

"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, teacher

LIVING SCHOOLS

Living Schools nurture a learning process that is deeply influenced by what is learned, how it is learned, where and when it is learned, and ultimately why it is learned.

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)

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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.

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	Leadership	Teaching & Learning	Nature & Place-Based Orientation	Health & Well-Being
School community members are committed to:	Organizational structures are characterized by:	Pedagogical practices are influenced by:	Schools reflect a commitment to:	School community demonstrates practices designed to:

<p>Engaging with the world</p> <p>Developing a cultural awareness of other's world views and identities</p> <p>Demonstrating and modeling care for plants, other animals, and the rest of the natural world</p> <p>Developing compassion for oneself, other people and all living things as well as skills to address positive change</p> <p>Promoting the health and well-being of students, staff, the wider community, and the natural environment</p> <p>A solution-focused growth mindset when facing challenges and opportunities</p> <p>Creating trusting and respectful relationships in the school community</p> <p>Respecting indigenous world views and traditional ways of knowing</p>	<p>Ensuring teachers and students have voice and agency</p> <p>Developing strong collaborative relationships with staff, parents, guardians, and community</p> <p>Creating opportunities for professional development for transformative learning</p> <p>Cultivating an ethos of equity, inclusion and diversity</p> <p>Explicit support for sustainability education and well-being</p> <p>Encouraging risk taking to explore new ways of living, learning, and working in a safe environment</p>	<p>Collaborative processes</p> <p>Holistic approaches to teaching and learning</p> <p>A commitment to inquiry-based strategies to affect real-world change</p> <p>A spirit of inclusion, student centred and differentiated learning</p> <p>The development of creativity and creating a climate for risk taking and student agency</p> <p>Modeling healthy and sustainable lifestyles</p> <p>Authentic assessment of and for learning practices</p>	<p>Using natural, social, built environments, including the school envelope to foster learning</p> <p>Incorporating outdoor learning relative to location of school</p> <p>Developing ecological literacy of students and teachers</p> <p>Incorporating furniture, light, classroom resources sustainably and to promote well-being</p> <p>Developing strong ties to community and commitment to active citizenry</p>	<p>Develop emotional, physical and spiritual well-being of students, staff, and teachers</p> <p>Support the principles of health promoting schools</p> <p>Explore the links between human health and the natural world</p> <p>Explore the relationships between sustainability, happiness, and well-being for all</p> <p>Support positive communication in the classroom, at school and with the wider community</p>
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Howard, P., & O'Brien, C. (2018)

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