



Student wellbeing: Literature review

Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation

Background

Student wellbeing is an important focus of the NSW Department of Education. The department's strategic plan, the School Excellence Framework and the Wellbeing Framework all underpin the work undertaken in student wellbeing and school excellence. The Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation's (CESE) literature review on student wellbeing explores how student wellbeing is defined; the relationship between wellbeing, schools and outcomes; school elements in improving student wellbeing; and student wellbeing policies in Australia.

Main findings

Wellbeing can be difficult to define because it has so many applications across a broad range of disciplines

The Australian Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) synthesised the most common and relevant characteristics that appear in most definitions of wellbeing – namely positive affect; resilience; satisfaction with relationships and other dimensions of one's life; and effective functioning and the maximising of one's potential – and it produced the following definition of student wellbeing:

A sustainable state of positive mood and attitude, resilience and satisfaction with self, relationships and experiences at school¹.

In education, wellbeing is important for two reasons

The first is the recognition that schooling should not just be about academic outcomes but that it is about wellbeing of the 'whole child', an approach highlighted in the Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians. The second is that wellbeing is important because students who have higher levels of wellbeing are more likely: to have higher achievement outcomes at school and complete Year 12; better mental health; and a more pro-social, responsible lifestyle.

The literature consistently identifies a number of core elements that affect student wellbeing

These can be grouped broadly into the following:

- creating a safe environment;
- ensuring connectedness;
- engaging students in learning;
- promoting social and emotional learning; and
- a whole school approach.

While these groupings have been distinguished for the purposes of outlining the evidence base related to student wellbeing, the categories are intrinsically interconnected and they should not necessarily be viewed as separate entities in and of themselves.

Wellbeing policies differ from state to state in Australia

All states in Australia have a commitment towards whole school approaches to student wellbeing. However, the degree of implementation and nuances of each policy differ to some extent between jurisdictions. These differences are explored in CESE's wellbeing literature review.

More information

You can read or listen to the literature review here: www.cese.nsw.gov.au/publications-filter/student-wellbeing-literature-review

CESE has recently released a professional learning course that allows educators to engage with contemporary literature on student wellbeing and connect it with their own practice. This online course will contribute 1.5 hours of registered professional learning for teachers. Visit www.cese.nsw.gov.au/professional-learning

¹ Australian Catholic University and Erebus International (2008) *Scoping study into approaches to student wellbeing: Literature review*. Report to the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations: Canberra