



Where the Mind is without Fear

Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high

Where knowledge is free

Where the world has not been broken up into fragments

By narrow domestic walls

Where words come out from the depth of truth

Where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection

Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way

Into the dreary desert sand of dead habit

Where the mind is led forward by thee

Into ever-widening thought and action

Into that heaven of freedom...

Rabindranath Tagore

Systemic Integral Education Model

This model is presented to complete Tagore's profound ode to true education above. What follows is a presentation of a systemic, integral model for education, which includes parents, educators, children of all ages, families, community members, etc. The intention of the model is to transform the way we think about education; how it is defined and brought to life.

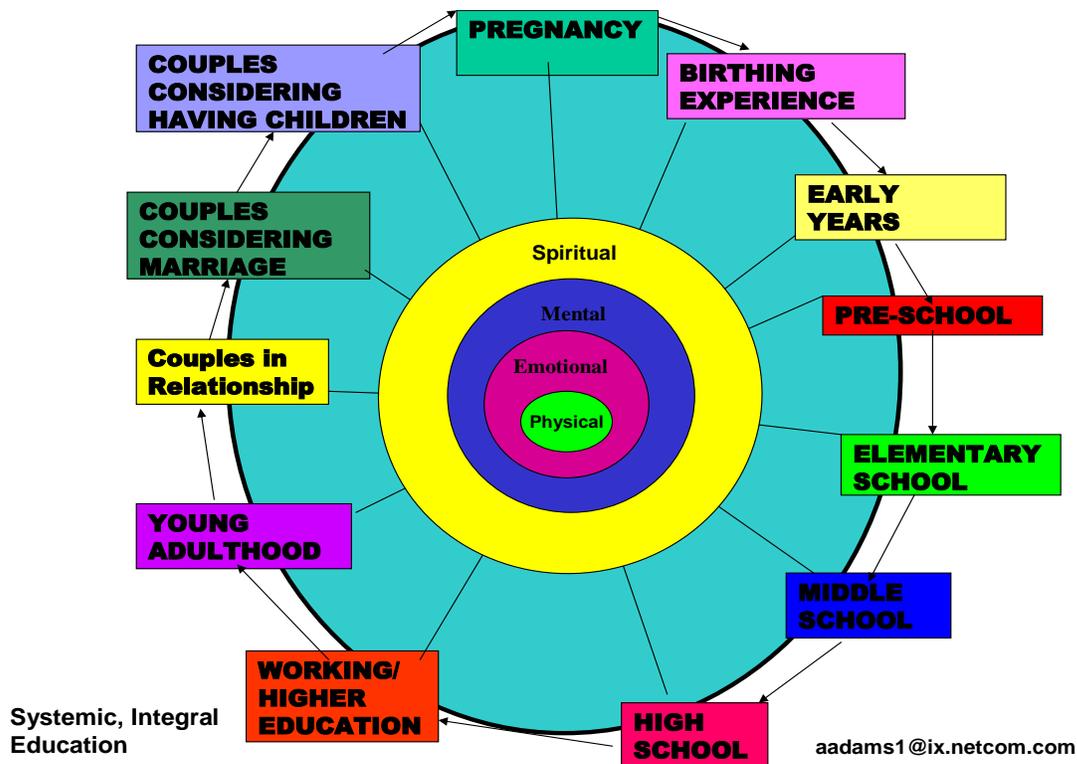


Figure 1

The above diagram represents a model for education that is *systemic*, i.e., spans from a child’s conception to his/her graduation from school, and is *integral*, i.e., develops and integrates the physical, emotional, mental and spiritual intelligences throughout the stages of growth and development. The time span beyond high school is included because these phases of work/higher education and young adulthood play such a crucial role in the quality of connection between couples considering long-term association, possible marriage and family planning and child raising.



This systemic, integral education is found in a campus-like environment that provides facilities for each of the stages. Education is viewed as a life long learning journey. The facilities needed to provide for couples, school students, babies, pregnant mothers and their partners, toddlers, elders, etc, are co-located. The schools and other programs are close to one another to provide intergenerational relationships and support. The campus is a learning community and epitomizes a living system that is dynamic and co created by its members. People of all ages, i.e., young people, couples, children, students, parents, elders, teachers, community members, etc., come to the campus for education; classes, workshops, access to experts, resources, e.g., books, tapes, experiential practices. They are assisted in learning more about what education, learning experiences, practices and knowledge are essential in developing and integrating their mental, spiritual, emotional and physical intelligences. Whatever they are addressing in their current stage of growth is supported by an integral educational approach.

Philosophical Framework

The philosophy of integral education is taught and employed throughout the campus. People are engaged in an inquiry about how to think from and with an integral worldview. From the research study of nine integral education programs (Adams, 2006), the participants imparted valuable knowledge concerning the learning experiences found most supportive of the development of their mental, physical, spiritual and emotional intelligences. The following is a synthesis of their contributions and provides a framework for the design of a systemic, integral educational experience:



- The schools, parents, families, teachers, friends and community support individuals in educating themselves as integrated human beings, i.e., the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual intelligences are developed and integrated.
- People are able to experience themselves in relation to a larger world and feel connected to themselves, others and nature. They learn and participate in practices that put them in touch with themselves, i.e., self-reflection, journaling, silent time, meditation, yoga, exercises etc. They experience their physical body as connected to the physical world and nature. They are ‘present’ in their body, feel centered and aware of their energy and the energy of others around them. They are engaged in discovering habits that support their health and well-being, i.e. good nutrition.
- People feel safe, loved and related to others, and have a sense of belonging. They feel respected, honored, known and self expressed as individuals. They think and learn for themselves. They love to learn, are curious and follow their passions in life. Individuals are trusted, given choices about their life and responsibility for their learning. Learning is experiential, embodied and relevant to their lives. People serve and mentor others. There is congruency in their lives.
- People have an understanding of and honor the world’s religions. They have learned the difference between spirituality and religion and engage in dialogues that support their spiritual insights and experiences, as well as their religions beliefs.

Throughout each stage of development, these principles are available for each person to relate to in a personal way—with which to make his or her own meaning. They are not rules or dogma. They are guidelines for exploring what it takes to invent a learning community with an integral worldview.



Relationship: The Foundation for an Integral Worldview

Throughout school, age appropriate courses are offered to learn about creating healthy relationships, both with oneself and others, i.e., groups and community. These courses correlate with other classes that address group dynamics, human development, responsible parenting, identity creation, as well as academic subject matter. The practices for good communication and dialogue are begun at an early age and are interwoven throughout the curriculum in appropriate contexts. Time is set aside regularly for young people to learn about silence, reflection, contemplation and self observation. The relationship they have with themselves is primary to all others.

Young adults considering committed relationships and/or marriage have courses, resources and practices available to them to support them in approaching a long-term partnership from an integral worldview. They can learn many important distinctions of intimacy, sexual experience and expression, compassion, listening, speaking, dialogue, having difficult conversation, handling disagreements, etc, that allow them to experience their ability to *create* relationship with others, of the same and opposite sex.

The systemic, integral education process engages couples in an essential inquiry regarding having a family; how to think about having a family from a view that incorporates the emotional, spiritual, mental and physical intelligences. The inclusion of these aspects supports the quality of choices made because the person involved in the choosing is also active in an integral lifestyle inquiry. Pregnancy and birthing inside the integral point of view regard the phenomenon as a whole, i.e., a complex, dynamic process. Expert advice in prenatal and perinatal experiences and care is available to families in this integral model of education. Many experts have voiced how important



this time is to a perspective mother, father, baby and family members. The integral philosophy is extremely important during this time because everything that is happening is happening inside of a complex, living system; all participants require understanding, support, attention, love, etc., and coordination. There is a level of consciousness that is available throughout this time that can integrate the emotional, physical, mental, and spiritual intelligences and utilize their integration to create a powerful environment in which to receive the gift of life. This experience of wholeness provides a unique ‘energy’ that opens people up to their ability to create new life in a manner consistent with the unique experience it is, and to share that wholeness and creativity with others around them.

Integral Education

In an integral milieu, children are known to have a quality of wisdom. They are related to with respect, honor and listened to; their voices are heard and supported in developing. From the beginning of life, human beings are recognized as having passions, curiosity and love of learning, and can be trusted to discover what their unique path of education will be. Education is viewed as education for life for parents, teachers, students and includes all the intelligences; emotional, mental, physical, spiritual. The curriculum is designed so each area is fully explored and interwoven with the others. There is no hierarchy of intelligence in the integral approach.

Throughout the curriculum, there is recognition of the significant contributing influencers to a student’s growth and development, i.e., the school’s philosophical and pedagogical approaches, parents, families, teachers and friends. These influences are an integral part of the program and are incorporated in the student’s educational program.



Physical Intelligence

Physical intelligence is seen as *fundamental* to a systemic, integral education experience. There is an acknowledgement of the integral relationship between biology (earth), chemistry (foods, substances) and physics (energy) at the core of this approach to education. There is groundedness, centeredness, consciousness and connection with the natural elements. Some of the characteristics of the development of the physical intelligence incorporate: 1) time spent in nature exploring the connections humans have with nature, plants and animals, 2) attention paid to healthy eating habits and learning the impact different foods have on the functioning of the body and 3) centeredness, body and energy awareness and ‘presence.’ In addition to a well coordinated physical education program, this systemic, integral model of education offers experiences in learning awareness through the body which provide an incremental and experiential relationship with one’s body throughout the first 18 years of life. Movement, drama, art and music are interwoven in the curriculum affording ‘embodied’ learning and supporting students with the connection between the physical body and the mental, emotional and spiritual areas.

Emotional Intelligence

The emotional domain plays a *relational* role in the integral educational programs. Connections are seen throughout. People are in community; they are in communication, with themselves and each other; they are caring and cared for; they are learning the skills to remain in community and communication, i.e., conflict resolution, dialogue, and mediation. Focus is placed on the experiences of: safety, belonging, relationship, love, being known, self-expression, responsibility, serving and mentoring others to support the development of emotional intelligence for everyone related to the



programs, i.e. students, teachers, parents, related personnel. Teachers and parents are educated to be compassionate of students in their emotional development and are engaged in their own emotional self-discovery. The schools have age appropriate opportunities to learn about relationship and community building, health and human development, responsible parenting, dialogue, self-expression through play, drama, music and academic courses as well. Programs are designed to give students opportunities for travel, exploration, service and mentoring to mature an integral worldview. The curriculum coordinates with the development of the students.

Examples of these could be community service projects, individual explorations in areas of interest that require student generated initiative and resourcefulness, camping trips or dramatic/ musical production that include everyone in the school and offer transformative learning experiences in self-expression, interdisciplinary connections and intergenerational relationships

Mental Intelligence

The *natural* role of the mental domain is respected in the integral curriculum. Mental intelligence is known to expand in an environment in which students are encouraged to love learning, be curious and follow their passion. When the learner is respected, trusted and honored as an individual and educated to think and learn for him/herself, given choices and responsibility for what is studied, the *natural* quality of learning is activated. Students exposed to curriculum that is experiential and relevant can embody the content and the context. The growth of mental acumen is equated with trusting the human being in his/her natural quest of learning.



There is a recognition that the purpose of education is to provide an environment in which the inherent attributes of the individual can naturally grow and take root. Human consciousness is recognized as an essential theme in the growth of mental intelligence. Learning content honors and reflects the learner's inner development. The development of the mental domain utilizes an eclectic approach by bringing together material appropriate for multiple ways of knowing.

Spiritual Intelligence

The spiritual domain plays a *contextual* role in an integral education. It gives a sense of congruency to life. Students are educated in ways that their sense of 'spirit' can show up in their lives, i.e., seeing themselves in relation to a larger world, feeling connected to themselves, others and nature. The holistic approach provides practices to support individuals getting more related to themselves through internal experiences such as contemplation, self-reflection, journaling, silent time, meditation, yoga, exercises, etc. The integral curriculum includes understanding and honoring the world's religions, learning the distinction between spirituality and religion and having clarifying conversations that bring people together and promote interfaith inclusion as opposed to exclusion and derisiveness.

Because the distinction between spirituality and religion is clearly made and accepted in an integral educational setting, everyone is engaged in an examination of his/her life and uncovering the meaning being made through the educational process. The value of silence and reflection is seen not as 'religious,' toward a belief, but toward an essential discovery—the relationship each person has with her/his own human spirit and that spirit or life force that surrounds us. Key to developing an integral point of view is



seeing the connection of science and spirituality—to experience the awe in both expressions of ‘spirit.’

Integral Intelligence

Extensive interdisciplinary modules that focus the student’s awareness on the interconnectivity of and reverence for all life are interwoven throughout the integral educational curriculum. World peace, cooperation, coordination and understanding are major goals of an integral worldview. Integral education programs focus attention on hosting events and activities that educate people to transform the way different religious, cultural, ethnic, or socioeconomic groups relate with one another.

Integral practices that develop and integrate the physical, emotional, mental and spiritual intelligences as ways of knowing and being in the world are found in the philosophical fiber of the course work, pedagogical observances and actions taken in the schools. There is a weaving together of the individual with him or herself, the individual and the collective, the inner and outer, the silent and expressive, the abstract and practical and the spiritual with the religious.

Integral Practices

There are many integral practices to include in an integral curriculum. Two examples of practices found to be supportive of integrating the physical, emotional, mental and spiritual intelligences are yoga (Gates & Kennison, 2000; Kramer, 1980) and Network Spinal Analysis (NSA) (Epstein, 1994) which would be valuable as part of an integral curriculum.



Conclusion

It is not the aim of this document to provide a comprehensive curriculum for an integral education. What is being proposed is the combining of many different approaches to match the requirements of a perspective integral educational community. These are examples that have proved successful in researched schools. One of the important criteria for being an integral education approach is that it is inclusive of the circumstances, audience and context for which it is being created. It is co created by its community. Students, parents, teachers, and friends co create an educational program that allows the uniqueness of each student to grow and express.

Each approach to holism in education has many unique qualities to contribute to a systemic, integral model of education. In closing, let us acknowledge Sri Atmananda and his son, Sri K. Padmanabha Menon, for reinterpreting his work for education, Krishnamurti, Yogananda and J. Donald Walters for his thorough interpretation of Yogananda's gifts to education, Maria Montessori, George Fox, Sri Aurobindo and The Mother, Jagdish and Bharti Gandhi who brought the spirit of Mahatma Gandhi and the world's religions to their schools and Rudolf Steiner, for the depth of their commitment to education, children and the world community. And to the people who have deeply known the integral experience and have reinterpreted it in a way that we all can benefit by it. Thank you.