate ways to implement this awareness).
- More and more educators, parents, media and ICT, health and social care professionals understand the connection between well-being and learning, and contribute to making all environments more conducive to learning for well-being.
- More and more youth organizations, governments and stakeholders from multiple sectors partner with us in producing services and products to sustain our collective endeavor and integrate in their work our learning for well-being approach.

In Conclusion

We are simply at the beginning of a dialogue.

We have used this paper to offer various thoughts, experiences, musings, and connections. We want to share what is in our heart about Learning for Well-being, including how we value full participation and engagement, loving communication and relationships, and clear understanding and practices of how we are each diverse and unique.

The desire, and necessity, for all of us to move beyond separate and separating areas of specialization underlies our emphasis on Learning for Well-being **as a process**.

We would like to conclude with three messages to reach out to our partners, and to all those with whom we share a vision of what is possible for ourselves, our children and in our world.

The first message relates to the uniqueness and diversity of each one of us, and the need to develop systems that take account of this fact. If we design and practice an approach for addressing everyone's needs and the contexts in which they live, then we have the possibility of creating inclusive societies that avoid labeling or judging differences. Such societies can celebrate the strengths of each while supporting any limitations or constraints.

The second message is the recognition that each one of us is fundamentally motivated by the deep desire for a sense of meaning. The discovery of that meaning for each of us is the process that makes the unfolding of our unique potential possible in all our diverse ways of being. The acknowledgment of that sense of meaning provides us with inner resources (whether we call it resilience, self-esteem, confidence) to work within the most disadvantaged positions, again without labeling and separating.

The third message is the importance of measuring ...

measuring the right things and in the right way. If we are talking about a process then we need to measure how well we are doing in that process; in this case, how well are we developing the capacities, competences and skills that are needed for Learning for Well-being; how are different environments supporting it; and how are we measuring the cost of not doing so?

We look forward to hearing from you – how can we co-create a movement for Learning for Well-being?

Learning for Well-being is the process of fully engaging and expressing who we are as individuals within the contexts of our common humanity. It inspires us to find ways for being our becoming – living in our present moment while developing, challenging and creating ourselves for the future.

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