Creating Positive Schools from the Inside Out

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Contextual Wellbeing

“A state of health, happiness and positive engagement in life that arises from membership of a healthy social context”
Helen Street, 2017

The Importance of Contextual Wellbeing

- Nurturing resilience in young people (e.g. Andrew Fuller)
- Learning to read (e.g. Dr Elisa Poskiparta, 2003)
- Staying Alive… (e.g. Marmot & Smith, 1990; Andrew V. Wister & Deanna Wanless, 2010)

Contextual Wellbeing [in schools]

“A state of health, happiness and positive engagement [in learning] that arises from membership of an equitable, inclusive and cohesive [school] environment”
Helen Street, 2017

Contextual Wellbeing

- Not a program
- Framework for creating real world wellbeing that supports other programs
- Organic development of wellbeing

Wellbeing Strategies for Schools

- Inclusion and Acceptance of others
- Mindfulness Meditation
- Strength based focus
- Develop a growth mindset
Wellbeing Strategies for Schools

Inclusion and Acceptance of others

Mindfulness Meditation

Develop a growth mindset

Strength based focus

Meditation

The support of wellbeing in schools is NOT working well

- Measures of success: Building the importance of context in the delivery of wellbeing and social and emotional learning programs
- Motivation outside in, inside out
- Slemp, G; Murray, S & White, M., (Eds), Future Directions in Wellbeing: Education, Organizations, and Policy. Springer Context

- Programs are not working as expected
- Meaningful group membership

Meaningful group membership

How can we create contextual wellbeing within our school communities?

Creating Contextual Wellbeing in Schools

Supporting Staff
- Work life balance
- Social and emotional learning
- Stress management
- Class management
- Staff cohesion/peer support
- Autonomy
- Competency

Flourishing teachers create flourishing classrooms

Creating Contextual Wellbeing in Schools
Policy and Practice

1. From Differentiation to Equity

- HOMEWORK
  - Lower groups REDUCED SELF-ESTEEM (Davidson, 2009)
  - Teacher expectations altered by group identification – groups become a SELF-FULFILLING PROPHECY (Benner, 2007)
  - INEQUITY in teacher quality, opportunity and status (Davidson, 2009)

ABILITY GROUPING IN SCHOOLS
- Inequity due to different home environment and levels of family support
- No research support for value of primary school homework on learning (Victorian Department of Education)
- Limited support for high school homework

2. From Extrinsic Rewards to Intrinsic Motivation

3. From Structured Time to Creative Time

Healthy policy and practice supports equitable learning where everyone is included, and everyone feels they belong.
Develop kindness and compassion

Healthy social norms result in the internalization of desirable values, attitudes and behaviours

Creating Contextual Wellbeing in Schools

A healthy physical space supports contextual wellbeing within an equitable and inclusive environment

Creating mindfulness naturally


Disconnection with the outdoors is causing physical, emotional and intellectual deficits in children's learning and development (Stephen Moss, 2012)

(Aric Sigman 2007) Children's exposure to nature significantly increases:

- concentration
- self-control
- mindfulness
- reasoning and observational skills
- reading, writing and math skills.
Improving school climate, not just security, is key to violence prevention

Research has consistently shown that positive school climate is a strong predictor of school safety. When students have healthy peer relationships, teachers they trust, and school policies that they perceive as fair, they are more likely to feel safe in the school and less likely to misbehave...

...it is important to consider how the use of security measures and discipline practices that are meant to enhance safety might actually decrease it.

F. Chris Curran, Assistant Professor of Public Policy, University of Maryland, Baltimore County
The Conversation, May 21, 2018

Contextual Wellbeing in Your School

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“Everybody is a genius. But if you judge a fish by its ability to climb a tree, it will live its whole life believing that it is stupid.”
- Albert Einstein