

# LIVING SCHOOLS

# CLASSROOM PLANNER

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GRADE[S] \_\_\_\_\_



**Have you ever walked into a school and had the sense that you are in a place where students and staff are flourishing? Everyone is engaged; student work is celebrated and nature is present within the classrooms and hallways. If so, you have likely already stepped into a Living School.**

We choose the term Living Schools because it invokes an image of **infusing education with life and vibrancy**. Living Schools are places where staff and students are co-learning, creating real-world solutions, and there is an explicit awareness that schools are interconnected with nature as well as with local and global communities. Central to the ethos of a Living School is the education vision of *well-being for all* – emphasizing well-being both individually and collectively, for all people and the ‘other than human’ life on our planet. It is an inclusive vision that recognizes that our well-being is important both now and into the future and that our well-being is intertwined with that of other people and the natural environment. (O’Brien, 2016, p. 9)

The focus on well-being ensures that Living Schools support outdoor learning, social-emotional learning and positive education in addition to other recommendations for transforming education which includes; fostering creativity, innovation, entrepreneurial mindsets, and digital literacy. In practice, this might take the form of bringing ‘new’ pedagogies into the classroom. Pedagogies such as inquiry-based learning, place-based learning, student-centred learning, outdoor learning, Genius Hour, nature-based learning and so forth. In essence, Living Schools are coalescing some of the most exciting recommendations for education transformation.

One of the key features of the Living School framework is that it aims to offer a comprehensive integration of many recommendations that are often addressed in isolation. For instance, there is recognition that greater attention needs to be paid to social-emotional learning, entrepreneurship education, positive mental health, and inclusive education but it would be an insurmountable task for administrators and teachers to respond to all of these independently. It has also been our experience that well-intended efforts to bring public education into the 21st century, or efforts to address pressing health and well-being concerns, consistently overlook how to do so from a sustainability perspective. Living Schools make an explicit connection to sustainability and contributing to sustainable societies. Living Schools are on the forefront of the education transition that Hargreaves, Shirley, Wangia, Bacon, & D’Angelo (2018) describe as the shift from the Age of Achievement and Effort towards the Age of Learning, Well-being and Identity. In Living Schools, there is purposeful attention to student, teacher and staff well-being.

# LIVING SCHOOLS ATTRIBUTES & PRACTICES

## Values & Vision

School community members are committed to:

Engaging with the world

Developing a cultural awareness of other's world views and identities

Demonstrating and modeling care for plants, other animals, and the rest of the natural world

Developing compassion for oneself, other people and all living things as well as skills to address positive change

Promoting the health and well-being of students, staff, the wider community, and the natural environment

A solution-focused growth mindset when facing challenges and opportunities

Creating trusting and respectful relationships in the school community

Respecting indigenous world views and traditional ways of knowing

## Leadership

Organizational structures are characterized by:

Ensuring teachers and students have voice and agency

Developing strong collaborative relationships with staff, parents, guardians, and community

Creating opportunities for professional development for transformative learning

Cultivating an ethos of equity, inclusion and diversity

Explicit support for sustainability education and well-being

Encouraging risk taking to explore new ways of living, learning, and working in a safe environment

## Teaching & Learning

Pedagogical practices are influenced by:

Collaborative processes

Holistic approaches to teaching and learning

A commitment to inquiry-based strategies to affect real-world change

A spirit of inclusion, student centred and differentiated learning

The development of creativity and creating a climate for risk taking and student agency

Modeling healthy and sustainable lifestyles

Authentic assessment of and for learning practices

## Nature & Place-Based Orientation

Schools reflect a commitment to:

Using natural, social, built environments, including the school envelope to foster learning

Incorporating outdoor learning relative to location of school

Developing ecological literacy of students and teachers

Incorporating furniture, light, classroom resources sustainably and to promote well-being

Developing strong ties to community and commitment to active citizenry

## Health & Well-Being

School community demonstrates practices designed to:

Develop emotional, physical and spiritual well-being of students, staff, and teachers

Support the principles of health promoting schools

Explore the links between human health and the natural world

Explore the relationships between sustainability, happiness, and well-being for all

Support positive communication in the classroom, at school and with the wider community



Howard, P., & O'Brien, C. (2018)

*"I find the word itself, 'Living' very appealing. It puts learning for students into a visible and real form beyond what is only the theoretical. It feels true to learn through something that is alive. It feels as if we are part of something. Something real. I close my eyes and picture vertical gardens, and perhaps micro habitats around the school. I see interconnections that bring local insects, plants, and animals, that brings with it a natural flow of information. **I don't picture a quiet space. ... I picture movement and flow, a flourishing place that I want to be.** We all feel more inspired to be there."*

Pascal Carrara, high school teacher, Canada

**TO HEAR FROM OTHER EDUCATORS AND READ  
MORE ABOUT LIVING SCHOOLS VISIT:**

**[WWW.LIVINGSCHOOLS.WORLD](http://WWW.LIVINGSCHOOLS.WORLD)**

# THE ETHOS, ATTRIBUTES AND PRACTICE OF A LIVING SCHOOL

Values and Vision: School community members are committed to:

Engaging students with the world

This is one of my strengths! Some examples are:

I'm interested in exploring this further by:

Ideas for professional growth

Lessons, Units, Courses where I will incorporate this attribute

Developing an expanding cultural awareness of other's world views including indigenous knowledge and world views and identities

Demonstrating and modeling stewardship for plants, other animals and the rest of the living world



# THE ETHOS, ATTRIBUTES AND PRACTICE OF A LIVING SCHOOL

Values and Vision: School community members are committed to:

This is one of my strengths! Some examples are:

Developing a compassion for oneself, other people and all living things as well as the skills to address positive change

The health and well-being of students, staff, myself, the wider community, and natural environment

A solution-focused growth mindset when facing challenges

I'm interested in exploring this further by:

Ideas for professional growth

Lessons, Units, Courses where I will incorporate this attribute



# THE ETHOS, ATTRIBUTES AND PRACTICE OF A LIVING SCHOOL

Values and Vision: School community members are committed to:

Creating respectful relationships in the classroom and school community

This is one of my strengths! Some examples are:

I'm interested in exploring this further by:

Ideas for professional growth

Lessons, Units, Courses where I will incorporate this attribute

Respecting indigenous world views and traditional ways of knowing



# THE ETHOS, ATTRIBUTES AND PRACTICE OF A LIVING SCHOOL

Leadership: Organizational and governance structures are characterized by:

Ensuring teachers, students have voice and agency

Developing strong relationships with parents, guardians, and community

Creating authentic opportunities for professional development of teachers for transformative learning

This is one of my strengths! Some examples are:

I'm interested in exploring this further by:

Ideas for professional growth

Lessons, Units, Courses where I will incorporate this attribute





# THE ETHOS, ATTRIBUTES AND PRACTICE OF A LIVING SCHOOL

Leadership: Organizational and governance structures are characterized by:

Cultivating an ethos of inclusion and diversity in my classroom and teaching practices

Incorporating sustainability education and well-being into my lessons, units, courses

This is one of my strengths! Some examples are:

I'm interested in exploring this further by:

Ideas for professional growth

Lessons, Units, Courses where I will incorporate this attribute



# THE ETHOS, ATTRIBUTES AND PRACTICE OF A LIVING SCHOOL

Teaching and Learning: Pedagogical practices are influenced by:

This is one of my strengths! Some examples are:

Working collaboratively with colleagues to deepen our understanding of living schools practices

Creating opportunities for students to learn collaboratively (within the classroom, school, community)

Incorporating interdisciplinary teaching when possible

I'm interested in exploring this further by:

Ideas for professional growth

Lessons, Units, Courses where I will incorporate this attribute



# THE ETHOS, ATTRIBUTES AND PRACTICE OF A LIVING SCHOOL

Teaching and Learning: Pedagogical practices are influenced by:

This is one of my strengths! Some examples are:

A commitment to inquiry-based strategies and actions to affect real-world change (e.g. real-world project-based learning, Genius Hour)

A spirit of inclusion, student-centred and differentiated learning

Fostering creativity, passion-based learning and student agency

I'm interested in exploring this further by:

Ideas for professional growth

Lessons, Units, Courses where I will incorporate this attribute



# THE ETHOS, ATTRIBUTES AND PRACTICE OF A LIVING SCHOOL

Teaching and Learning: Pedagogical practices are influenced by:

Modeling healthy,  
sustainable lifestyles

This is one of my  
strengths! Some  
examples are:

Authentic assessment  
of and for learning  
practices

I'm interested in  
exploring this  
further by:

Ideas for  
professional  
growth

Lessons, Units,  
Courses where I  
will incorporate  
this attribute

Encouraging risk  
taking to explore new  
ways of living,  
learning, and working



# THE ETHOS, ATTRIBUTES AND PRACTICE OF A LIVING SCHOOL

Nature and Place-Based Orientation: School reflects a deep commitment to:

This is one of my strengths! Some examples are:

Using natural, social and built environments, including the school envelope to foster learning

Incorporating outdoor teaching and learning

Developing ecological literacy of students and myself

I'm interested in exploring this further by:

Ideas for professional growth

Lessons, Units, Courses where I will incorporate this attribute



# THE ETHOS, ATTRIBUTES AND PRACTICE OF A LIVING SCHOOL

Nature and Place-Based Orientation: School reflects a deep commitment to:

This is one of my strengths! Some examples are:

Incorporating use of furniture, light, classroom sustainably to enhance well-being

Developing strong ties to community and commitment to active global citizenship

I'm interested in exploring this further by:

Ideas for professional growth

Lessons, Units, Courses where I will incorporate this attribute



# THE ETHOS, ATTRIBUTES AND PRACTICE OF A LIVING SCHOOL

Health and Well-Being: School community demonstrates principles and practices that are designed to:

Develop emotional, physical, and spiritual well-being of students, and myself

Support the principles of health promoting schools

Explicitly explore the links between human health and the natural world

This is one of my strengths! Some examples are:

I'm interested in exploring this further by:

Ideas for professional growth

Lessons, Units, Courses where I will incorporate this attribute



# THE ETHOS, ATTRIBUTES AND PRACTICE OF A LIVING SCHOOL

Health and Well-Being: School community demonstrates principles and practices that are designed to:

Explore the relationship between sustainability, happiness, and well-being

Support positive communication in my classroom, at school and in the wider community

This is one of my strengths! Some examples are:

I'm interested in exploring this further by:

Ideas for professional growth

Lessons, Units, Courses where I will incorporate this attribute







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