

Healthy Young People

Wellbeing and Schools

Influence of school on student wellbeing

Young people spend approximately seven hours a day at school and the school environment strongly influences the choices they make, and consequently their physical and mental health and wellbeing.

The structure of the school day can influence health choices. For example, when travel time, class time and homework is considered, school contributes to significant inactivity in a young person's day. When students are encouraged to have short active, standing or stretch breaks during class time they will reduce their sitting time.

School structure can also impact student sleep. If school sports training is held early in the morning (before school) it can cause some students to miss out on getting enough sleep. If school tests and exams are regularly held in the first lesson of the day, it can disadvantage young people who tend to feel more alert later in the day.

School facilities or infrastructure are another factor to consider. For example, providing a safe place to store bikes could encourage students to ride to school. Or ensuring most of the food available in the school canteen is 'everyday' food can help to reduce the amount of high sugar and high fat 'sometimes' foods eaten at school.

Staff role modelling is also a powerful influence. For example, staff can use body positive language and promote acceptance of body differences (body diversity).

A Whole School Approach to Wellbeing

The Tasmanian whole-of-government approach to the wellbeing of children and young people encompasses the six wellbeing domains of *Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth: The Nest*.ⁱ

The HYP Missions contribute to student wellbeing through a whole school approach by addressing the following domains and descriptors from the Department of Education's [Child and Student Wellbeing Strategy](#).

Being loved and safe

- Have a voice and the ability to raise concerns and have these concerns addressed

Having material basics

- Have access to nutritious food and clean water
- Have access to materials to support participation in activities

Being healthy

- Are mentally and physically healthy
- Are emotionally well, happy and supported
- Are as physically active as they can be
- Have access to appropriate health and care services

Learning

- Are developing literacy and numeracy skills appropriate to age

Participating

- Are engaging with peers and community groups
- Are an active participant in their own life; including being able to have a say and have their opinion heard and valued

Having a positive sense of culture and identity

- Have a positive sense of self- identity and self-esteem

Health Promoting Schools Framework

The Health Promoting Schools Framework is a whole school approach to support positive health and wellbeing in the school community. The HYP Missions provide a student led approach to making changes to Practice, Partnerships and Environment to support the healthy behaviours of students and staff.

Supporting young people to make healthy choices will help them to develop healthy habits for life and help to reduce the rate of serious but often preventable chronic (long-term and hard-to-cure) diseases like type 2 diabetes, heart disease and some cancers.

The Health Promoting Schools Framework also encourages partnerships with parents and the community which may in turn influence health habits outside of school and improve outcomes. If parents and carers are aware of young people's needs and school expectations, they may feel more committed to supporting the health behaviours promoted in HYP. There are also many potential health benefits for school staff.

Benefits of a Whole School Approach to Wellbeing

Here are some ways that completing the HYP Missions will benefit the education outcomes of your school while helping to develop Healthy Young People.

Benefits for learning

Healthy students are absent from school less. The HYP Missions promote healthy behaviours that can improve brain function and cognition, such as being active and eating breakfast. HYP can support learning and development, educational outcomes including literacy and numeracy, classroom behaviour, student engagement and concentration

Students as leaders

HYP empowers students to work in partnership with adults in the design, delivery and evaluation of initiatives designed to make healthy choices easy, positive and normal at school. This partnership builds student health literacy and has benefits for promoting healthy choices to students.

Student-led initiatives can influence young people in ways many adult-led interventions cannot. Normalising healthy behaviours among school role models and within school peer groups will have a major influence on social norms and influence young peoples' behaviours at home and for life.

Meet requirements of the Australian Curriculum

We know schools are busy places and the curriculum is crowded, so to make it easy for teachers HYP is mapped to the Australian Curriculum: Health and Physical Education.

The student activities and thinking tools are locally-developed and suitable for use in Tasmania. Teachers can use HYP resources with confidence, knowing the information has been checked by local health and education experts.

ⁱ Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (ARACY), *The Nest action agenda: Improving the wellbeing of Australia's children and youth while growing our GDP by over 7%*, ARACY, Canberra, 2014.