

Spotlight

Wellbeing in Australian schools

March 2022



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The key messages in this Spotlight reveal that:

- ⚡ educators and school communities play a significant role in supporting and developing learner wellbeing
- ⚡ wellbeing is crucial to academic achievement, and wellbeing programs can support and accelerate students' learning
- ⚡ teaching is a demanding profession and educators require time and experience to determine which non-teaching tasks to prioritise in order to best support learner growth and achievement, as well as professional learning to best support their students' wellbeing
- ⚡ as is the case for their students, the wellbeing of educators and school leaders has come under increasing strain in recent years and various initiatives have been developed to foster their wellbeing

- ⚡ choosing the right wellbeing program and measuring its impact and effectiveness are important components of a whole-school community approach to wellbeing.

Introduction

There has been an intense focus on mental health and wellbeing in public discourse over the past two decades, and the level of attention paid to wellbeing in early learning settings and schools reflects this concern. Natural disasters and the pandemic of recent years have accelerated the need for research, resources and programs addressing the wellbeing of learners, educators and school leaders, and various initiatives and programs already exist that aim to understand and strengthen their wellbeing.

As students and teachers return to the classroom following extended periods of online learning for some, wellbeing continues to be a significant focus for school communities. Wellbeing is the shared responsibility of students, educators, families, and their broader communities. However, early learning and school settings are often in a position to identify when children and young people are at risk of poor wellbeing, and to ensure action is taken by appropriate agents to address these needs. Various programs, tools and resources have been developed to help learners and their families, teachers, and school leaders work together to understand and foster learners' wellbeing. Alongside these efforts, school systems have intensified their efforts to support educator and school leader wellbeing.

This *Spotlight* addresses learner wellbeing and examines how it is defined, why it is important, and how it can be measured. It also provides resources on supporting the wellbeing of children and young people. The wellbeing of educators and school leaders is vital to a well-functioning education system, so this Spotlight also explores the current state of educator and school leader wellbeing in Australia, how schools can support the wellbeing of their educators, and the resources available to them.

In this Spotlight, the term 'educator' is used to refer to all individuals in schools and early childhood settings who have a role in educating learners. This includes teachers and leaders, but also teachers' aides, teaching assistants, early childhood educators, library technicians and other support staff.

Defining wellbeing

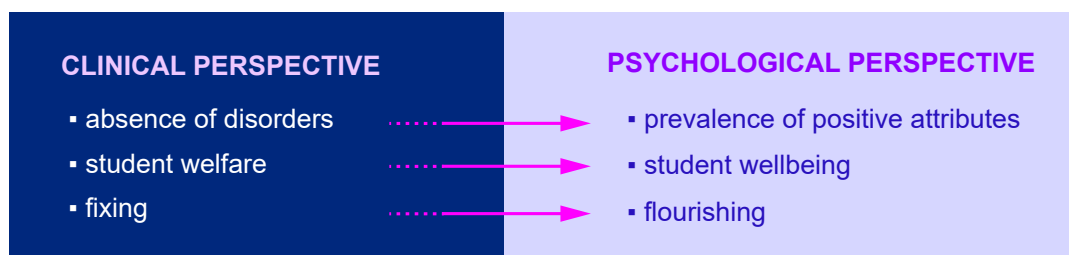
There is no shortage of published literature about wellbeing. The Google Ngram viewer, which charts the frequency of terms published over time, shows a large upswing in publications about wellbeing since 1995 (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Google Ngram viewer search for wellbeing



With a plethora of research into this topic, there are a variety of definitions and conceptualisations of wellbeing. What can be seen over time is a shift in both research and school practice away from the concept of student welfare and towards the concept of student wellbeing, and from a clinical definition of wellbeing; as the absence of negative conditions, to a psychological perspective of wellbeing; as the prevalence of positive attributes (Fraillon 2004). Figure 2 shows this change in approach and associated language.

Figure 2. Changes in focus over time (sources: Australian Catholic University 2008; Fraillon 2004)



What is clear is that wellbeing is not a straightforward positive-negative dichotomy, nor is it a continuum. Viewed as a holistic concept, wellbeing is best understood as the complex interplay between internal (subjective wellbeing) and external factors, and how individuals respond to these (OECD 2014). Wellbeing is relative to the individual and changes over time depending on their personal circumstances.

Definitions that focus on wellbeing in education are equally diverse. Table 1 provides examples from curriculum documents, and some descriptions are learning area-specific.

Table 1. Wellbeing in curriculum frameworks

Wellbeing	A sense of satisfaction, happiness, effective social functioning and spiritual health, and dispositions of optimism, openness, curiosity and resilience	Health and Physical Education Glossary (ACARA n.d.a)
	Quality of life of a population. This can be measured by objective indicators, for example, life expectancy, educational attainment and income, or by subjective measures of how people perceive the quality of their life, as revealed by surveys of happiness	Geography Glossary (ACARA n.d.b)
	Sound wellbeing results from the satisfaction of basic needs - the need for tenderness and affection; security and clarity; social recognition; to feel competent; physical needs and for meaning in life (adapted from Laevers 1994). It includes happiness and satisfaction, effective social functioning and the dispositions of optimism, openness, curiosity and resilience	Early Years Learning Framework (DET 2009, p. 49)
	... Well-being is the state of feeling good and functioning well in your life ... As a process, well-being comprises four important elements that are intrinsically connected and influence each other: feeling good, functioning well; accomplishing; and flourishing	International Baccalaureate Organization (Balci 2021)

A scoping study exploring approaches to student wellbeing conducted for the then Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations developed the following definition for student wellbeing:

“Student wellbeing is defined as a sustainable state of positive mood and attitude, resilience, and satisfaction with self, relationships and experiences at school”

–Australian Catholic University 2008, p. 66

Learning contributes to every aspect of students’ wellbeing (Education Council 2019) and none more so than social and emotional learning. Most social and emotional learning frameworks cover both intrapersonal (occurring within a person) and interpersonal (occurring between people) domains. The Australian Curriculum’s General Capabilities Personal and Social Capability strand sets out skills in four areas: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and social management (relationship skills) (Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) 2018).

Social and emotional wellbeing are often paired, and they tend to dominate conversations about wellbeing. Social wellbeing considers how the individual characteristics of the child facilitate positive interactions with their family, school and community. Emotional wellbeing refers to the way a person thinks and feels about themselves, including being able to adapt and deal with daily challenges (resilience and coping skills) (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) 2012).

Over recent years the definition of social and emotional wellbeing has shifted from a focus on the absence of mental health disorders (such as anxiety and depression) to one of positive emotional functioning. The term mental health is often used indiscriminately to describe a variety of different mental disorders and illnesses. While wellbeing encompasses mental health, it is also shaped by other intrapersonal and interpersonal influences. The following section examines some of these and highlights the holistic nature and components of wellbeing.

Components of learner wellbeing

While defining wellbeing is complex and requires consideration of various factors and influences, educators and education systems require a shared framework for understanding and addressing learner wellbeing. A common understanding also helps to ensure consistent policy and measurement practices across systems, sectors and jurisdictions.

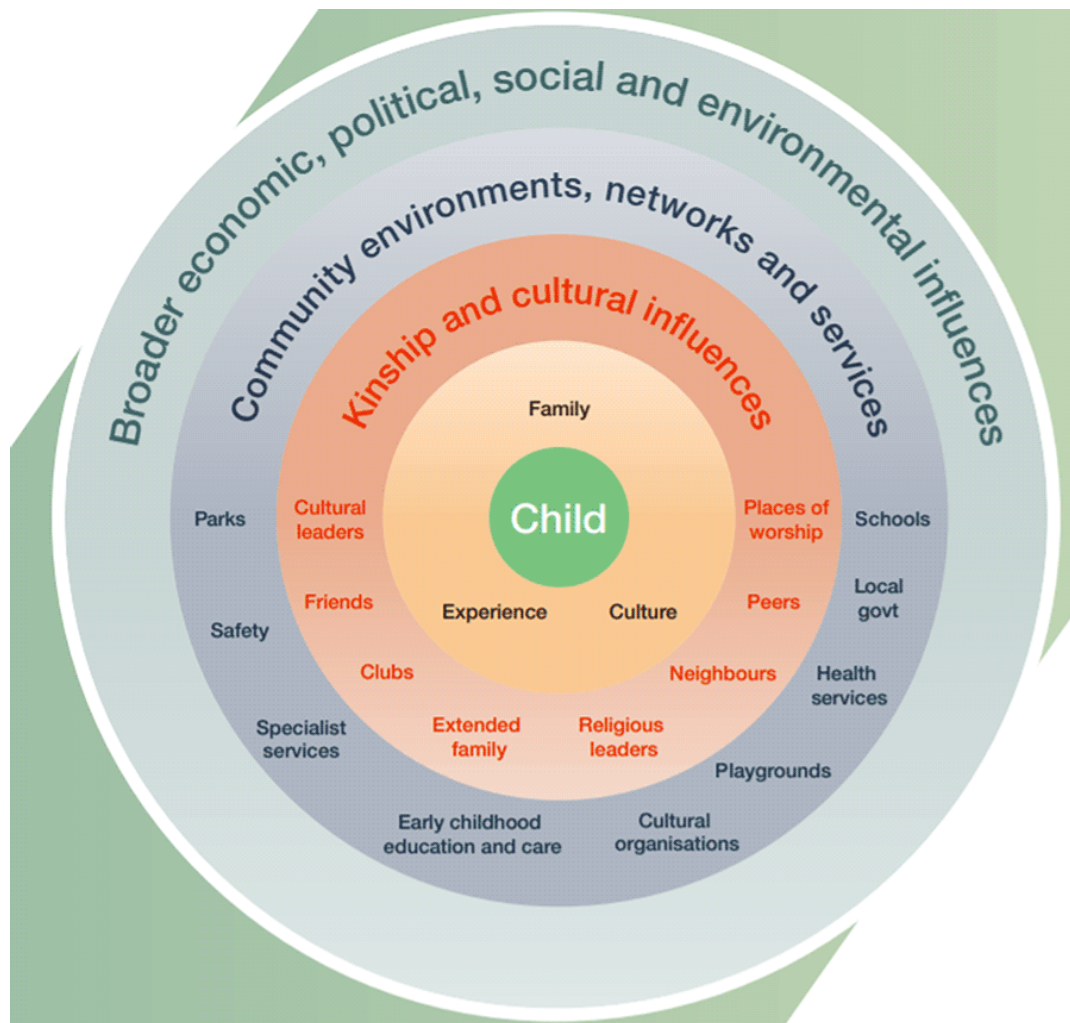
The Student Wellbeing Data Project

In an acknowledgement of the need for a national framework to consistently conceptualise and measure learner wellbeing across jurisdictions, Australia's education ministers endorsed the Student Wellbeing Data Project in June 2020. The objective of the Project is to support the development of a national approach to understanding student wellbeing, including the development of tools for the measurement of student wellbeing that support decisions about improvements in school climate at the system and school level. The purpose of stage one of the Project, currently in progress, is to determine the principal domains of wellbeing that pertain to students and their impact on student outcomes and assess their relative significance.

Ecological model of development

Human development occurs within multiple contexts, and involves the interplay between an individual's personal characteristics, and their family, school, and community environments. In the same way that ecosystems are interdependent, an ecological model of wellbeing takes a holistic approach to the environments in which a child develops. A common example of an ecological model places the individual in the centre, surrounded by four nested levels of influences (see Figure 3).

Figure 3. Ecological model of child development adapted from Bronfenbrenner (1979) (Source: Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority 2018, p. 13)



The ecological model shown in Figure 3 was adapted from Bronfenbrenner's (1979) model, which comprises:

- the microsystem (the family or classroom)
- the mesosystem (two microsystems in interaction)
- the exosystem (external environments that indirectly influence development, e.g., parental workplace)
- the macrosystem (the larger socio-cultural context, such as the individual's ethnicity, culture and belief systems) (Bronfenbrenner 1979).

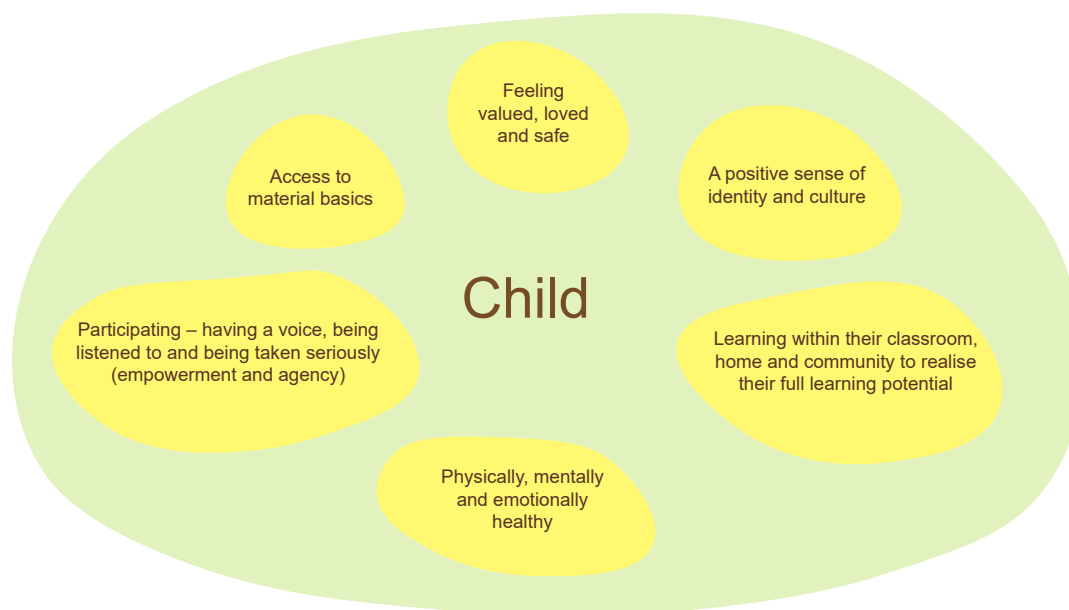
It shows how children are influenced by their social, environmental, political and economic contexts. Of course, children also influence the environments around them as participants. Family is the primary influence, and this diagram highlights the significant impact family and home environments have on children's wellbeing.

Given the different levels of influence outlined in this ecological model, it is useful to consider what educators can feasibly influence in terms of wellbeing (Ainley et al. 1998). As well as ensuring a child's basic needs are met, early learning settings and schools play a major role in the healthy development of each child's sense of identity, and in ensuring they develop a sense of connection to others. Social and emotional learning is as much a part of education's role as academic learning.

Fundamental wellbeing processes and interactions

The Nest, a wellbeing framework for children and young people released by the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (ARACY), outlines six wellbeing domains: the extent to which someone feels loved and safe; has access to material basics; is healthy; is learning; is participating; and has a positive sense of culture and identity (ARACY 2018) (see Figure 4). There is a strong parallel in this list with Maslow's hierarchy of needs which references biological and physical needs, safety needs, esteem needs, belongingness and self-actualisation.

Figure 4. The Nest's six wellbeing domains (ARACY 2018)



Connectedness

Connectedness underpins all six of The Nest's wellbeing domains. There is an important link between a sense of belonging and social and emotional wellbeing. Connectedness or belonging refers to the extent to which learners feel accepted, respected, included and supported by others at school or in early learning. Students develop their interpersonal skills as they experience success in collaborating, conflict resolution and communicating.

A sense of connection to school is associated with positive health and academic outcomes and has been linked to positive social and emotional wellbeing outcomes, such as decreased anxiety levels (Baumeister & Leary 1995). Students with diminished school connectedness are more likely to experience various negative outcomes, including poor health and wellbeing, elevated risk of anxiety and depression, and lower levels of achievement. They are also more likely to engage in risk-taking behaviours such as drug and alcohol use (Bond et al. 2007).

Connectedness also encompasses the importance of a person's connection to place and national identity (Renshaw 2019). For example, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities emphasise the importance of their land, culture, spirituality and ancestry, and how these affect the wellbeing of the individual and the community (Gee et al. 2014). Educators and school leaders play an important role in supporting the wellbeing of all learners and fostering cultural safety in their schools, which refers to:

“An environment that is spiritually, socially, and emotionally safe as well as physically safe for students; where there is no assault challenge or denial of their identity, of who they are, and what they need. It is about shared respect, shared meaning, shared knowledge, and experience of learning together”

–Williams 1999, p. 213

[Read more](#) about AITSL’s work to promote cultural competency among Australia’s teacher workforce and cultural safety in Australian schools.

Supporting learner wellbeing

Educators play a vital role in developing “confident and creative individuals who have a sense of self-worth, self-awareness and personal identity that enables them to manage their emotional, mental, spiritual and physical wellbeing – and have a sense of optimism about their lives and the future” (Education Council 2019, p. 5). The Australian Professional Standards for Teachers and the Australian Professional Standard for Principals and the Leadership Profiles (the Principal Standard) explicitly outline the responsibility educators have to support learner wellbeing.

Teachers at the *proficient* career stage are expected to “ensure students’ wellbeing and safety within school by implementing school and/or system, curriculum and legislative requirements” (AITSL 2011, p. 17). Principals are expected to be “well versed in the latest research and developments in ... student wellbeing” (AITSL 2014, p. 21) and to “create an ethos of respect taking account of the spiritual, moral, social and physical health and wellbeing of students” (AITSL 2014, p. 18).

Why is student wellbeing important?

Improved outcomes in all aspects of student wellbeing are positively associated with improved outcomes in all other aspects of schooling. Positive psychological characteristics have been linked to a range of outcomes including academic achievement, fewer risky behaviours, and better physical health in adulthood (Durlak et al. 2011).

“Wellbeing and a strong sense of connection, optimism and engagement enable children to develop a positive attitude to learning”

–DET 2009, p. 10

Protective factors

As well as helping children and young people to build healthy relationships with others and enjoy life, improving wellbeing and building resilience is important in preventing and reducing the impact of social and emotional problems. Enhanced student wellbeing is important not only to the development of students’ social and emotional competence, but also to the prevention of depression, suicide, self-harm, antisocial behaviour (including bullying and violence) and

substance abuse (Australian Catholic University 2008, p. 4). Conversely, low self-esteem, which is an indicator of the relationship between personal identity and wellbeing, has been associated with problems such as anxiety, drug abuse, delinquency and depression (Leary 2007).

Academic achievement

Wellbeing has a significant impact on students' academic outcomes. Students with a greater level of wellbeing are more likely to experience improved academic outcomes. For example, improving a student's wellbeing index by one standard deviation can result in an approximate 5% improvement in their expected NAPLAN numeracy scores between years 7 and 9 (Cárdenas et al. 2022). It is therefore unsurprising that wellbeing programs often have a positive impact on learners' academic achievement. Several Australian reviews have found that school-based wellbeing programs had small to moderate positive impacts on student academic achievement, compared to similar students in control groups engaged in their usual activities. In one case, general academic performance was equivalent to three months of additional learning gain (Dix et al. 2020).

What is the current state of wellbeing among Australian students?

In 2013-14, approximately 1 in 10 students had self-harmed at some point in their life, and about 1 in 7 Australian children and adolescents aged 4 to 17 had experienced a mental health disorder (Goodsell et al. 2017). After neurodevelopmental conditions, the next most frequently occurring disorders among young people are anxiety, depression and conduct disorders (AIHW 2012; Kern et al. 2014). Conduct disorders are defined as "a group of disorders that cause a person to act in ways that might violate the rights of other people and to disregard the instructions of authority figures" (Berger, Reupert & Allen 2020, p. 10).

Wellbeing programs that consider and acknowledge the unique personal characteristics of learners, such as their age, gender and sexuality are best placed to support positive wellbeing outcomes. Data suggest that younger students, on average, have higher levels of optimism, self-confidence and self-efficacy than older students, and that these continue to decrease as students mature (Forster 2004, p. 82). Adolescence is a peak time for the onset of mental health problems and most cases have their onset before the age of 21 years (Productivity Commission 2020, p. 3). Overall, the wellbeing of girls is slightly higher than boys, however, 49% of girls report they feel very stressed compared to 33% of boys (Australian Council for Educational Research 2018).

State and territory jurisdictions tend to hold the most detailed and up-to-date data on student wellbeing. For example, the Tasmanian Government runs the *Annual Student Wellbeing and Engagement Survey* across years 4 to 12 in government schools. In 2021, 29,650 students completed the survey. Results showed that 84% of students felt safe at school most of the time and 71% of students felt they belonged at their school, while 63% of senior students (years 10 to 12) reported being resilient in times of stress (Department of Education Tasmania 2021). The Tasmanian Government has launched its child and youth wellbeing strategy, *It Takes A Tasmanian Village*, based on this survey data and additional community consultation.

Wellbeing in times of transition

There are particular times and situations in which wellbeing needs may be greater for individual students and entire cohorts. Natural disasters and the current COVID-19 pandemic are obvious examples, as are more routine occurrences such as starting school or dealing with grief. Transition points, such as the commencement of primary school, moving from primary to secondary school, and exiting secondary school, represent a time of change and have the potential to be stressful in the short term. For some people, they trigger longer-term or more intense responses that have an impact on wellbeing.

The transition from primary to secondary school occurs during adolescence, a particularly challenging developmental stage, and may require adjustment to a new school and new ways of learning and teaching, as well as new people. Students who make the move successfully are “more likely to have higher or long-term success in measures of academic engagement and outcomes, and social-emotional and behavioural competencies, while students who do not are at greater risk of dropping out of school” (Sniedze-Gregory et al. 2021, p. 7).

The return to school in 2022 following significant periods of remote learning for many students offers a timely opportunity to focus on the relationship between periods of transition and wellbeing. Together, students, families and schools can consider the implications of learning from home on student connections, socialisation and levels of anxiety. These students may have spent significant time viewing digital content or in online communities where interaction norms may not reflect the values and expectations of the school.

Is the state of learners’ wellbeing changing?

A 15-year snapshot of wellbeing survey responses from 66,767 Australian year 2 to 12 students across 404 schools showed trends in social and emotional wellbeing between 2003 and 2014. This analysis, based on the [Social-Emotional Wellbeing Survey](#), indicated that wellbeing remained fairly stable over that time, except for reports of feeling ‘very stressed’ and ‘I worry too much about schoolwork or what others think’, which trended upwards. Over the same period, students’ reported difficulties in controlling anger decreased (Australian Council for Educational Research 2018).

On the other hand, there is a general consensus that the wellbeing of many students has deteriorated since 2020, which has been supported by reports indicating an increase in the number of contacts to Kids Helpline during the COVID-19 pandemic. Calls to the helpline rose 30 per cent in Victoria in the first six months of 2021 compared with the first six months of 2020, and by 14 per cent in NSW (Carey 2021).

Technology is often acknowledged as contributing to changes in wellbeing. The ways that young people use digital technologies have implications for their health and wellbeing, affecting their “physical activity, posture, vision, sleep and emotions” (Edwards, Straker & Oakey 2018, p. 12). Research demonstrates a complex relationship between digital technology and young people’s mental health and wellbeing, with technology having both positive and negative impacts as mediated by personality, social and digital factors (Livingstone & Smith 2014; Hollis, Livingstone & Sonuga-Barke 2020). Children may associate using technology with positive feelings, for example when achieving success in games, and for many children being on-screen has a calming effect. Digital technologies also offer children and young people access to a larger, richer network of social supports and mental health treatments (Hollis et al. 2016).

However, the negative impacts on mental health and wellbeing can be serious. A longitudinal study of 2,120 adolescents found that those who had experienced cyberbullying were at increased risk of suicide ideation/attempt in the short term (two years) (Perret et al. 2020). As students' intensive use of technologies continues, both inside and outside of the classroom, understanding of the impact these have on their wellbeing will continue to improve.

Resource List 1

Mental Health and Wellbeing resources for children and young people

Headspace

As the National Youth Mental Health Foundation, headspace provides young people with mental health, physical and sexual health, alcohol and other drug services, as well as work and study support.

🔗 <https://headspace.org.au/>

Student Wellbeing Hub

Offers games, videos, websites and resources on various topics like how to deal with bullying and how to stay safe online.

🔗 <https://studentwellbeinghub.edu.au/students/>

The BRAVE program

Online program supporting children and young people experiencing anxiety and their families.

🔗 <https://www.brave-online.com/>

ReachOut

Offers supports, tools and tips for young people, parents and schools on a variety of topics including bullying, relationships, mental wellbeing and identity

🔗 <https://au.reachout.com/>

Bullying. No Way!

Provides students and school communities with evidence-informed resources and activities to support a proactive approach to bullying education and prevention.

🔗 <https://bullyingnoway.gov.au/>

OurFutures (previously Climate Schools)

Hosted by the University of Sydney's Matilda Centre for Research in Mental Health and Substance Use, this platform comprises five interactive modules targeting different year levels that aim to educate students and empower them to improve their health and wellbeing. Topics include mental health, alcohol and cannabis, and MDMA and emerging drugs.

🔗 www.ourfuturesinstitute.org.au

Office of the eSafety Commissioner

Offers resources that aim to help children and young people safely navigate the online world.

🔗 <https://www.esafety.gov.au/young-people>

Measuring learner wellbeing

A recent Productivity Commission report on mental health recommended that all schools should measure student wellbeing using specific targets and nationally consistent measures of student wellbeing, with schools required to report on their progress against wellbeing outcomes (Productivity Commission 2020). In fact, most education systems recognise the important relationship between individual social, emotional and academic outcomes and wellbeing, and routinely monitor the level of wellbeing among students (see Resource List 2).

Subjective wellbeing is usually measured via surveys, or in the case of younger children, direct observation. A range of psychometrically validated measurement tools exist with associated methodologies for implementation (see Resource List 2). The measurement of wellbeing has recently extended into the early years with the first round of the *International Early Learning and Child Well-being Study* (OECD 2020). The measurement framework for this study included self-regulation or executive function (working memory, mental flexibility and self-control) and empathy, trust and pro-social behaviours.

The highly personal nature of the questions in these surveys means they elicit different levels of honesty from respondents depending on how self-aware and how safe they feel. Anonymous surveys can provide a whole-class or school-level indication of wellbeing. All surveys represent a point in time measure and regular follow-ups are required to track changes over time. Some educators use exit or entrance check-ins with individuals or online equivalents, but to accurately assess wellbeing of individuals requires a combination of data points.

Survey fatigue and apathy is a real danger if this is the only way that wellbeing is investigated, particularly if students have seen no action resulting from their previous survey responses. Educator reflections on students' self-management skills and their positive feelings about themselves can supplement data collected through more formal mechanisms. Through observations of students in small group interactions, educators can evaluate elements such as students' abilities to empathise with others and behave cooperatively (Forster 2004).

The wide variability in individual social-emotional development, and in personal experience, means educators need to be cautious about generalising from limited data or from the measurement of sub-elements of wellbeing, which may not be comparable. While monitoring a student's level of wellbeing is important, the real challenge is to ensure this data is used to inform action that promotes growth in wellbeing.

In addition to wellbeing data, almost all jurisdictions collect data on concepts that are adjacent or “akin” to wellbeing, such as optimism, resilience, perseverance, and emotional regulation. Contextual data, which explore school climate, education delivery, school engagement and student behaviours, can also help to illustrate students' connectedness to school and their overall wellbeing. Understanding the relationship between learners, their families, and the school community can inform a more complete understanding of individual and school-wide levels of wellbeing.

Resource List 2

Surveys and reports of student wellbeing

Various professionally-designed surveys of student wellbeing are used across Australian schools. These have been developed as valid and reliable measures based on significant data collection.

It can be useful for educators to review sample questions and online reports for a range of surveys to improve their understanding of the constructs of wellbeing and to stimulate their own conversations about wellbeing with students, parents and colleagues.

Victorian student health and wellbeing survey: About You

🔗 <https://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/health/Pages/mental-health-advice-teachers.aspx>

ACT School Satisfaction and Climate Survey

Completed by all parents and carers, school staff and students in Years 4 to 1

🔗 <https://www.education.act.gov.au/public-school-life/school-satisfaction-and-climate-survey>

Queensland School Opinion Survey

🔗 <https://qed.qld.gov.au/our-publications/reports/statistics/schooling/schools/Pages/school-opinion-survey-faqs.aspx>

Tasmanian Student Wellbeing and Engagement Survey)

This annual survey uses the ARACY 6 wellbeing domains.

🔗 <https://www.education.tas.gov.au/about-us/projects/child-student-wellbeing/student-wellbeing-survey-3>

NSW Tell Them From Me survey

🔗 <https://education.nsw.gov.au/student-wellbeing/tell-them-from-me/about-tell-them-from-me-/student-survey>

South Australian Wellbeing and engagement survey (SA)

🔗 <https://www.education.sa.gov.au/department/research-and-statistics/statistics-and-data/wellbeing-and-engagement-collection-survey/about-wellbeing-and-engagement-collection>

Speaking Out Survey (WA Commissioner for Children and Young People)

🔗 <https://www.ccyp.wa.gov.au/our-work/projects/speaking-out-survey/>

School Wellbeing Check survey (Student Wellbeing Hub)

🔗 <https://studentwellbeinghub.edu.au/educators/framework/school-wellbeing-check>

Social and Emotional Wellbeing Survey (ACER)

🔗 <https://www.acer.org/au/sew>

Pivot's Wellbeing for Learning Tool

🔗 <https://pivotpl.com/wellbeing-for-learning/>

Six Star survey

🔗 <https://www.sixstarwellbeing.com.au>

Skodel

🔗 <https://skodel.com>

Do student wellbeing programs work?

Educators and school leaders are best placed to understand the unique needs of their students, and to decide which programs and approaches will support positive wellbeing outcomes within their school community. For wellbeing programs to be effective, they need to be tailored to the school's context and be part of a broader school-wide commitment to understanding and addressing the unique needs of learners, educators and leaders.

When they are implemented within supportive learning environments and tailored to the school's context, wellbeing programs can have a positive impact on learner wellbeing. A meta-analysis of 213 school-based social and emotional learning programs engaging over 270,000 students found that participating students “demonstrated significantly improved social and emotional skills, attitudes, behaviour, and academic performance”, compared to their peers in control groups (Durlak et al. 2011, p. 405).

However, these improvements may not continue into the long-term after programs end, demonstrating the importance of school culture and climate in fostering long-term positive wellbeing outcomes. Two meta-analyses that measured the short-term effects of social and emotional learning programs found statistically significant benefits for participating students immediately following the intervention (Durlak et al. 2011; Wigglesworth et al. 2016). However, a comparison between another two meta-analyses (Sklad et al. 2012; Taylor et al. 2017) found limited long-term effects of social and emotional learning programs (Mahoney 2018).

A systematic review of mental health and wellbeing programs available to New South Wales schools recommended that, alongside the implementation of such programs, school leaders should:

- provide staff training and resources
- clearly outline how school staff are expected to support the delivery of these programs
- monitor and evaluate the use of these programs within their schools
- monitor student outcomes related to these programs, and
- facilitate ongoing staff consultation around mental health and wellbeing concerns (Berger, Reupert & Allen 2020).

Wellbeing programs may also have a positive impact on students' academic outcomes. A systematic review and meta-analysis of 78 evaluations of school-based wellbeing programs revealed both academic and non-academic benefits, with students in the interventions up to four months ahead in their learning, compared to their peers in control groups (Dix et al. 2020). These results combine to make a strong statement about the value of implementing wellbeing programs within a school-wide culture that prioritises and values wellbeing, noting that it is difficult to confidently attribute changes in wellbeing outcomes to a single specific program and that change in this area takes time (Smith et al. 2021).

Resource List 3

Choosing a wellbeing program

Be You programs directory

This searchable database of evaluated mental health and wellbeing programs helps educators choose wellbeing programs to implement in their learning community. All programs listed have been through a rigorous assessment process designed in

collaboration with experts at the Murdoch Children's Research Institute and the University of Melbourne, and each program has a rating on a scale from 1 to 4 for evidence and implementation.

The evidence rating provides an assessment of the research underpinning the program, including its impact and quality. The implementation rating provides an assessment of the program's training, support, and acceptability by participants and instructors. Programs are classified into the following categories:

- mentally healthy communities
- family partnerships
- learning resilience
- early support responding together

🔗 <https://beyou.edu.au/resources/programs-directory>

NSW Department of Education mental health and wellbeing program list

The programs included in the list were identified in a literature review conducted by Monash University as supporting long-term mental health and wellbeing outcomes for students. The programs fall under the following categories: anxiety and depression; self-harm and suicide; behaviour and social skills; body image; and general programs.

The Department also published a Mental Health and Wellbeing Program Planning Template to help school learning and wellbeing teams determine the most appropriate mental health and wellbeing program for their school.

🔗 <https://education.nsw.gov.au/student-wellbeing/counselling-and-psychology-services/mental-health-programs-and-partnerships/evidence-based-mental-health-wellbeing-programs-for-schools>

Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) program guide

This US guide to selecting effective social and emotional learning programs provides filters by age group, type of school, program approach (e.g., academic integration, lesson-based, organisational or teaching practices), as well as according to significant evaluation outcomes aligned to CASEL's framework.

🔗 <https://pg.casel.org>

Educator wellbeing

Learner wellbeing is supported and strengthened by educator wellbeing. Creating a healthy workplace is a shared responsibility and Australian work health and safety standards expect employers and employees to protect against risks to staff wellbeing, both physical and psychological. Teacher wellbeing relates closely to the quality of their work and comprises four aspects: 1) cognitive well-being, including self-efficacy; 2) psychological wellbeing, including job satisfaction, stress, commitment, and a feeling of trust; 3) physical well-being, such as burnout; and 4) social well-being such as workplace relationships (Schleicher 2018). Teachers' wellbeing has both "inward" and "outward" outcomes: it impacts their personal levels of stress and intentions to leave the profession, as well as the quality of their teaching and their students' wellbeing (Viac & Fraser 2020).

What is the state of educator wellbeing?

Educator surveys consistently raise questions about wellbeing in the workplace. Teacher workforce data from New South Wales, South Australia and the Northern Territory collected in 2018 through the Australian Teacher Workforce Data (ATWD) initiative indicated that a quarter of teachers from these jurisdictions intended to leave the profession before retirement. Of these teachers, 68% cited 'I am finding it too stressful/it is impacting my wellbeing or mental health' (ATWD 2021, p. 10).

[Read more](#) about the Australian Teacher Workforce Data (ATWD) initiative, including how to participate in future rounds of the ATWD Teacher Survey.

The OECD's Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) asks educators similar questions about their mental health and wellbeing. In the most recent iteration of the survey (2018), approximately three quarters of Australian educators said their job negatively impacts their mental health (50% "to some extent", 15% "quite a bit", 9% "a lot"). These were slightly higher or the same as the OECD averages (43%, 16%, 7%). More than half of Australian educators said they experience stress at work, either "quite a bit" (33%) or "a lot" (24%). These proportions were both higher than the OECD averages (31% and 18%) (Thomson and Hillman 2020).

In a 2021 survey of 571 educators across Australia, 80% said their work-life balance was either "less than ideal or non-existent", an impact felt most acutely by female educators (Australian College of Educators (ACE) 2021, p. 16). The survey, conducted in June and July 2021, showed overall job satisfaction levels for educators had dropped from 91% in 2017 to 63% in 2021. The proportion of respondents who felt 'supported by colleagues' also fell steeply (95% in 2017, 80% in 2021) (ACE 2021). When asked about their resilience and adaptability specifically during the pandemic, 66% of educators reported they had been able to maintain a positive outlook, while 18% disagreed with this statement. Just under half (48%) reported they "think about leaving" *fairly often or most of the time* over the course of a year. However, the majority of educators surveyed (87%) reported they find teaching rewarding or very rewarding (ACE 2021). Findings from

subsequent iterations of this survey and additional research will help to determine whether these comparatively low levels of professional satisfaction persist following the lengthy periods of remote learning experienced by some students and educators in 2020 and 2021.

Connection with colleagues is as important to educators as school connectedness is for student wellbeing. Collaboration and collective efficacy are recognised sources of wellbeing, however, evidence suggests an increasing focus on individualised solutions such as mindfulness and yoga, as well as self-paced online professional learning, which is leading to increasing isolation (Hargreaves, Washington & O'Connor 2019). This suggests there are benefits to principals valuing and resourcing time for teacher collaboration. An extension of this philosophy is the importance of the principal and school leadership team creating and maintaining a school culture and climate that is conducive to fostering wellbeing among all.

Supporting educator wellbeing

Learner and educator wellbeing are interdependent, and it takes time and experience for educators to determine which non-teaching tasks to prioritise in order to best support learner growth and achievement. When students are vulnerable and have diverse needs, educators may feel pressure to 'fix' problems for students and a sense of guilt when this cannot be achieved. These feelings can be overwhelming and especially difficult for early career teachers to adjust to. A vicious circle of 'care more, do more' becomes a threat to teacher wellbeing (Hargreaves, Washington & O'Connor 2019, p. 95). In mid-2021, notably a period when much of Australia was experiencing various restrictions to limit the spread of COVID-19, 70% of educators reported they were spending more time supporting their students' emotional wellbeing. Working with students with diverse learning needs and behaviour management have been identified as two areas of concern for educators (ACE 2021, p. 12). A lack of appreciation of their work was identified as an issue by a teacher health and wellbeing study (Heffernan et al. 2019).

Jurisdictions' supports for educators

Jurisdictions have introduced various mechanisms to support educator wellbeing. For example, the Northern Territory Department of Education has developed a Teacher Wellbeing Strategy, which is based on the understanding that "when teachers are at their best, students are at their best" (Northern Territory Government n.d., p. 3). To inform the development of the Strategy, the Department surveyed their school-based teaching workforce to understand their occupational health and wellbeing, receiving 875 responses. While teachers reported high levels of commitment to their roles and ascribed high levels of meaning to their work, they also reported working long hours and high rates of exposure to offensive behaviour. Respondents suggested that social connectedness and professional development opportunities contribute to improved wellbeing and may help to combat teacher attrition (Northern Territory Department of Education n.d.).

The Queensland Department of Education has launched a Staff wellbeing framework, Staff wellbeing planning guide, and Occupational violence and aggression prevention strategy to support educators. The Department has also appointed seven Regional Wellbeing Coordinators to provide assistance to schools as they implement staff wellbeing initiatives (Queensland Government Department of Education 2022).

Wellbeing of early career educators

Research highlights the wellbeing of early career teachers as a major concern for the profession and stresses the importance of good quality induction and ongoing support programs for graduate educators and those moving to new positions. The importance of early career educator wellbeing is also highlighted in *Graduate to Proficient: Australian guidelines for teacher induction into the profession*. Wellbeing is one of the guidelines' four focus areas, alongside professional practices, professional identity, and orientation (AITSL 2016). Positive and productive relationships with their students is an important factor in building teacher confidence, and relationships with colleagues also contribute to wellbeing. Qualitative research conducted with school leaders, experienced and early career teachers in Australia, South Africa and Norway found that early career teachers often experience low confidence and self-esteem, communication breakdowns, and difficulties establishing trusting relationships within their school community (du Plessis & Sunde 2017). Studies of teacher job satisfaction found that “a teacher’s relationship with every other teacher in their school’s trust network and the density of a teacher’s academic advice network predicted the development of teacher job satisfaction” (Edinger & Edinger 2018, p. 573). This demonstrates the importance of strong partnerships between initial teacher education (ITE) providers and schools and the need for comprehensive induction programs for early career teachers.

New teachers are less likely to leave the profession if they are provided with a mentor in their content area and if they feel supported and successful (Breux 2016; Ingersoll & Strong 2011). Well-designed and implemented induction programs for early career teachers are also known to improve retention rates. However important areas such as teacher wellbeing and professional identity are not always being covered in new teacher induction programs. Nearly a third (31%) of early career teachers surveyed in 2016 reported there was no focus on teacher wellbeing in their induction, despite only 13% of school leaders agreeing with this statement (AITSL 2017, p. 10).

Measuring educator wellbeing

In an acknowledgement of the need to measure wellbeing outcomes among learners as well as educators, various tools have been developed and implemented both in Australia and overseas (see Resource List 4). Internationally, teacher wellbeing is measured through elements of TALIS and the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA). The OECD has also developed a framework for data collection and analysis of educator wellbeing which comprises four key components – physical and mental wellbeing, cognitive wellbeing, subjective wellbeing, and social wellbeing – which also considers “inward” outcomes, such as stress and intentions to leave the profession, and “outward” outcomes, such as classroom processes and student wellbeing (Viac & Fraser 2020). Locally, the Australian Principal Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing Survey has been fielded annually since 2011. Its findings are explored in the following section on school leader wellbeing. As is the case for learners, survey fatigue is also an issue for educators and needs to be carefully considered and managed during attempts to understand and measure their wellbeing.

Teacher Subjective Wellbeing Questionnaire

Researchers at Utah State University have developed and validated an 8-item Teacher Subjective Wellbeing Questionnaire, which allows educators to self-report their wellbeing using items exploring school connectedness and teaching efficacy (Renshaw, Long & Cook 2015). Respondents are asked to what extent they agree with various statements, such as *I feel like I belong at this school* and *I am treated with respect at this school*. The survey is freely available for use.

Do educator wellbeing programs work?

As wellbeing programs targeting educators continue to be rolled out across the country, evidence of their efficacy is growing. Interventions that address teacher stress and burnout have been found to decrease stress, improve wellbeing, and result in increased commitment to their role among participating educators (Carroll et al. 2021). Educator wellbeing programs also contribute to improved outcomes among learners, including a significant reduction in the general difficulties they perceive in the classroom, improved perceptions of teacher support, and improved task orientation (Carroll et al. 2021). While the evidence so far is promising, efforts to measure educator wellbeing and to understand the efficacy of wellbeing programs are being hampered by the lack of a consistent definition of educator wellbeing (Hascher & Waber 2021; McCallum et al 2017).

Resource List 4

Wellbeing resources for educators

Pastoral care: a 10-step plan

🔗 https://www.teachermagazine.com/au_en/articles/pastoral-care-a-10-step-action-plan

AITSL My Induction app

🔗 www.aitsl.edu.au/teach/start-your-career/my-induction-app

Classroom adjustments: Mental Health [Podcast]

🔗 www.nccd.edu.au/professional-learning/classroom-adjustments-mental-health

Developing a workplace mental health strategy: A how-to guide for organisations

🔗 www.headsup.org.au/docs/default-source/resources/393615_1117_bl1833_acc-2.pdf

Quality Teaching Rounds

🔗 <https://qtacademy.edu.au/what-is-qtr>

Spotlight: Induction of beginning teachers in Australia – What do early career teachers say?

🔗 www.aitsl.edu.au/docs/default-source/research-evidence/spotlight/induction.pdf

Teacher Magazine Wellbeing edition

🔗 www.teachermagazine.com/au_en/category/wellbeing

Wellbeing surveys for educators

Assessing Wellbeing in Education

An online survey that assesses adult and student wellbeing. The school receives group level aggregate reports and alerts of students that need support. Staff, parents and senior students are provided with personal reports.

🔗 <https://www.awesomeschools.com>

National School Surveys, part of the Victorian Counselling & Psychological Services

🔗 <https://www.schoolsurveys.com.au/Staff-Well-being-Survey.php>

Wellbeing programs and professional learning

There is an array of programs, resources and apps targeting wellbeing in schools. Some programs provide professional learning for educators, others are intended to be used with students.

Ideally, wellbeing programs and practices will be part of a systemic whole-school approach, and where possible include wellbeing training for educators, support for parents, and student-focused interventions and resources. In selecting evidence-based mental health and wellbeing programs, schools should look for clearly identified aims and objectives that are closely linked to the needs of students and the school community. Implementation procedures should be clearly defined and include roles and responsibilities of staff, and details about monitoring of student outcomes. Ongoing staff consultation is another crucial element of effective program implementation (NSW Department of Education 2021).

The importance of providing professional learning about wellbeing for educators reflects their essential role and their capacity to influence student wellbeing outcomes. Evidence suggests that wellbeing programs delivered by 'trained' classroom educators (that is, a program designed to build the capacity of the educator first, supported by resources for students) are marginally more effective in impacting students' wellbeing outcomes than programs delivered by external professionals (Dix et al. 2020).

There has been significant investment in professional learning for educators about wellbeing, and all Australian educators have access to online professional learning through the Australian Student Wellbeing Hub and Beyond Blue's *Be You* initiative, among others.

Australian Student Wellbeing Hub

🔗 <https://studentwellbeinghub.edu.au/>

The Student Wellbeing Hub is the home of the Australian Student Wellbeing Framework, which aims to support school communities to build positive learning environments and to consider reviewing their current safety and wellbeing policies and support requirements. The Framework and associated professional learning modules provide school communities with advice on developing and implementing policies and support mechanisms to help students. Figure 5 shows the five elements of this framework: leadership, inclusion, student voice, partnerships and support.

Figure 5. Australian Student Wellbeing Framework (ESA 2018)



The framework includes a strong focus on student voice, ensuring that students are active participants in their own learning and wellbeing, that they feel connected and that they use their social and emotional skills to be respectful, resilient and safe.

Be You

🔗 <https://beyou.edu.au>

Following the National Mental Health Commission's *National Review of Mental Health Programmes and Services* in 2014, funding was given to Beyond Blue to lead a national education initiative known as *Be You*. This initiative is targeted at educators working in early learning settings and schools, and is designed to enable educators to take an "active role in supporting the mental health and resilience of children and young people, and in providing effective responses to suicide (including postvention)" (Smith et al. 2021, p. 12). A study which compared educators who had been exposed to the *Be You* initiative and those who had not demonstrated that *Be You* participants were significantly more likely to be aware of and engage in evidence-based practice, and the following content areas of the program:

- beliefs and attitudes toward the mental health of children and young people
- awareness of, and access to, evidence about child and youth mental health
- awareness and knowledge of processes to refer children, young people or their families to early intervention
- services or external supports available to support child and youth mental health
- confidence to recognise and respond to mental health risks in ways that are consistent with contemporary evidence
- knowledge of suicide postvention supports and depth of understanding about responding to suicide trauma (Smith et al. 2021).

Be You is delivered predominantly online which helps to facilitate scalability and accessibility, and reduces associated costs. A blended model of delivery that includes support from a consultant is recommended to deepen engagement and address the needs of specific educators or at specific times such as after critical incidents. However, it appears that awareness of, and satisfaction with, the current blended delivery model is mixed and educators also noted that programs such as *Be You* had a limited range of resources to address the wellbeing of children and young people with high and complex needs (Smith et al. 2021).

"Ongoing learning about child social and emotional development and wellbeing should form part of the ongoing professional development requirements for all teachers"

–Productivity Commission 2020, 5.4

Resource List 5

Wellbeing professional learning

Student Wellbeing Hub Professional Learning

The Hub offers free online courses providing professional learning for educators, as well as a specific pre-service teacher version of the professional learning. Resources support building safe, inclusive and connected school communities

🔗 <https://studentwellbeinghub.edu.au/educators/professional-learning-courses>

Be You Professional Learning

Beyond Blue offers online professional learning with targeted programs for pre-service teachers, early childhood teachers and educators, and primary and secondary teachers and school leaders. The professional learning consists of 13 content modules grouped under five domains, with content centred around mentally healthy communities.

🔗 <https://beyou.edu.au>

The National Excellence in School Leadership Institute's Staff Wellbeing Toolkit

The Toolkit is a group development program that was developed for Australian educators to support a whole school approach to relationships and wellbeing. The Northern Territory, South Australian and Queensland Departments of Education have adopted the Toolkit.

🔗 <https://www.nesli.org/staffwellbeingtoolkit.html>

Positive Education professional learning

Positive Education has five pillars of wellbeing: positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning and accomplishment. Under this model, wellbeing centres on striving for and attaining these positive attributes in life (Seligman 2018). The Institute of Positive Education delivers this professional learning through a combination of live and asynchronous learning.

🔗 [Link](#)

Building Resilience in Teacher Education (BRiTE)

Five online interactive learning modules designed for pre-service teachers, informed by an extensive review of the teacher resilience literature and empirical research.

🔗 <https://www.brite.edu.au>

Cultivating Teacher Resilience

This edited book published in 2020 is open access and can be downloaded for a deep dive into all aspects of teacher resilience.

🔗 <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-15-5963-1>

School leader wellbeing

What is an educational leader's role in supporting wellbeing? Firstly, they take responsibility for their own wellbeing, and for the organisation's climate, culture and connections. In addition, their role is to build the wellbeing capacity of others in their community. The Principal Standard sets out this challenge as 'developing self and others'.

"Principals build capacity by creating a culture of empowerment, responsibility and self-directed research that leads to the development of a professional learning community. They model the importance of health and wellbeing, watch for signs of stress in self and others and take action to address it. They modify their leadership behaviour based on learning from experience and feedback from colleagues"

–AITSL 2014, p.15

How are school leaders faring?

The key Australian research into wellbeing of school leaders is the annual Australian Principal Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing Survey (the Principal Survey). The latest published results come from 2021; a stressful year for many school leaders, and this was borne out in the findings across many areas (See et al. 2022). Leaders reported long working hours (an average of 55.6 hours a week, up from 54.5 hours in 2020). Reported rates of burnout and cognitive stress in 2021 were the highest ever recorded by the survey (which commenced in 2011). Following completion of the survey, almost one third (29%) of participating school leaders received a follow-up email from the research team alerting to signs of concerning stress levels (a red flag email). The alert was based on principals' survey responses indicating a risk to their quality of life, occupational health and/or self-harm. The email included links to Employee Assistance Programs and local support services (See et al. 2022).

There were some positive findings, especially considering the difficulties school leaders have faced during the COVID-19 pandemic. Social support from external colleagues was reported at its highest rate since the survey began. Reflecting extended periods of learning from home, the majority of school leaders (82%) reported increased parent/carers engagement compared to pre-pandemic years. School leaders also reported high levels of satisfaction with their work in terms of how meaningful it is and how it contributes to their school's overall function; commitment to their workplace (i.e., their specific school); and self-efficacy. Highlighting a need for ongoing professional development and support, younger and less-experienced principals reported higher levels of stress from work demands and more negative health and wellbeing outcomes than their more experienced colleagues (See et al. 2022).

Addressing bullying and violence is a growing issue, with 84% of school leaders surveyed in 2021 reporting being subjected to some form of offensive behaviour in the last 12 months. While the 2020 survey results indicated a drop in offensive behaviours towards school leaders, these rates rose again in 2021. Almost half (44%) of school leaders were threatened with violence and two in five (39%) experienced physical violence (See et al. 2022). An analysis of over 13,000 responses to the Principal Survey collected between 2011 and 2019 from 4,103 government school leaders found that while students and parents are responsible for most offensive behaviours, for example, threats of violence and physical violence, colleagues contribute significantly to the number of bullying incidents. Notably, female school leaders are significantly more likely to experience

bullying or physical violence than their male colleagues (Arnold et al. 2021). Demonstrating the seriousness of this issue, school leaders are more likely to be subjected to offensive behaviours than members of the general population, and Australian school leaders experience offensive behaviours at higher rates than their counterparts overseas. Some researchers suggest the community should investigate and address the causes of offensive behaviour across society, and that school leaders should meet with parents and carers online where possible to help minimise instances of offensive behaviour (Arnold et al. 2021). The COVID-19 pandemic has provided teachers and school leaders alike with new ways to engage with learners and their families, and it will be important for them to proactively consider which of these practices they continue into the future.

Lack of control over work and lack of participation in decision-making are cited as contributing factors to occupational stress, with moral stress stemming from not being able to perform the role that one feels morally obliged to do (Riley et al. 2021, p. 11). Compared to CEOs in other sectors, educational leaders may have more autonomy in some areas, but much less in terms of work hours, work-life balance, financial and staffing decisions. Other factors affecting wellbeing such as relationships at work and organisational culture can be either a source of stress or a buffer against stress.

Support from education systems

To support the wellbeing of the adults and young people in their community, education leaders need to receive equally strong wellbeing support from their education system and employers. Jurisdictions are committed to supporting teacher and school leader wellbeing and have implemented a range of supports to facilitate improved wellbeing outcomes. Government and non-government systems that prioritise leader wellbeing take note of the research, consult with their site-based and regional leaders, and commit resources to effective implementation of health and wellbeing strategies. They recognise that ‘schools thrive when principals thrive’ (DET Victoria 2019).

Systems support educational leaders through coaching, residential programs and opportunities for sabbaticals to study and investigate leadership in other settings. Notably, when policy makers and systems seek to respond to the multiple challenges school leaders face, there is a fine balance to be maintained between helping and hindering. Policies and programs that have demonstrated success are best placed to support positive wellbeing outcomes without contributing to educator workload.

Leaders who receive the least professional support report the greatest challenges in maintaining their mental health (Riley et al. 2021). The importance of being connected to colleagues and having access to mentors is a consistent finding in wellbeing research, although being busy too often traps leaders into sacrificing all-important opportunities to engage in professional support networks regularly.

Specific school leader support systems have been introduced in some jurisdictions. The Northern Territory Department has developed a Principal Wellbeing Framework and School Leader Wellbeing Action Plan. Similarly, the Victorian Department of Education and Training has published a Principal Health and Wellbeing Strategy and associated Discussion paper, which are underpinned by various resources, such as proactive wellbeing supervision, which provides

principals with access to psychologists and check-ins for new principals, and free and confidential health checks (DET Victoria 2021). In Queensland, principals are supported through a [Principal Health and Wellbeing Strategy](#) and associated [Action plan](#). The Tasmanian Department of Education has introduced a [Principal Wellbeing Action Plan](#) and [Discussion paper](#), and the ACT Education Directorate has released a [Principal Health and Wellbeing Plan](#).

School partnerships and practices to support wellbeing

There is a clear expectation that schools, systems and sectors should make wellbeing as important an issue as literacy and numeracy, with the Productivity Commission recommending that the National School Reform Agreement be updated to include student wellbeing as an outcome (Productivity Commission 2020). This assumes a whole-school community approach where everyone shares ownership for fostering wellbeing. It will also require a shift in resourcing, particularly in terms of staffing. Schools, with the support of systems and sectors, are already establishing leadership positions with responsibility for student wellbeing, systems are employing additional educational psychologists and there is a more diverse workforce of counsellors, nurses, wellbeing officers, chaplains and others who support children and young people in learning settings.

Schools may need to reconsider timetabling changes to provide quality time for pastoral care, one-to-one mentoring, dedicated outdoor space and time in natural environments, and provision of extracurricular activities, all of which play a role in promoting wellbeing. School libraries in particular support student wellbeing by promoting bibliotherapeutic practices and operating as safe spaces that facilitate relaxation and recharging. In appropriately staffed school libraries, young people can find sanctuary and belonging (Merga 2020).

Schools and early learning settings have opportunities to address the wellbeing of students and their families based on existing trusted relationships. They can encourage families to reach out and alert their child's teacher to issues early, rather than at a crisis point. It is also important that families understand where an educator's role ends and when referral to mental health professionals and support services is appropriate, including communicating to students and families which agencies are available for what purpose (Gillard 2020).

While schools may be an effective gateway to broader wellbeing services, educators and practitioners frequently report barriers to access that prevent them from being able to support child and youth mental health (Smith et al. 2021, p. 196). Leaders that work in partnership with external agencies and government are well-positioned to help raise awareness of these systematic barriers.

Conclusion

System and sectors have demonstrated their ongoing commitment to understanding and improving learner and educator wellbeing, and as students and teachers return to the classroom after extended periods of remote learning for some, these insights will become even more significant. To understand and support learner wellbeing, teachers and schools require opportunities to develop their capabilities to explicitly teach social and emotional skills, as well as access to evidence-informed, strengths-based programs and approaches.

Provided educators and education leaders have the resources they require to 'fit their own mask first', they are ideally positioned to partner with students, parents and carers, and the wider community to ensure that all students feel connected at school, and in their life more generally. Armed with a sense of self-worth, self-awareness and personal identity, learners will be better equipped to manage their emotional, mental, cultural, spiritual and physical wellbeing.

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