

Teachers' Kit

EAT DIRT

reimagining education

CONNECTING TO COUNTRY
CONNECTING TO NATURE
CONNECTING TO EACH OTHER

CHALLENGING THE CURRICULUM



A Project Funded by
NSW Reconstruction Authority

Eat Dirt was created on the lands of the Gumbaynggirr people. We are eternally grateful for the support we have been given by our Aboriginal brothers and sisters in the development of this teaching kit

For information about Eat Dirt go to
www.landcarensw.org.au

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Eat Dirt, Reimagining Education

Mission statement:

Improve community wellbeing through use of the physical environment and building connections

Improve student wellbeing

Improve teacher wellbeing

Foreword

Dear Educators,

Thank you for joining us on this incredible journey to change the way education is delivered in NSW. Over the past few years, our communities have been ravaged by bushfires, floods, mouse plagues and COVID 19. This has resulted in significant trauma across the entire landscape. Our students' wellbeing is suffering, our teachers are leaving in droves and our environment needs our collective help.

The NSW Department of Education puts student wellbeing at the centre of learning. Yet this is not realised in many classrooms or indeed in the system itself. How can we even think that describing students as above or below average is student centred? And let's not forget graded classes. Straight off the bat students are either a success or a failure.

The result is despondent students who consistently misbehave and are then labelled as having a disorder such as ADHD. Yet why is it, that they become leaders when taken out of school and on to the sporting field or into nature? Our children need to be free; they need to connect to nature, they need to connect to each other and they need to connect to Country. They cannot be shut in a box for 4 hours a day, going from subject to subject with absolutely no connection whatsoever. This is a recipe for disaster.

With studies showing that one third (34%) of youth self-reporting high or very high levels of psychological stress, we need to find an answer – and the answer is right there in front of us. We need to be out in nature – with studies showing that one lesson conducted in nature results in roughly half the redirects in the next lesson.

So why don't we take the classroom outside? Why don't we engage in project-based learning with purpose? Why don't we create cross-curricula lessons that build foundations and connections between the faculties. The silos need to be broken down and we need to work together. Let's look more broadly and assist the community. What are the government's priorities for the environment? Why can't students help? This teaching framework will also delve into how you can work with other institutions to help heal the environment whilst improving wellbeing outcomes across the community.

Our education system has failed to keep up with the rest of society. We no longer need institutions where students are taught concepts that they will never use once leaving school – one can argue that we never actually did. It's time we all pondered the question. What is the purpose of education and what skills do we want our students to master? Our students are paralysed with fear – from climate change to COVID 19 – we need to give them the tools to manage this fear and give them back some control over their lives and their futures.

Melanie Tyas
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“There was a camaraderie and a commitment to being present and recognising the value of doing something different to what they normally do in class. They also showed a clear pride in some of their achievements ...”

Bellinghen High Eat Dirt Teacher

Happy
are you
OKay
day!!