

**GEOGRAPHICAL
EDUCATION AND
ENVIRONMENTAL WELL-
BEING: Opportunities
arising from
developments in England**

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The Concept of *Care*

Education as *care* ethically implies that it:

- is for the benefit of all children;
- recognises and values difference and diversity;
- provides a responsive environment of support and development;
- offers varied approaches and stimuli for learning;
- involves children as active participants.

Care relates to oneself, family and friends, the wider local/global community, the natural/human-created world, and ideas. [Nel Noddings, 2005]

Every Child Matters: UK national drive

5 key outcomes:

- Be healthy;
- Stay safe;
- Enjoy and achieve;
- Make a positive contribution;
- Achieve economic and social well-being.

ECM agenda connects with the child's social, community and physical environment –
People and place are key, as is *sustainability*.

Environmental Well-Being

- Focus for developing understanding of sustainability has moved to a policy for *Sustainable Schools*.
- The view is that to develop the ECM agenda fully, “The area underrepresented is the environment or, more specifically, *the environmental well-being of children*, which as a major influence on their health, safety and overall life chances, sometimes very starkly.” [DfES, 2006, 14, italics added]
- This can affect a sense of identity, respect for the environment, care for oneself and others, how life might be lived, how distant others might be valued.
- Environmental experience and attitudes matter!

Connecting Locally

A sense of *environmental well-being* is developed through:

- awareness of one's own community;
- recognising local interdependence;
- building a sense of belonging and identity locally;
- encouraging concern and respect for 'the local';
- fostering a sense of care for the community;
- becoming engaged with community groups;
- observing and participating in sustainable practices;
- involving and empowering children's involvement.

Linking Geography and Environmental Well-Being

At the heart of Sustainable Schools is a set of geographical ideas and skills:

- A sense of place;
- Environmental knowledge and perception (social, physical, natural);
- Recognition of scale from the local to the global;
- Local and global interdependence;
- Environmental sustainability;
- Sustainable development;
- Valuing of and care for the environment and people;
- Fieldwork engagement and skills;
- The role and use of maps, photographs and other 'data'.

Sustainable Schools 'Doorways'

Eight foci are suggested to help develop children's sense, appreciation and understanding of and involvement in environmental well-being:

- Food and drink;
- Energy and water;
- Travel and traffic;
- Purchasing and waste;
- Buildings and grounds;
- Inclusion and participation;
- Local well-being;
- The global dimension.

Conclusion

Five conclusions drawn from the move to develop the *Sustainable Schools* agenda:

- This agenda recognises the central importance of the environment to the development of children.
- It appreciates that children live in places and that people and places impact on them fundamentally.
- Inclusion and participation in neighbourhood and community life and development for all is essential.
- This is not simply about local engagement and action but also about global recognition and responsibility.
- ***It cannot be achieved without the insights, understanding and values provided by active geographical education.***