SCHOOL CONNECTEDNESS

What is School Connectedness?

School connectedness is the belief held by students that adults and peers in the school care about their learning as well as about them as individuals.

WHY IS SCHOOL CONNECTEDNESS IMPORTANT?

Students are more likely to engage and succeed academically when they feel connected to school. School connectedness is particularly important for young people who are at increased risk for feeling alienated or isolated from others, for example, students with disabilities.

THE FOUR ELEMENTS OF SCHOOL CONNECTEDNESS

The following four elements form the fundamental basis of connectedness.

RELATIONSHIPS

Relationships are the connection with others based on warmth, empathy, and respect.

Respectful relationships are the glue that holds a positive school community together.

BELONGING

Belonging is the sense of connection with a group or institution, for example a group of peers, family or school.

Students and staff need to feel like they belong to a social group as well as belong to the school itself.

INCLUSION

Inclusion is the willingness to form relationships with people who may be different from you.

Schools can promote inclusion by valuing diversity as a strength, and modelling positive attitudes to diversity.

ACTIVE PARTICIPATION

Active participation involves individuals contributing to the community in a meaningful, posiitve and ongoing way.

Both staff and students benefit from a real sense of contribution as well as the community itself.

HOW TO PROMOTE SCHOOL CONNECTEDNESS THROUGH A WHOLE SCHOOL APPROACH?

The Health Promoting School (HPS) Framework is an evidenced-based whole school approach, established by the World Health Organisation, which promotes school connectedness. The model is centred around three core components.

This component is concerned with both the curriculum content as well as the action and participatory teaching and learning styles utilised throughout the delivery of the curriculum.

The school social environment, is formed by underlying values that are reflected in school policies and procedures, such as standards of behaviour and attitudes adopted by staff towards students and parents.

Student-centred learning activities which encourage participation and promote students' roles in decision-making are highlighted as an effective teaching strategy.
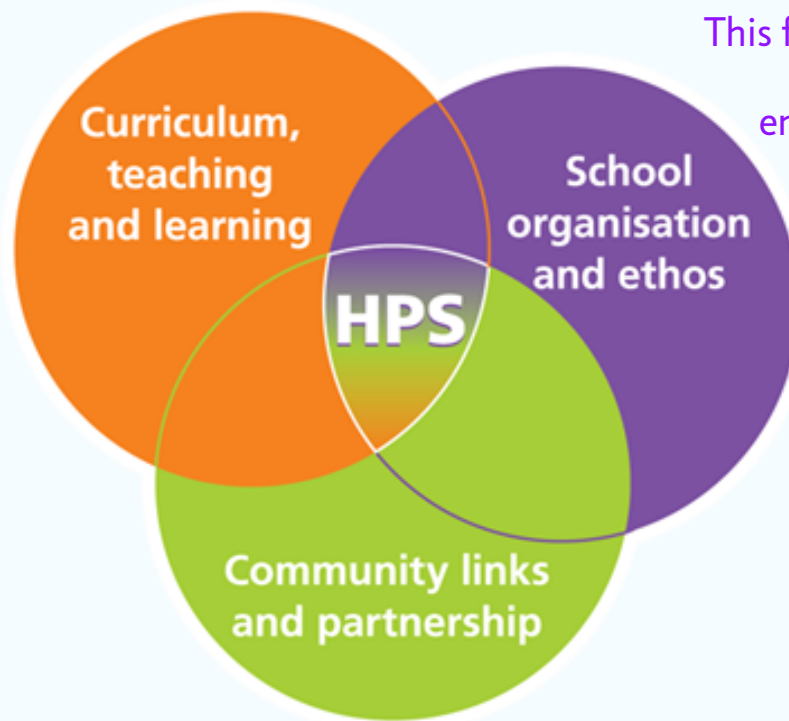
This framework promotes a supportive social environment that values all members of the school community with respect for diversity.

Curriculum, teaching and learning

School organisation and ethos

HPS

Community links and partnership

In the broad school community environment, health promoting school processes include participatory, inclusive and democratic processes that involve students, school staff, families and the broader community working together to guide the development of school policy and organisation.

This component promotes all members of the community to actively participate within the school community, for example, assisting with the school organisation strategies such as time-table restructures and extra-curricular activities.

HOW TO PROMOTE SCHOOL CONNECTEDNESS IN THE CLASSROOM?

Recognise that students are individuals who have **diverse learning styles** and backgrounds.

Incorporate a variety of teaching approaches, activities, and assignments to ensure the success of all students within the class.

Provide a **safe**, **supportive**, and **fair learning environment** where students are encouraged to share their ideas and be responsive to the classroom climate.

Students need to be able to express themselves without the fear of being wrong.

Demonstrate **clarity** when it comes to classroom **behavioural** and **performance** expectations.

Each activity should have a correlating learning objective and class outcomes to demonstrate how class activities will help build the necessary and required skills later in life.

Provide **timely**, **specific**, and **constructive feedback** on activities, and assessments.

Students need to know how they are progressing in class and what they need to change in order to actively engage with the content and be successful in class.

Useful Further Resources:

- MindMatters: Professional resource Module 1.4: Relationships and Belonging

- CDC's Fostering School Connectedness: Strategies for Increasing Protective Factors for Youth; Learning Leadership OECD

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