

OECD Learning Compass 2030



# Towards Collective Well-Being

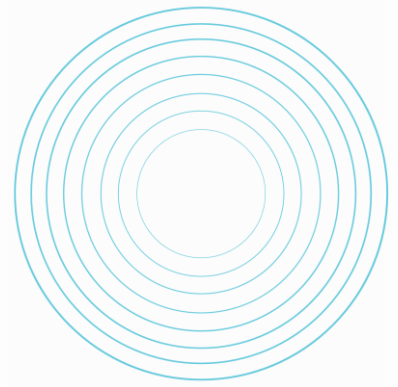
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In modern industrial and post-industrial societies, it is very important for students to develop a sense of agency, the belief that they have the power to understand and to affect the current environment—personal, social, professional, communal.

Most human beings throughout history have NOT had a strong sense of agency. They followed customs and did what they were told to do. So even having the sense that one has control over some aspects of one's life is a considerable achievement, and one that does not occur without support and without a sense of agency.

As [OECD Learning Compass 2030](#) suggests, in our time an important requirement is that one is able to work with others for the common good – the importance of collective well-being.

In modern contemporary society, particularly in the United States, it is not easy to convert your own sense of agency to a commitment to work with others for the common good. A cooperative approach requires both a belief in the importance of cooperation, and the skills and knowledge to do so effectively.

As in earlier times, it is essential that all young persons become literate, and that literacy now includes computational literacy; that they be exposed to the major disciplines and ways of thinking that human beings have developed over the centuries and have practice in thinking in disciplined ways; that they are able to work together with others on common pursuits; and that they become participating citizens in their communities – competencies and concepts the Learning Compass equally stresses.

At the same time, new techniques and technologies have emerged and these should certainly be drawn upon. But the technologies should never determine the goals. Rather the goals and values of a society should determine which technologies are relevant and how best to deploy them—while retaining the right to rethink these approaches, and to make further adjustments as warranted.

These skills do not develop by accident. They need to be modeled, coached, rewarded, and – as necessary—sanctioned when they fail to emerge in situations where they are needed. Traditionally, scouting, the military, and

other religious and communal organizations have enhanced the cooperative stance. We now need to be able to do so within our more traditional educational institutions and also—a greater challenge—in social media.

As an educator for well over fifty years, I consider the following changes and challenges to be most daunting: 1) to prepare students for citizenship not only in their own community but in the wider, now global world; 2) to provide the human values and models that were once powerful in many neighborhoods but are now far less visible and for less compelling; 3) to help all young people develop that sense of agency, of change-making, that was once restricted to elites; 4) to make sure that a heightened sense of personal agency and purpose, is wedded to goals that are appropriate to the broader society and can be publicly justified; 5) to help young people become comfortable with new technologies, while guiding them to use these technologies in ways that are appropriate and ethical; 6) of special importance and of great challenge, to provide the tools and the guidance so that all individuals can continue to learn throughout their lives—again cherishing what is of value in the past and present while being prepared to take on new and unexpected challenges.

In the past, because of economic considerations, only those with considerable means could have an education that is individualized, personalized, taking into account their own strengths as well as areas that needed special support. Alexander the Great could have Aristotle as a tutor, a mentor! But today, as we understand better the differences that exist across individuals, and as we have available technologies that can be personalized as much as we'd like, it is possible to provide powerful educational supports that are available for the full spectrum of human beings. And should this educational dream be realized, we will be in the unique position of being able to help each person, each human being, to achieve his or her full potential.

But preparing each person for lifelong learning and for a sense of purpose is only one half of the equation: unless human beings can learn to live together, peacefully and cooperatively, the world will be an undesirable place, and, indeed, there may not be a world at all.

<sup>1</sup> [Howard Gardner](#) is the Hobbs Professor of Cognition and Education at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. A recipient of the MacArthur Prize Fellowship, the University of Louisville Grawemeyer Award in Education, the Prince of Asturias Award for Social Sciences, and the Brock International Prize in Education, he is a leading thinker of education and human development. He has received honorary degrees from thirty-one colleges and universities. He has studied and written extensively about intelligence, creativity, leadership, and professional ethics, and is senior director of Project Zero and co-founder of the Good Project. For the last several years, he has worked in various capacities with Harvard undergraduates and is now undertaking a study of liberal arts and sciences in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Gardner's books include *Good Work*, *Changing Minds*, *The Development and Education of the Mind*, *Multiple Intelligences: New Horizons*, *Truth, Beauty, and Goodness Reframed*, and *The App Generation: How Today's Youth Navigate Identity, Intimacy, and Imagination in a Digital World*.