

Measuring Holistic Student Outcomes: Insights From a Global Inquiry

Executive Summary

Education systems across the globe are increasingly prioritizing the development of students who are not only academically proficient but also capable of navigating complexity, collaborating with others, and shaping their own futures. These broader non-academic outcomes, such as agency, awareness, connectedness, and well-being, are not separate from academic mastery but deeply intertwined with it, shaping students' ability to thrive both in school and in life. This integrated set of academic, social, emotional, and developmental capacities, collectively referred to as **holistic student outcomes**, holds strong potential to develop students who can shape a better future. However, the systems needed to support teachers to integrate holistic development into day-to-day classroom practice and subsequently measure these outcomes require further attention. Teachers are not always adequately trained to cultivate these non-academic outcomes, and existing measurement approaches, largely designed for academic learning, fail to capture how they develop in practice.

To learn how to advance holistic outcomes measurement, the **Global Institute for Shaping a Better Future**, an initiative of Teach For All, convened the Holistic Student Outcomes Measurement Working Group—a global coalition of researchers, practitioners, and education leaders across more than 10 countries. The working group set out to explore two central questions: *1) How do we know whether students are growing holistically?*, and *2) How can measurement better support teachers to develop holistic outcomes?* Drawing on cross-contextual research and lived experiences, the paper distills its core insights alongside five in-depth case studies and a curated set of practical measurement approaches and tools, offering applications in diverse education contexts, from early primary classrooms to crisis-affected systems. Together, these elements provide a pathway from concept to practice and invite readers to explore how measurement can be implemented in real classrooms and systems.

- 1. Holistic outcomes should be locally rooted and globally informed.** While there is growing global alignment around core domains of holistic student development, their meaning and expression are shaped by local context. Effective measurement requires balancing shared frameworks with contextual relevance, ensuring that what is measured is both comparable across contexts and grounded in lived realities.
- 2. Measurement can support teacher development.** In most education systems, data is collected for accountability, with limited relevance to day-to-day teaching. This paper argues for a shift toward “assessment *for* learning,” where measurement is embedded within cycles of reflection, dialogue, and instructional adaptation. When teachers are supported to interpret and act on data—particularly data related to classroom culture, relationships, and student experience—measurement becomes a tool for professional growth.

3. **Holistic outcomes develop non-linearly.** Unlike academic outcomes, which often follow structured learning progressions, non-academic outcomes such as agency, connectedness, and wellbeing evolve unevenly over time and are shaped by relationships, environments, and lived experiences. This means that traditional before-and-after measurement models are insufficient. Measurement systems must instead reflect developmental trajectories, account for variability, and capture the conditions that enable or constrain student growth.
4. **Teachers and education programs can prioritize malleable and transferable outcomes.** Not all non-academic skills are equally responsive to teaching. Skills such as growth mindset, self-efficacy, collaboration, and problem-solving are highly malleable by teachers. These skills are also transferable, making them useful for measurement. Other non-academic skills are more influenced by external factors beyond the locus of control of the classroom. Measuring outcomes that are both teachable and broadly transferable allows educators to focus their efforts where they can have the greatest impact.
5. **Measurement must move beyond an overreliance on surveys.** Student self-report surveys remain the dominant tool for measuring holistic outcomes due to their scalability and ease of use. However, they are limited by bias and often fail to capture how students demonstrate competencies in real-world contexts. The paper points to more behaviorally grounded approaches and introduces a curated set of tools that offer practical alternatives for assessing holistic student outcomes.
6. **Triangulated measurement enables actionable insights for teachers.** The most effective measurement systems integrate multiple sources of data on dimensions such as student outcomes, teaching practices, and educator mindsets to provide a more complete picture of development. This approach helps educators move beyond surface-level interpretation and better understand the drivers of student growth.

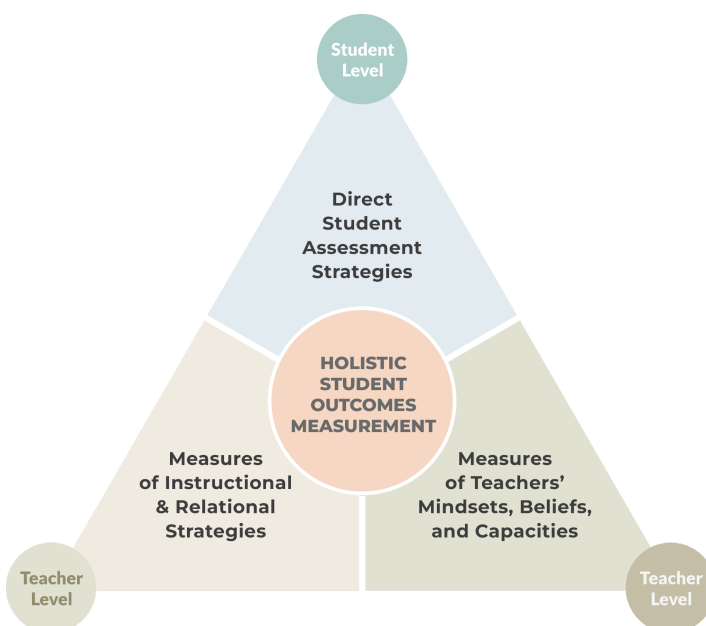


Figure 1. Triangulation of teacher and student outcomes data.

Taken together, these insights point to a fundamental shift: from measurement as a static, evaluative exercise to measurement as a dynamic, practice-embedded process that strengthens both teaching and learning. The implications of this shift are significant for different actors across the education ecosystem. For practitioners, the priority is not to collect more data but to use data more effectively—building the capacity to interpret holistic outcomes and translate them into instructional decisions. For teacher development organizations, this requires embedding measurement into coaching, reflection, and professional learning structures, ensuring that data is timely, relevant, and actionable. For funders and policymakers, the findings underscore the need to invest not only in tools, but in the enabling conditions that make data use possible, including time, training, and system alignment. Finally, for the broader field, the paper highlights the importance of advancing more rigorous, contextually grounded approaches to measurement that reflect how students actually learn and develop. When designed and used effectively, measurement becomes more than a way to track progress—it becomes a mechanism for improving teaching, strengthening student agency, and advancing more equitable and responsive education systems.

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