

Symposium statement: Linking Health, Equity and Sustainability in Schools

Schools have a shared interest in promoting health, equity and sustainable development. Linking the various programs and strategies that promote these broad goals allows schools to become better places to enjoy learning, teaching and learning, reduces disparities among students and communities and helps to protect the fragile ecological environments in which we all live.

The health of human populations, equitable distribution of resources and the health of global ecosystems are inextricably linked. The need for fundamental changes in how we live is becoming impossible to ignore. Health promotion, equity and sustainable development are all relevant for schools, yet often they are being treated as different issues.

During the symposium on linking health, equity and sustainability in schools in Geneva, Switzerland, on 10-11 July 2010, participants from over 30 countries from every region of the world discussed how the linkages among these three broad areas of human development work and how they can be improved. As a result of the discussion at this symposium, the symposium participants call on governments, non-governmental and other organisations and the industry at international, national and regional level:

1. To adopt comprehensive approaches, coordinated agency-school programs and whole school strategies to promoting health, equity and sustainable development as part of school development
2. To guarantee long-term support through international, national/state and regional policies and strategies, combined with sufficient political support, resources and capacity
3. To encourage and support the active involvement of children and young people in planning, monitoring and evaluating policies and programmes
4. To promote ongoing professional development for educators, public health professionals and environmental workers
5. To improve communications and knowledge exchanges among the international, national/state/provincial and regional networks, agencies, voluntary organizations and professionals in the education, school health, welfare and environmental sectors.

The symposium has developed two specific descriptions of the issues and programs that can be implemented and coordinated in order to strengthen the cooperation between schools, other agencies and governments in addressing disadvantages/disparities as well as promoting human health and sustainable development. The world-wide movements promoting healthy schools, community schools and eco-schools have agreed to collaborate in acting on these two summaries of better practices by exchanging knowledge and information over the next several months.

Conference participants will also be taking actions within their own communities, organizations and sectors to enhance this needed cooperation and collaboration. They invite others to take similar action, to reach out within their own sectors and to support this call for more cooperation across these different but extremely compatible forms of social development through and with schools.

Questions:

- Too much based on Vilnius Resolution?
- Sustainability or sustainable development?
- Political enough?
- Enough equity?
- Enough on actual links between equity, health and sustainability?
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