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“Hälsoskolan”

– the national government, local authorities and university in a joint effort to promote health literacy in arctic children and youth

Background

Children and youth in the arctic region of Sweden face challenges like decreased self-assessed overall health, increased incidence of mental and somatic disorders and few reaches the recommended level of daily physical activity. Vulnerable groups are newly arrived, LGBT persons and young people with disabilities. The Swedish school has been criticized for poor academic results and increased stress among students.

Intervention

The School of Health – “Hälsoskolan” – echo a number of the United Nation’s Sustainable Development Goals integrating health promotion, sustainable development and equity. The aim is to increase health literacy and contribute to health equity among children and youth living in the arctic region in Sweden. The Association of Local Authorities and the County Council joined force with Luleå University of Technology to promote health literacy in the 51 thousand children and youth living in Norrbotten. The Swedish government funded 6 health promoting school initiatives in 9 of 14 municipalities totaling 4 million Swedish Crowns.

Outcomes

By making a conscious choice to explore what is well, looking for good examples – success stories – to learn from and build on we identified for example: One municipality involved all students from pre-school to high school, all school staff and politicians to make a plan for health promoting school – participation and empowerment in action. One school increased the physical activity by 100% by making it part of the ordinary school day for all students and staff. Another school decreased the assault reports from 71 to 8 and student safety increased with 17% after building a health promoting school focusing on caring relationships making students and staff proud of their school.



Implications

The results point to the success of collaboration across governments, local authorities and university to promote health in arctic children and youth sharing success stories to promote health literacy in students. The next step is to address sustainability by building an organization involving additional actors such as civil society and local businesses. Additionally, focusing on vulnerable groups making an extra effort to reach youth not in school, training or employment. Continued collaboration will systematically address and enable good conditions to promote health literacy by involving the political arena where education, public health and health promotion come together.



Photo: Melina Granberg,
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