Nudgee Beach Environmental Education Centre
Pedagogical Model

In, about and for a sustainable marine environment: to foster values connecting self, others and Place
The Pedagogical Framework at Nudgee Beach

In, about and for a sustainable marine environment: to foster values connecting self, others and Place

Nudgee Beach is a tidal environment and therefore our working environment is shifting just like the sand on which we work. At low tide a large four kilometres by four hundred metre sand beach emerges while at high tide patches of sand peep between the fringe mangrove forests. Nudgee Beach EEC delivers learning experiences predominantly on this sand as well as in various other local locations some with historical and cultural significance within the northern Moreton Bay side area. These environments include islands, beaches, bushland, mangroves, wetlands where staff and students interact with the plants and animals they contain on a day visit basis. The staff at the centre are very familiar with “the Place” in which they work experiencing these environments, their flora and fauna at different points in the lunar cycle; weather conditions; different times of the day and the year; using different stories and experiences to meet the needs of learners from different age levels and curriculum focuses. For many students these environments are foreign and provide a level of challenge that creates a level of disequilibrium originally described by Piaget and the focus of Outdoor Education as optimum for learning. The centre explores an expansive vision of sustainability and place with students using all four dimensions of productive pedagogy, and the additional ‘fifth’ dimension “Learning Beyond the Classroom” that moves beyond productive pedagogy, and is particularly suited to developing ‘learning for sustainability’.

Our Pedagogy is one reflecting the deep connections to place. It is holistic and encompasses indigenous perspectives both in content and as a way of seeing the world. It is multi-sensory; nobody goes to the beach without engaging their sense of smell; the visual impact of the beach; the feel and texture of the sand between your toes. Clients from preparatory years to year twelve and TAFE access the centres services. Students come to Nudgee Beach to go to the Beach; not the melaleuca wetlands or casuarina forest. They all think they are going to a Gold Coast type beach that is the mental image of beaches held by Australians so when they see Nudgee Beach they are not necessarily thinking that it’s that great. But, by the end of the day they have a buzz about what they have done and seen. Going out onto the beach one day hundreds of jellyfish are on the sand returning the next day and there’s hundreds of stingray holes instead. The life and what is there to attract students is continually changing and shifting. Our programs have to be able to not only reflect the capacity to book a school to come to the site three to six months in advance but to also be able to deal with the shifts and changes the environment and the weather of the day create. We are very much about the doing; whether they are five, ten or fifteen it about every child participating; every student must have their hands on the sand, on the equipment and engaged in the doing. If they have never pumped a yabby pump they don’t know how to do it or hold the animal they find. It is this newness, an unfamiliar context which creates the disequilibrium for the participant which we must both overcome and harness to engage them in the learning. Many students have never walked in wet shoes, our current obsession with cleanliness as a society means for many students it is the first time they have got “Dirty”. It’s a spiral curriculum informed by the classroom teacher and the initial interactions and conversations with students which assists in the assessment for learning. It’s a curriculum which has to accommodate the base level skills needing to be explained at every year level as well as the depth and complexity of learning required for senior classes at the same time. Because of the tidal nature our programs are designed in modules which can be interchanged to account for the tidal differences so students can engage in the modules in different order to accommodate the shifting tides. The intent is to focus on creating a non-competitive environment with students. It is this assessment as learning which focuses on skills, student performance and observation as assessment of learning: In, about and for a sustainable marine environment: to foster values connecting self, others and Place. The shifting sand with every tide assists to reduce the impact on the beach of this student engagement. The impact of three thousand students is continually monitored by staff. We continue to monitor our program delivery, the students learning and our impact through scientific analysis of which data comparing areas on the beach which are not within the green zones.