

Essential Elements of Agile Schools

The Qualities of Effective Educational Communities

- 1. Agile schools work because people choose to make them work.** We believe in freedom of choice, and that making the choice to participate fully in teaching, learning, and leading is the most important choice we can make.
- 2. Agile schools love to learn.** We believe that learning is inherently enjoyable and that giving learners a responsible degree of autonomy in their individual pursuit of knowledge and skill makes it even more so. Agile educators are learners, too.
- 3. Agile schools take a constructive approach to failure.** We believe failure is a normal part of success. Kids struggle to learn. Teachers struggle to teach. Administrators struggle to lead. We all experience failure on the way to solving new problems. The faster we fail, the more solutions we try. The smarter we fail, the more knowledge we bring to the next iteration. Instead of looking back at problems, Agile schools look forward to solving them.
- 4. Agile schools are always getting better.** We believe there's almost always a better way of doing something, and that it's almost always worthwhile trying to figure out what that better way is. Agile schools value progress, and the appropriate measurement thereof, because progress is the true indicator of learning.
- 5. Agile schools empower people to empower others.** We believe that individuals—not systems or policies—are the true sources of power in our schools. Our responsibility is to use our power in service of the greater good, and to teach students how to use their power that way, too.
- 6. Agile schools achieve extraordinary results.** We believe in transformative learning that goes far beyond incremental improvements in test scores. Adults in Agile schools also strive for extraordinary achievement in their profession as well.



“Learning begins with teaching that makes sense.”

Essential Elements

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7. **Agile schools are based on deeply-held beliefs, clearly-articulated values, and a firmly-rooted sense of commitment.** We believe that the most successful schools are those run by people who know what matters most to them and who possess an unshakable determination to get it.
8. **Agile schools are communities where people make a difference and connect with something greater than themselves.** We believe that the drive to contribute is part of human nature. Our role is to guide people in directing their contribution toward its highest and best use.
9. **Agile schools value ownership, positive attitudes, high expectations, and unwavering optimism.** We believe that making a good life is about making good choices, that the pursuit of happiness is an inalienable right, and that self-mastery is the key to its rightful exercise.
10. **Agile schools embrace the risk inherent in the achievement of great things.** We educate for maximum potential not minimum competence. We believe that all learners have within them extraordinary strengths and untapped resources, and that learning is only limited by our willingness to attempt what has never before been attempted. We welcome change, we innovate, and we seek out challenges that organize and measure the best of our energies and skills.
11. **Agile schools affirm self-knowledge as the most valuable knowledge and self-determination as the most basic right.** We believe that introspection, self-disclosure, and intellectual honesty are essential to personal transformation. We seek to support young people in becoming the adults they want to be.
12. **Agile schools are communities where no one is above the rules, everyone has a voice, freedom is sacred, equity and excellence are not mutually exclusive, and the highest goal of education is contributing to the present and future well-being of individuals who can thrive independently in a modern democracy.** Agile schools value college preparation, career fulfillment, and engaged citizenship, but we value something else even more. Collegiate, career, and civic achievement are important, but they are means to ends, not ends in themselves. Human happiness, meaningful contribution, and sustained well-being of self and community are the ultimate ends to which Agile schools aspire on behalf of the children and families we serve.

A silhouette illustration at the bottom of the page shows a group of graduates wearing caps and gowns. Many of them have their hands raised in the air, some holding their caps, suggesting a celebratory or enthusiastic atmosphere.

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