

Sustainable education in Schools: the flow on effects to health and wellbeing

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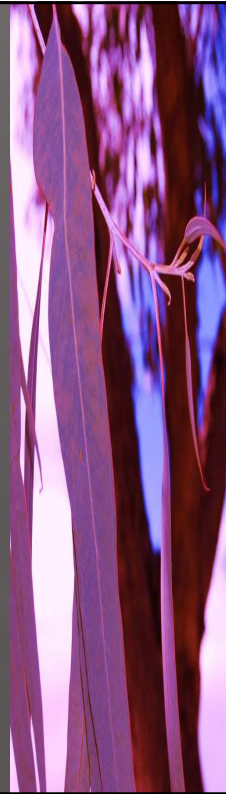
Overview

- ▣ Overview of my project's evolution with reference to the Australian Sustainable Schools Initiative (AuSSI)
- ▣ Definitions
- ▣ Overview of findings
- ▣ Areas of potential research
- ▣ Open the floor to questions and discussion



Background

- ▣ AuSSI staff interested to learn more about potential flow on effects to health & wellbeing
- ▣ Under the direction of the AuSSI Coordinator I volunteered my time to speak with schools involved with the evaluation and participated in the evaluation's focus group activities to further explore potential links between the AuSSI and improved health and wellbeing.



Australian Sustainable Schools Initiative (AuSSI)

- ▣ Partnership with Australian Government's seeking to support schools in developing a culture of sustainability
- ▣ Holistic framework with measurable environmental, economic, social and curriculum outcomes.
- ▣ Whole of school approach, encouraging schools to incorporate Education for Sustainability (EFS) themes into all aspects of a school operations



Health and wellbeing

Health is holistic, encompassing mental health and physical, cultural, and spiritual health. Land is central to wellbeing. This holistic concept does not merely refer to the 'whole body' but in fact is steeped in the harmonised interrelations which constitute cultural well-being. These inter-relating factors can be categorised largely as spiritual, environmental, ideological, political, social, economic, mental and physical (Swan and Raphael 1995).



Social capital

- ▣ Seen in public health as a measure of the level of trust, positive social networks and extent of cooperative relationships
- ▣ Higher levels of social capital appear to be related to better health status.
- ▣ Social capital and social connectedness are key determinants of mental and physical health and inequality.

(Baum 2008; Keleher & Armstrong 2005; Butterworth 2000)



Common success factors

Success factors of particular relevance to health and wellbeing benefits:

- ▣ Incorporates local themes and settings
- ▣ Priorities and pace of implementation set by individual schools
- ▣ Shared vision and distributed leadership
- ▣ Links with local community

Generates benefits related to increased control and self determination, concepts central to health and social justice.

Appears to assist in strengthening a schools social capital.



Creating meaning

- ▣ The AuSSI incorporates themes which have meaning and application locally while exploring broader concepts.
- ▣ As students actively engage in EFS themes it appears to create optimism, hope and confidence.



Summary

- Conversations from ACT Sustainable School's suggest:
 - whole of school ethos change
 - Decline in absences
 - Improved behaviour
 - Positive work ethic
 - Homework quality improved
 - Sense of purpose
 - Improved sense of self, self esteem
 - Improved communication
 - Enthusiasm for supplementary learning
 - Improved social capital



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