



Student wellbeing

Student wellbeing has been defined as ‘a sustainable state characterised by predominantly positive feelings and attitude, positive relationships at school, resilience, self-optimisation and a high level of satisfaction with learning experiences’ It is strongly linked with learning and ‘is enhanced when evidence-informed practices are adopted by schools in partnership with families and community’ (DEEWR, 2008).

Why is it important?

Enhanced student wellbeing can contribute to improved academic achievement by increasing student motivation to participate and achieve; student engagement with, and participation in, learning; student attendance; and by decreasing the incidence of problem behaviour at school (DEEWR, 2008).

The top four concerns identified by 11-14 year olds were body image, family conflict, bullying and emotional abuse, and coping with stress (Mission Australia, 2010).

Ainley (2004) reports that disengagement from school is not only a precursor to leaving school, but to disengaging from wider social interaction. Developing a sense of connectedness to other members of a school ‘is part of the process of developing a sense of interdependence with others in a broader social community’.

If the transition from primary to lower secondary is a time when some students become less engaged then it becomes even more critical that this phase of education helps students to feel connected to the school and, ultimately, to wider society.

Key messages

Student engagement, support and resilience building should underpin the ethos of the school and should be reflected in the pedagogy and curriculum.

Optimising wellbeing within the school requires a whole-school approach that covers practice in four domains (Department of Education Training & Employment, 2012):

1. learning environment
2. curriculum and pedagogy
3. policies and procedures
4. partnerships.

Examples of practice

- Implementing whole school programs such as peer support and mentoring programs
- Providing ready access to a home-room teacher; giving one teacher responsibility for mentoring and pastoral care for a subset of students within the broader group
- Establishing a supportive, caring and inclusive school community that fosters school connectedness
- Establishing an environment that is physically safe
- There is active participation of parents and other caregivers in children’s learning, with channels for communication open between the child’s home and school
- A transition program for Primary – Junior Secondary acknowledges and addresses the anxiety of students transitioning from primary school to Junior Secondary
- There are clearly defined processes to identify and allocate resources to students requiring intervention and support
- The school’s Junior Secondary curriculum builds the foundations for success by embedding personal and social competencies within lessons across the Junior Secondary year levels.

Ainley, J., 2004. *Individual and school influences on interdependence*. s.l., s.n.

DEEWR, 2008. *Scoping study into approaches to student wellbeing*, s.l.: Australian Catholic University.

Department of Education Training & Employment (DETE), 2012. *Learning and wellbeing framework*.

Mission Australia, 2010. *National Survey of Young Australians*, s.l.: s.n.