

Human Wellbeing as a hands-on topic to engage kinaesthetic learners

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DISCLAIMER: *Many of the activities mentioned in this article are highly engaging to all students, they can be applied to a range of topics other than Human Wellbeing, and Proctor isn't an expert in this area, just wanted to share successes with some of his past students.*

Image source: Shutterstock

Have you ever had students that you cannot engage in topics which seem very theoretical? It can be a trying task to play catch up with new students and develop personalised learning activities that make theoretical and intangible topics such as Human Wellbeing more practical. The suggestions below are based around past success at engagement through movement, gamification of learning and making a topic more personal for students so it really hits home.

It is important to remember that **kinaesthetic learners learn from hands on processes and do not simply need a fidget device** while listening to your (probably boring) lecture or answering a worksheet. It is therefore important to make the hands-on part of the learning meaningful to the content and not simply be additional to the content.

You will also need to consider, if you are targeting specific students, the type of kinaesthetic learner they are as not all activities listed here will provide success to all but are still likely to be engaging for most students (kinaesthetic preferences or not).

Think about the following to tailor activities for your students:

- Do they use whole body movement?
Indicating you might use out of chair activities, whole room movement, outdoor activities.
- Do they communicate with their hands?
Indicating you might look at using alternative materials and resources than computers and worksheets.
- Do they prefer fine motor skills?
Indicating you might use activities where hands on

tasks are used to test, obtain, apply or communicate information.

- Do they work well with others? (And what are the current Covid restrictions)
Indicating you might modify group work or student interaction.

Examples of hands-on learning that might benefit learners

Games – these ideally would be linked to outcomes or learning content. Such an example could include a board game with consequence cards. For example, students can create a game about development where a consequence card might read “Your country has a low life expectancy due to malnutrition. Move back two spaces.”

If you want an easy version that students can create and use in one lesson, you might give them a net of a cube and make a consequence dice. An example of this might be to make a poverty cube and play the life expectancy game. This is a pretty basic game, but will act to highlight an idea in a kinaesthetic way and can be easily be adapted for other purposes.

The Life Expectancy Game

This is a game to help you understand all the issues faced by people living in poverty which limit or reduce their life expectancy – how long they are going to live.

To play the game you will need the following items:

- A poverty cube
- A pen and paper
- A calculator

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How to play:

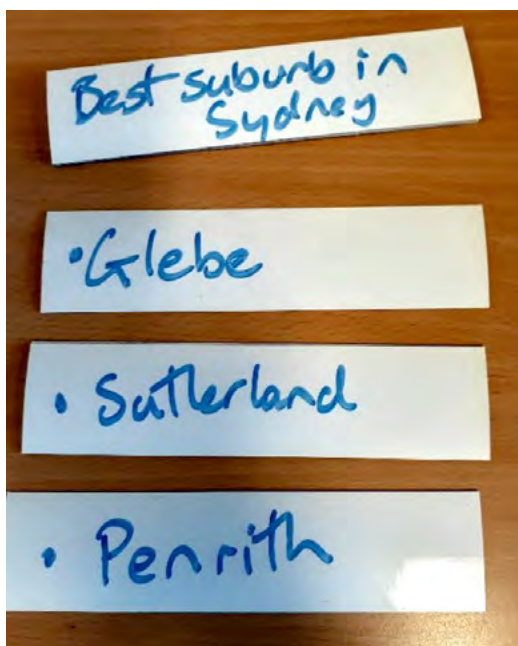
- Each player starts off with a life expectancy of 80 years – an average life expectancy for a person living in a developed country.
- Roll the poverty cube.
- For each issue that is face up on the dice the player deducts years from their life expectancy based on the table below.
- A player is out of the game once they reach their real life age (around 16 years old) and the winner is the last player left alive.

Write or draw the following poverty issues on each side of a cube:

Poverty issue	Years to deduct from your life expectancy
Worms	1 year
Poor housing	2 years
Poor access to clean water	3 years
Poor access to food	4 years
Malnutrition	5 years
Disease	6 years

Fieldwork – virtual fieldwork is possible for many topics during the Covid-19 era, however, any physical fieldwork is best for kinaesthetic learners. For a fairly intangible topic such as Human Wellbeing, students could focus on designing and carrying out surveys to administer, environmental monitoring to assess risks to health.

For example, students could build questions to assess the wellbeing of a local suburb in comparison to a neighbouring suburb, or to compare to data of a contrasting suburb in a large city.



Dry erase magnets/mini whiteboards – these can be used to write upon and collaborate ideas which involves discussion and movement.

Mini whiteboards can be used for formative assessment by asking students to write their answers to a question and reveal. This can also be a great way to build student resilience in sharing their understanding and ideas with others by encouraging movement between groups or partners, where answers can be modified. For example, you might complete a Think, Pair, Share activity where students are asked to think of the most/least developed nation, then discuss and rank their guess with a group of students on a mini whiteboard.

This can then be moved to the whiteboard combining all students guesses with the ability to move these around to follow the discussion if you also employ dry erase magnets. Alternatively, students could be given a suburb in Sydney or town in Australia and use profile.id data to do some preliminary research and go through the same process.

Using collaborative technology such as a Google doc or Kahoot (or other online quizzes) will deliver a similar result in terms of an activity, however, loses some of the movement and interaction.



Sticky notes – can offer similar activities as the dry erase magnets but are cheaper and more accessible. Students could place their reasoning on a thinking continuum for a posed question.

For example, students could be asked how effective they believe wellbeing indicators are, rate them on the continuum or even rate the measures taken to improve wellbeing in a country. Students writing on the board or moving between groups to access information or display answers around the room also helps to engage them in movement in the learning process.

Silent source – this activity is a popular History game where students are given a visual image in the middle of a large piece of paper and asked to walk around the room and write comments on the border in silence. Comments might be what the source shows, when it was created, a criticism of the source etc.

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This involves movement and where students are unsure or have questions, they are encouraged to write these down so that other students might answer them as they move from source to source. For example, students could be given different choropleth maps or graphs depicting where countries sit on a wellbeing measurement. Discussions can be had at the end of the activity where students might want to justify or add to an idea.



Build population pyramids – normally a graphing task, this can be made into a more hands-on activity by using blocks, playdough, popsicle sticks or Lego. Students can be requested to build on of the common shapes of pyramids (triangle, beehive or barrel, rectangle) and use this for discussion around what each shape means for a nation or population.

Cath Donnelly has presented at the GTA on Numeracy activities which also suit kinaesthetic learners by using biscuits, blocks and other items to create graphs. She also suggests using a string continuum to plot information along. An example might be to using labels and pegs to guess where countries sit on a HDI or other scale.

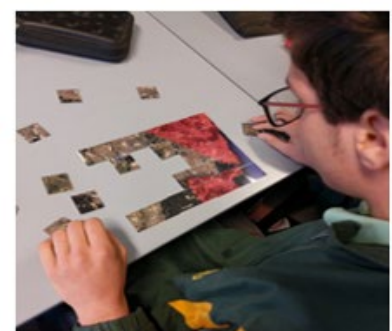
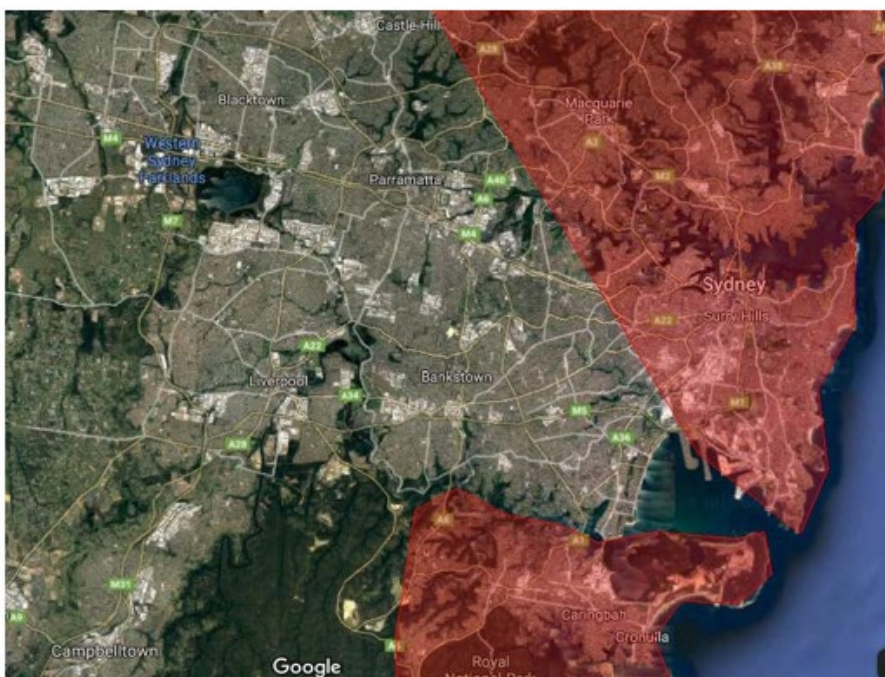
Scratch offs – If you really want to impress your students and add some excitement (and cost) to your

lessons you can use scratch stickers to hide information. Students might be asked to first guess the information that is hidden and then scratch to reveal the answer. For example, you might provide the definition to a wellbeing indicator and hide its name under a scratch sticker. Once students guess they reveal. Scratch stickers can be bought easily and somewhat cheaply in eBay. A similar effect could be achieved through folding the paper, but not as exciting for students.

Scratch stickers can be bought inline e.g. eBay, or can be made by mixing paint (silver/grey) with a small amount of dishwashing liquid. You can paint this mixture, once you have the right ratio, onto what you are trying to hide directly or onto some clear contact to cut up and use later.

Make something

- **Make a MUAC bracelet** and try it on. Students will often not know what MUAC stands for, so when they colour their bracelet and try it on, they first put it on their wrists. When it is revealed that MUAC stands for Middle Upper Arm Circumference and that on a child sized bracelet the red zone is about a 20c piece, students get a shock.
- **Prepare a meal** that someone in a developing nation might eat. You could assign a meal to prepare from a range of countries for students to compare. This will likely also engage in student discussion about fairness of meals where there is quality foods with diversity versus a plain meal with basic ingredients. This would then make the lesson an empathy task and stick with them for years to come.



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Puzzles – making learning discoverable through a puzzle means that tactile learning engages their needs and builds understanding through play. Taking a choropleth map of access to water, education or another indicator of wellbeing and making it into a puzzle would allow for a fun activity where students must piece the map back together. Once complete, students can be quizzed or make their own understanding clear in an assessment form that that is needed.

When using the map of Sydney showing spatial patterns of advantage and disadvantage students were initially told nothing about the map and were asked to guess. This stimulated them to access their prior knowledge and informal comments could be heard where students were overheard saying “Oh, I didn’t know that was where Blacktown was.” And making their predictions about the map’s content. This allowed for some initial formative assessment and where the next parts of the lesson would then move to.

Host a Hunger Banquet – Oxfam has a planned activity to raise awareness and understanding about poverty (and donations) with a worked script, resources, and ideas on how to successfully run the banquet. In summary, the Hunger Banquet splits students into groups representing different levels of development. The groups are then fed based on these groupings, with the most developed fed well, while the least developed group receive a paltry meal in comparison. It really shows the disparities through food and ticks off a lot of students who miss out on a full meal!

<https://www.oxfamamerica.org/take-action/events/oxfam-hunger-banquet/>



Mystery bags – hiding something that is tangible in a bag and asking students to guess what is inside only by touching helps to inspire their creativity and curiosity. A range of things could ultimately make their way into the bag however, a fun game is to get bags of different colours and in small groups students try to work out what diet is inside each bag. They may be asked to list the individual items and then guess if it is a healthy diet or not.

This could be then extended to photos of people from countries where the diet is from and students matching these together. Examples of foods to hide in the bag can range from fast food or convenience items to rice and pulses, plant-based food or even insects (plastic ones are best). Bags like this can be purchased online, made at school or cheap pillowcases could be utilised.

WATCH David’s presentation on this topic from the 2021 GTANSW & Act Annual Conference

Link <https://vimeo.com/559931755>

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