

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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National Honor goes to Magnolia Elementary School for Whole Child Excellence

[ASCD](#) recently announced that Magnolia Elementary School is the 2015 recipient of Vision in Action: The ASCD Whole Child Award. On behalf of her school, Principal Patricia Mason accepted the award from ASCD Executive Director Judy Seltz on stage during the first general session of the 70th ASCD Annual Conference and Exhibit Show.

Vision in Action: The ASCD Whole Child Award is designed to recognize schools that that have changed the conversation about education from a focus on narrowly defined academic achievement to one that promotes the development of the whole child, making sure each child is [healthy](#), [safe](#), [engaged](#), [supported](#), and [challenged](#). Vision in Action schools have moved beyond a vision for educating the whole child to actions that result in learners who are knowledgeable, emotionally and physically healthy, civically active, artistically engaged, prepared for economic self-sufficiency, and ready for the world beyond formal schooling.

Magnolia Elementary serves 497 students from grades pre-K through five in suburban Baltimore. The school is classified as Title I and 90 percent of the students qualify for free or reduced lunch. A staff of three administrators, three school counselors, 44 teachers, and 10 support personnel provide a well-rounded learning environment for each child.

“ASCD applauds the work Magnolia Elementary School has done to support each and every child they serve, and it is our pleasure to present the school with the 2015 Vision in Action Award,” said Seltz. “The faculty and staff at Magnolia Elementary consistently demonstrate an exemplary commitment to nurturing learners who are healthy, safe, engaged, supported, and challenged, and we are looking forward to sharing their impressive practices with the education community.”

Commitment to All-Around Health

As part of its commitment to the healthy tenet, Magnolia Elementary runs programs to enhance the physical and social-emotional health of each student. For example, the school keeps students’ bodies healthy by participating in a harvestable school garden program. Through the program, students grow vegetables on school grounds that are then incorporated into school lunches. Since many of the students’ home neighborhoods are not safe for outside play, the school has reworked its master schedule to allow for increased physical education periods and additional free play time connected to lunch periods. The school also includes movement periods in its after-school intervention program.

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Magnolia Elementary also has a mental health cohort that meets six times each year to evaluate the support the school is providing to teachers, staff, and students. The cohort is comprised of a school psychologist, guidance counselor, social worker, as well as a school health readiness counselor, and the school focuses on promoting healthy social-emotional skills and conflict resolution strategies.

“Our vision and actions at Magnolia Elementary School lay a foundation that will help all of our children to develop healthy choices, safe practices, and a mindset of perseverance as they face the academic and social challenges of life,” said Magnolia Elementary School Principal Patricia Mason.

Promoting Positive Behaviors

As a Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) school, Magnolia Elementary believes in emphasizing positive behaviors and teaching character. To build a greater sense of school community, the school has created five “houses” on campus, and each house aligns with a specific character trait: responsibility, respect, cooperation, encouragement, and perseverance.

Students from each grade and every staff member in the school – support staff and faculty alike – are a part of the house system. Within their respective houses, students participate in numerous service learning projects, including making and sending cards to veterans, packing meals for students in need, and cleaning the school grounds.

Success and Sustainability

Due to the school’s focus on evidence-based practices, the percentage of students rating proficient or advanced in mathematics and reading on the Maryland School Assessment (MSA) has increased in four of the last five years.

To continue student growth in academics and all other areas, Magnolia Elementary has created a strong structure for sustainability. The school’s three-part mission statement, which includes developing students as well-rounded citizens, partnering with families and the community, and believing in each other, is integrated into every aspect of the school improvement plan.

In order to accomplish the goals of the school improvement plan, and to make sure that the entire school is accountable for whole child support, leadership is divided between quality improvement teams, which meet monthly and collaborate on each element of school success. A few of these are the assessment team, which analyzes data from formative and summative assessments; the community collaborations team, which facilitates events that include families and the community; and the integrated instructional strategies team, which uses the whole child approach to provide professional development training based on staff needs.

By aligning each of the school efforts—professional development, classroom instruction, assessments, and community engagement—with the mission statement and prioritizing whole child support in that mission, Magnolia Elementary has set up a successful and sustainable environment for student growth.

“I am incredibly proud of Magnolia Elementary School,” said Harford County Superintendent of Schools Barbara Canavan. “The entire school community has been unrelenting in their commitment to ensure that each student experiences unique and differentiated opportunities to achieve both academically and personally. This award is a resonance of the school motto and what we know and admire about the staff of Magnolia Elementary School; they are ‘Reaching, Teaching, Learning... Changing Lives!’”

Schools throughout North America submitted applications for Vision in Action: The ASCD Whole Child Award. Five faculty members from the winning school are guests at the 70th ASCD Annual Conference and Exhibit Show in Houston from March 21-23 and will be featured on an upcoming Whole Child Podcast. ASCD will continue to share Magnolia Elementary’s expertise and exemplary practices with its 125,000 members and the larger education community.

For more information about ASCD's Whole Child Initiative, visit www.ascd.org/wholechild. To learn about the Whole Child Network of schools, visit www.ascd.org/wholechildnetwork. You can also find out more about ASCD's other programs, products, services, and memberships at www.ascd.org.

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