



 EDUCATION REVIEW OFFICE
TE TARI AROTAKE MATAURANGA

WELLBEING FOR SUCCESS: EFFECTIVE PRACTICE

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The Prime Minister's
**Youth Mental
Health Project**

Wellbeing for success: effective practice

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Foreword

How children and young people feel at school has a major impact on how confident they are and how well they learn. There is no single measure for wellbeing, but the factors that contribute to it are interrelated and interdependent.

Most children and young people enjoy school, thrive and succeed. But for some, negative experiences, behaviours or emotions during the passage from childhood to adulthood can affect their wellbeing and lead to long-term negative consequences.

In 2012 the Prime Minister launched the Youth Mental Health Project, which aims to help prevent the development of mental health issues and improve young people's access to youth mental health services. The Education Review Office (ERO) has contributed a series of evaluations and resources to this project.

Wellbeing for success: effective practice gives leaders, teachers and trustees examples of what works and why. We have also published *Wellbeing for success: a resource for schools*, which helps schools evaluate and improve student wellbeing. Together these build on and extend our previous work and reflect and complement the wellbeing components of the *School Evaluation Indicators*.

These publications will help leaders, teachers and trustees to better understand and respond to wellbeing challenges and to promote wellbeing for our children and young people.

Looking after their wellbeing will support every student to become a confident, connected, actively involved lifelong learner.



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March 2016



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Introduction

Wellbeing is vital for student success and is strongly linked to learning.^{1,2} New Zealand and international research shows that many school factors influence student success. Although there is no single measure for student wellbeing, the factors that contribute to it are interrelated and interdependent. For example, a student's sense of achievement and success is enhanced when they feel safe and secure at school. This in turn lifts their confidence to try new challenges, strengthening their resilience.

In April 2012, the Prime Minister launched the Youth Mental Health Project, with initiatives across a number of education, social and health agencies. The project aims to improve outcomes for young people aged 12 to 19 years with, or at risk of developing, mild to moderate mental health issues. These outcomes include improved:

- > mental health
- > resilience
- > access to youth-friendly health care services.

In 2014, the Education Review Office (ERO) undertook an evaluation of the extent to which schools were promoting and responding to student wellbeing. The findings were published in the following reports:

- > ***Wellbeing for Children's Success at Primary School (February 2015)***
- > ***Wellbeing for Young People's Success at Secondary School (February 2015)***

This effective practice report provides further detail about practices in selected schools (see methodology in *Appendix 1*) that promote wellbeing for all students, and describes how these schools respond when concerns, issues or events require more targeted support.

This report complements an ERO resource developed for schools to help them improve student wellbeing. *Wellbeing for success: a resource for schools* describes the practices in schools that effectively promote and respond to student wellbeing.



1 Noble, T. and Wyatt., T. (2008). *Scoping Study into Approaches to Student Wellbeing. Final Report*. Canberra. Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations.

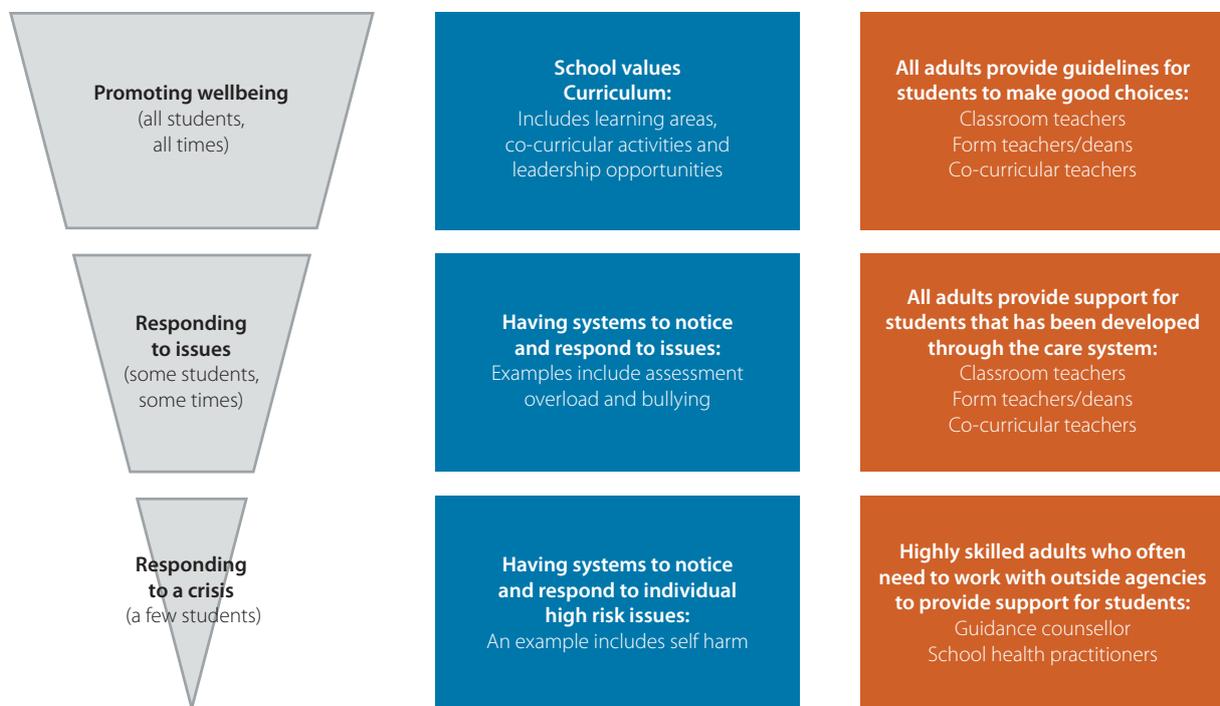
2 Mullis, I., Martin, M., Foy, P., & Arora, A. (2012). *TIMSS 2011 International Results in Mathematics. Chapter 6*. Chestnut Hill, MA: TIMSS & PIRLS International Study Center, Boston College.

Promoting and responding to student wellbeing

Developing a positive school culture is vital for achieving the desired outcomes for student wellbeing. Schools promote a culture of wellbeing by making their vision, values, goals and priorities part of their curriculum and associated learning and teaching practices. The capability to respond well to a particular event is often determined by the way in which the school's culture of wellbeing enables and supports leaders and teachers to respond.

ERO's report *Wellbeing for Young People's Success at Secondary School* (February, 2015) describes the ways in which schools addressed student wellbeing, modifying the Intervention Triangle³ as a 'promoting and responding triangle' (Figure 1) that describes the provision of support for all students and for particular groups of students.

Figure 1: The promoting and responding triangle



This report focuses on the first two tiers: promoting wellbeing for all students; and responding to wellbeing issues as they arise. Having a strong culture of wellbeing provides the foundation for schools' responses to issues and crises.

3 CASEL. (2008). *Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) and Student Benefits: Implications for the Safe Schools/Healthy Students Core Elements*. Washington DC: National Center for Mental Health Promotion and Youth Violence Prevention, Education Development Center.

Schools with good wellbeing practices

The schools with good wellbeing practices had common themes in their approach to promoting wellbeing for all students and responding to specific wellbeing concerns and issues. The motivation to do better was underpinned by the desire for school to be a good place for students. All of the schools focused on improvement for wellbeing.

The following themes were clearly evident in the talk, actions and approaches to wellbeing in the schools with effective practice:

- > ***We can do better.***
- > ***Improvement focus.***
- > ***Recognising the need for a balanced focus on wellbeing and achievement.***
- > ***Providing layers of support.***
- > ***Systems, people and initiatives ‘wrap around’ students.***
- > ***Making implicit school values explicit.***
- > ***Schools using restorative practices.***
- > ***We want the best for all of our students.***

These schools had carefully developed a culture of wellbeing. They recognised the need to plan for wellbeing in the curriculum. Students in these schools had opportunities to show leadership and have their opinions heard and acted on. Each school had the right systems, people and initiatives to fit their culture and their needs.

Culture of wellbeing

Improvement in students' wellbeing often started with work to develop a school culture to support wellbeing. The schools with effective practice reviewed their school culture as part of their desire to improve wellbeing outcomes for all students in their school.

Each school developed an agreed set of values to underpin the actions in their school. Most of the schools had worked with their community to do this. The process took time but was worthwhile as it meant that the community understood, owned and supported the culture of the school.

Leaders developed a culture of wellbeing based on shared values and positive relationships throughout the school community. They managed the change in expectations, taking the school community with them. Their actions were based on the firm foundation of the shared values. Leaders were trusted, and kept students at the centre of all decisions.

Restorative practices⁴ played a powerful part in establishing this culture, empowering students to lead, and take increasing responsibility for their actions. School leaders recognised the risk of a superficial approach to implementing restorative practices. Taking time to deeply understand the approach meant that restorative practices were effectively implemented and had a significant and enduring impact. Many schools had a focus on cultural sensitivity to ensure their school culture was inclusive.

4 Information on this, and other programmes and initiatives, can be found in *Appendix 3*.

Planning for wellbeing was a conscious action. The positive culture and values were embedded in the school, integrated into everything school leaders and teachers did – from strategic planning; development of policies; school systems; relationships throughout the community and into the classroom. Schools successfully promoting wellbeing had a clear vision of what they wanted for their students. Many had specific wellbeing goals in their strategic plans, with targets to work towards.

Boards of trustees received regular reports on progress towards wellbeing goals and actions needed to enhance progress. Some boards set aside one meeting each month with a singular focus on wellbeing, while others had wellbeing as a regular agenda item.

Principals made appointments carefully, considering how the personal qualities and strengths of applicants would support their culture of wellbeing. They regularly revisited the culture to strengthen it with existing staff and to make sure that new staff were clear about how they were expected to act in the school. These actions ensured ongoing sustainability and provided opportunities to refine the culture.

In many of these schools, leaders described the changes as reframing ‘how we do things around here’ to promote and respond to student wellbeing.

“In times of crisis you go back to what you believe. Values and restorative practice (were) well embedded so they were a great support.”

– *Principal*

Figure 2 highlights some of the key shifts schools were making to improve their school culture to one that more effectively promoted and responded to student wellbeing.

Figure 2: School culture of wellbeing

Focus	From	To
Culture	Adult focus. Punitive systems and approach to managing student behaviour.	Student focus. Restorative approach that focuses on accountability, healing and needs. ⁵
Values	School values are implicit in intentions, planning and practices.	School values are explicit and visible in all aspects of school operations and practices.
Thinking	Deficit thinking prevails in a culture of blame and negativity.	The strengths and potential of students, teachers, parents and whānau is the focus for promoting and responding to wellbeing.
Attitudes	It is not easy or okay to ask for help.	Asking for help is ‘normalised’ and encouraged.

5 Restorative Schools. (2009). *Restorative Practice*. Retrieved from www.restorativeschools.org.nz/restorative-practice.

The following example shows how wellbeing was promoted by schools in a community working together to establish familiar, positive school cultures. The values were shared across the schools, supporting transitions between schools by providing students with continuity of expectations and a greater sense of belonging.

Promoting wellbeing across a community

The principal, new to the intermediate school in 2010, noted:

- > high levels of stand downs and suspensions
- > poor attendance
- > a decreasing student roll
- > graffiti and a poorly maintained school environment
- > systems that were more focused on adult wellbeing than student wellbeing
- > deficit views of some students and the wider community.

The principal and deputy principal explored the possible underlying causes of these negative aspects of the school culture. They investigated:

- > the views of students, parents, teachers, school trustees and contributing schools
- > what other local schools were doing to build a positive school culture
- > how other school leaders were supported to improve their school's culture
- > what the research showed.

School leaders identified the causes of the issues at the school and, working across the cluster of local schools, found that many of the issues were common in other schools. They also identified the differences between the schools in terms of expectations for behaviour, the way they did things in the classrooms, and responses to wellbeing issues. They also recognised that these differences were unsettling for students moving from one school to another.

School leaders decided to introduce Positive Behaviour for Learning⁶ (PB4L) schoolwide. This proved to be an important foundation to build on. It was a good fit for the school as it targeted the promotion of their desired behaviours, and provided for, and supported, culturally responsive and community based responses to wellbeing. All the schools in the cluster saw the sense in adopting PB4L as it was easier for schools with common values to work collaboratively.

As a cluster, school leaders decided they needed to embed shared expectations in relation to values, key competencies and learning that were consistent across the local schools. The school worked with other local schools to develop shared common values for students across the wider education community.

Members of the school cluster, including parents and whānau, agreed on ways to work together to establish a predictable environment. They worked together to develop a set of agreed values.

6 Information about this and other programmes can be found in *Appendix 3*.

Each school developed their own rubric to show what the values would look like in action. They shared their rubrics across the cluster, seeking external review and critique. This helped them to refine and strengthen their work as well as aligning it with other schools.

Teachers were supported to use deliberate acts of teaching to engage students in the key competencies of the school's values. They had a clear framework to help them identify the learning outcomes for students. Across the cluster, positive implementation of the values was recognised with classroom reward systems adopted schoolwide.

Relationships were enhanced between the three contributing primary schools, the intermediate and the college. This was achieved by once-a-term meetings and the sharing of strategies to strengthen the impact of the PB4L framework. These cluster relationships provided opportunities for other teaching and learning activities such as moderation and sharing successful teaching approaches.

PB4L team leaders were strong advocates for improvement and worked with the cluster to keep the model evolving. They supported ongoing dialogue to build group consensus and to establish a process for schools and teachers to review and improve their expectations and performance. These leaders recognised that the development of sustainable systems took time and required skilful leadership.

Consistency in implementing the values was important in supporting greater community cohesion, particularly at a time of rapid local population and roll growth. The consistency of implementation of the values was monitored in each school and the data shared at term meetings. The data was analysed and actions determined to fine tune the implementation of the values. This in itself formed another cycle of review and improvement.

Students and their families were regularly asked for their experience of the school culture. They had a strong shared understanding of the school values, regardless of which school they attended. This contributed to their sense of belonging in the wider community. Subsequently, as they moved from one setting to another, students experienced similar expectations for behaviour and so felt more secure. They had a greater sense of belonging than if the school cultures were different from each other.

The shared values also promoted a deeper understanding of culturally responsive practices and place-based curriculum around the significance of local features to Māori. Students experienced improved engagement and achievement outcomes and this was reflected in improved outcomes for students and accelerated progress for Māori students.

Wellbeing in the curriculum

Student wellbeing is central to successfully implementing The New Zealand Curriculum. A focus on wellbeing ties together the curriculum's vision, principles, values, key competencies and learning areas. Wellbeing clearly positions learners and their development as confident young people at the centre of what schools do.⁷

Schools that had good wellbeing practices recognised the importance of explicit teaching to achieve desired outcomes for students. School leaders promoted teaching practices that enabled students in each classroom and other learning groups to work as caring, inclusive and cohesive learning communities.⁸ Wellbeing values were consistently actioned in the curriculum, in relationships, and through celebrations. Values were taught explicitly and modelled by leaders, teachers and students.

Curriculum opportunities for promoting wellbeing were planned for and mapped out. Particular consideration was given to the social, emotional and physical aspects of wellbeing. This involved teachers:

- > nurturing student dispositions that support their learning (for example, persistence, identity as learners)
- > teaching students how to support one another's learning (for example, by giving explanations and peer feedback)
- > being seen by their students as caring about their learning (more than caring about them or simply liking them)
- > demonstrating a caring pedagogy that values and honours diversity
- > supporting student participation while engaging critically with students' views, ideas and understandings
- > using debate rather than assertion to resolve intellectual conflict
- > organising the environment (for example, grouping students and designing tasks) to develop inclusive learning communities.



⁷ Education Review Office. (2015). *Wellbeing for children's success at primary school*. Retrieved from www.ero.govt.nz.

⁸ For more information, see www.nzcurriculum.tki.org.nz/layout/set/print/Principles/Inclusion/About.

School leaders recognised the importance of smooth transitions to enable students to settle into their new environment with minimal disruption to their learning. Strong relationships across the local education community allowed teachers to share information about students transitioning to school. Teachers were then better able to tailor the curriculum to meet their needs and students settled quickly to their learning.

“Wellbeing doesn’t stand alone. It is woven within and across the curriculum. Our values are well embedded and central to forming, developing and changing relationships.”

– *Principal*

The following example describes the approach one school took to strengthen the way their curriculum was reviewed and adapted to better promote wellbeing for all students.

Responsive curriculum

This school recently moved towards a ‘negotiated curriculum’. The principal made it clear that it was not about conceding control to the students, but rather it was about levels of negotiation: *“It’s not a free-for-all”*. Teachers had the appropriate skills to negotiate a classroom curriculum that accounted for what they knew about students’ individual learning strengths, interests and needs. The curriculum looked different in each classroom depending on the teacher, the students’ abilities and year levels. It may have been as simple as identifying the ‘can do’ and ‘must do’ activities in the daily plan, or the teacher running a workshop for students to opt into. In this school, teachers were increasingly ‘de-privatising’ their teaching, for example, explaining the focus for a reading group. They might have identified several children to be part of the group and others could decide if they needed or wished to observe or participate.

The senior leadership team (SLT) talked with students in classrooms to find out about their perceptions about teaching (not teachers) and their own learning. A set of questions was used as a discussion starter with students:

- > *What does your teacher do to help you with your learning?*
- > *What does your teacher do that gets in the way of your learning?*
- > *Do you have goals for yourself that your teacher doesn’t know about?*
- > *Does your teacher know about all of your learning?*

The responses to the questions were analysed to identify themes and patterns. The SLT, alongside the classroom teacher, shared the findings with students in each class.

The SLT stated there were big shifts in student choice in the curriculum. They described a class where the teacher structured the day around a series of workshops and one-to-one conferencing opportunities. It was not always the teacher leading workshops as students also had opportunities to be leader/teacher.

Students at this school were included, involved, engaged, and invited to participate in curriculum decisions and to make positive contributions to their learning.

Student leadership, agency and voice

In the schools with good wellbeing practices, students had opportunities to develop confidence as leaders, learners and valued members of the school community. They actively contributed to the planning, implementation and review of wellbeing initiatives.

Many schools adopted a tuakana teina⁹ approach to foster student-to-student relations. Leadership roles and responsibilities in these schools included mentoring, coaching, leading interest groups, and representing the school in the local community. In some schools, the curriculum was designed to enable students to explore their own leadership qualities and to reflect on leadership in different contexts.

Students were viewed as inherently capable. Their views, ideas and decisions were sought and valued. They were trusted to take on the leadership roles that contributed to their wellbeing.

The shifts in Figure 3 were evident in the schools where students were actively involved in promoting and improving their wellbeing and the wellbeing of others.

Figure 3: Student leadership, agency and voice

Focus	From	To
Student voice	Schools relying on surveys as the means to seek students' perspectives.	Schools using a range of ways to involve students in decision making and leadership of their wellbeing and learning (for example, focus groups, class discussions, Quality Circle Time ¹⁰ and 'think tanks').
Student leadership	Leadership opportunities only available to an 'elite' group of students.	Opportunities for all students to take on leadership roles and responsibilities.
Student involvement in decision making	Limited or no opportunities for students to make decisions about things that affect their wellbeing.	Students actively involved in decisions that impact on their wellbeing through the curriculum, pastoral care processes and identification of wellbeing priorities.

⁹ Tuakana teina relationships are an integral part of traditional Māori society. They provide a model for buddy systems where an older or more expert tuakana helps and guides a younger or less expert teina.

¹⁰ Information about Quality Circle Time, and other wellbeing programmes and initiatives, can be found in *Appendix 3*.

The following example highlights how one school provided opportunities for students to explore leadership through the curriculum.

Developing student leadership

The curriculum in Years 7 and 8 at this school had a very strong focus on developing students' understanding of leadership qualities, and what qualities each student thought they could develop in themselves. Year 7 students were asked to think about possible leadership roles they could take in Year 8. The school's curriculum helped them identify possible leaders to study, determining why they were good leaders and how the student could learn from them as they took on leadership roles themselves.

School leaders worked with the students to 'unpack' leadership qualities. Guiding questions were used to promote discussion:

- > *Who in your life has influenced you?*
- > *How can that inspire or help you to become a leader?*

The next example shows how a school responded constructively to an issue and promoted student participation in their local community.

Students participating and contributing to their community

The school became aware of an issue in the community where students were intimidating people at the local shops, asking for money and being rude to shopkeepers. The school responded by getting the students together with the shopkeepers and local Member of Parliament for a chat.

The focus was on students and the shopkeepers getting to know each other as real people with identities and families, for example: "*This is Tom, he is from...and he has a family.*" It wasn't about telling the students off, rather it was about building relationships and demonstrating school values beyond the school. Following this meeting, there were no more reports of students behaving negatively in the community.

Students also had the opportunity to be involved in a local festival, appearing on stage and running stalls. The principal developed useful networks and involved himself in community groups. This enabled him to build strong knowledge of the community, its strengths and challenges. The school also maintained close contact with local sports clubs, and students were encouraged and supported to belong to sports teams and engage in out-of-school training and games.

The following example highlights the range of authentic contexts in which students were able to take responsibility for their own wellbeing, and lead the promotion of wellbeing for their peers and teachers.

Students represent and advocate for self and others

The school values of fairness, diversity, inclusion, creativity and sustainability were reflected in its culture and the range of student-led initiatives.

Students were treated with respect and teachers viewed them as capable of taking the lead. Students led and lent their energy to a variety of groups that promoted wellbeing. School leaders had an enlightened approach to working with young people.

The school actively sought and engaged in a variety of wellbeing activities and programmes. The student-led *Healthwise Panel* actively promoted 'mental health matters'. Students on this panel worked to remove stigma around mental health issues. They sponsored a range of initiatives including a 'Don't Panic' day and 'Live for Tomorrow' which promoted stress management activities. An example of the work of this panel was when students ran a stall that distributed stress relief packs to students and teachers that included information pamphlets about stress.

This school was a pilot school for the Peer Sexuality Support Programme (PSSP).¹¹ Selected senior students attended a four day training camp at the start of the year where they were trained by external facilitators in providing information to their peers on issues related to sexuality. Information was provided to students through one-to-one contact, assembly presentations and an anonymous question and answer text service. One assembly presentation dealt with the issue of the need for informed consent in sexual relationships.

Another very active group in this school was the feminists. This group, which had a male co-leader, conducted an energetic campaign for a unified school dress code. Students in this group believed that the existing code discriminated against girls and was more strictly enforced than the boys' code. They talked to students at assembly and got their feedback. They negotiated with senior leaders and the board of trustees about the school's dress code, and presented at school assemblies. The outcome was that the code became non-gender specific, and teachers looked at and altered their own dress code.

Other student groups supporting student wellbeing include the Peace Ambassadors (a peer mediation initiative). A peer support team operated in Term 1 to assist the transition of Year 9 students into the school. Some Year 13 students gave up study time to provide academic support for juniors in their subject classes.

¹¹ More information about this and other programmes can be found in *Appendix 3*.

The following example shows how student 'voice' was a strong contributing factor in refocusing the school's goals and behaviour management model.

Working collaboratively to develop new solutions and approaches

The senior leadership team was reflective, focused on continual review, and used evidence to inform decision making. The school's approach to wellbeing aligned well with the guiding principles of relationships, and strength-based curriculum, inquiry, cohesion and collaboration.¹² Positive, trusting and fair student-teacher relationships were the basis for teachers building their knowledge of students and their response to student wellbeing.

The school was determined to get a clear and accurate picture of student wellbeing. Leaders conducted surveys of student wellbeing but were alerted to concerns that the responses were not an accurate reflection of what students really felt. Leaders and teachers discussed and investigated alternative ways of collecting data. The principal decided to trial the New Zealand Council for Educational Research (NZCER) *Wellbeing@School* survey¹³ with all staff and students in Years 4 to 6 in an attempt to obtain accurate and reliable data from students.

Following the completion of the survey, senior leaders worked with teachers to unpack and analyse the results. The results highlighted significant differences between the teachers' and students' views of the school culture. Teachers' beliefs about school culture were rocked by the survey findings. One third of students reported that they had been bullied over the previous three weeks. Students also indicated that they were not confident to take issues to their teachers for fear of not being believed or being blamed. The results indicated that students had poor knowledge of positive behaviours, about what counted as bullying, and strategies for conflict resolution.

The survey findings led school leaders to realise that punishing students for undesirable behaviour was not working. They identified the need to investigate other behaviour management models in order to reduce the bullying behaviour of a small group of students causing problems. Extensive research into various models, programmes and approaches was done before deciding on a final model. Leaders had more focused discussions with students and initiated a further inquiry to gather more data to better understand some aspects of what students were saying.

Teachers and leaders realised that a positive learning environment was a prerequisite for the 'future learning' focus that was already a strategic goal. They noted that in order to focus on 'future-focused learning' they would need to shift the students' skills and attitudes – encouraging them to take more responsibility for themselves and their actions.

Senior leaders and teachers decided the priority focus should be to change the school's culture and behaviour model from a punitive approach to a pro-social behaviour approach. They believed that collaborative behaviours and self-regulation were the key areas to nurture and grow.

12 See *Appendix 2* for information about the guiding principles for student wellbeing.

13 Information on this, and other wellbeing initiatives and programmes, can be found in *Appendix 3*.

Teachers and leaders took time to reflect deeply. They decided they needed to deliberately teach positive behaviours and strategies to empower students. Teachers talked to students about the dynamics of bullying; the roles played out in bullying; whether they were initiators, spectators or on the receiving end.

The leadership team focused on building relationships to achieve a positive school culture and learning environment. They identified the need to have everyone take a shared responsibility for:

- > a common language
- > their approach to teaching, and
- > recognising positive behaviours.

Teachers and leaders worked with students, parents and whānau to develop their *Top 10* desirable school behaviours for adults and students in the school community. The *Top 10* behaviours were informed by research and trialled before being implemented across the whole school. Teachers attended refresher and support sessions regarding the *Top 10* behaviours as necessary, to ensure consistency across the school. They had opportunities to reflect and question the approach and took some time to accept the new role that they played in contributing to a positive school community.

Teachers worked to integrate the *Top 10* throughout the school. They used classroom programmes, assembly presentations and the school's website to do this. Desirable behaviours were reinforced and teachers explicitly taught conflict resolution strategies. Teachers encouraged students to use these strategies to manage their own behaviour and to manage situations that might arise before asking an adult to get involved. Students had opportunities to actively improve their wellbeing and the wellbeing of others through the student council, peer mentoring and peer mediator roles.

School leaders used the NZCER surveys with their Year 4 to 6 students to monitor the impact of their initiatives. One of the school's strategic goals involved implementing recommendations from the *Wellbeing@School* student and staff survey each year. Leaders engaged in ongoing consultation with students, parent groups and staff. They monitored the number of bullying incidents reported. These initially increased as students became more confident to report incidents but then dropped away significantly. As a result of the school's focus on this area, the principal identified a need to link the *Top 10* to the school's vision, values, curriculum teaching and strategic goals.

The principal was continuing to make the time to get students' views about the impact of the changes.

Systems, people and initiatives

In the schools where ERO found good wellbeing practices, school leaders and their communities were proactive and responsive in their approach to wellbeing.

Enhancing student wellbeing was a shared responsibility requiring access to expertise across the school and through partnerships with whānau, the community and relevant support services. Developing expertise and working collaboratively enabled the identification of needs and provided a basis for early interventions and referral pathways.

Schools used multiple sources of evidence to find out about both individual student wellbeing and overall school wellbeing. Leaders used what was known about student wellbeing to identify vulnerable students and areas for improvement, including improving student access to guidance and support at school.

The following examples describe the ways in which the systems, people and initiatives in two schools provided layers of 'wrap-around' support for students to both promote their wellbeing and respond when issues, concerns or crises arose.

Establishing a supportive environment conducive to student learning and wellbeing

A well-coordinated pastoral care and guidance network at this secondary school effectively monitored student wellbeing. This network gave students ongoing contact with one or more significant adults through a grouping structure that includes Roopu groups of 12 to 15 students for two years.

Roopu teachers were well supported by deans. Deans followed their year groups through Years 9 to 13 and knew their students well. The deans had eight hours allocated weekly to manage their role. A dean oversaw each year level and worked with Roopu teachers, meeting with them weekly to provide academic and pastoral care for students. Their role also included both academic and pastoral mentoring of individual students, induction of new students and supporting students transitioning back to school after time out for health or social issues. Deans liaised with external agencies to access specialist support for students.

In the senior school, Roopu groups included students from Years 11 to 13. At Year 11, a group of students who were at risk of not succeeding in NCEA Level 1 were given additional support and mentoring as a group (the Aratahi class). Other students at Year 12 were supported by academic mentors.

Roopu teachers were responsible for both the academic and pastoral care of students. Students met with their Roopu teachers daily and for an hour on Fridays. The smaller numbers enabled students to be closely monitored and individually mentored. Roopu teachers are expected to be vigilant and responsive to students whose wellbeing and learning were of concern.

The guidance team, which included the deans, guidance counsellors, learning services staff and Roopu teachers met weekly in year groups (Year 9, 10 or 11 to 13) to discuss the needs of individual students. An action plan for individual students was developed and revisited at these meetings.

The counsellors and deans also met fortnightly with the principal and the deputy principal to focus on pastoral responsibilities. Students at risk of not achieving were identified and an appropriate key worker was assigned to address their specific needs. Counsellors and deans had strong links with external agencies and accessed their expertise according to need.

The school had a strong focus on supporting students' transition into the school whether in Year 9 or in later years, as is the case for many students. Deans meet with new students and their whānau for at least 30 minutes to find out about their interests, aspirations and needs.

As well as a Term 1 peer support programme to assist students transitioning into the school, a small number of Year 13 students from the previous year were employed as teacher aides. Teachers found that the past students related well to the junior students and supported them both formally and informally to settle into the school.

Restorative practices underpinned the school's approach to dealing with behavioural issues. There was a focus on:

- > helping students to identify the impact their behaviour has on others
- > holding students accountable for their behaviour
- > supporting students to accept responsibility for their actions
- > helping students find a way to 'put it right' and make better choices in the future.

Students particularly valued the respect for diversity shown by both fellow students and staff.

Student voice: what it feels like to be a student in this school

I feel like a person here. At my other school they welcomed my parents not me.

Everyone's an individual here.

At this school peer support is not patronising – they're not better than you – power stuff. You're friendly with people in all age groups.

Here you can be the person you want – you can be yourself.

I really like school now. Everyone's friendly.

We can talk to teachers on the same level – there's no power imbalance – that's why it works.

It's not just the guidance counsellors who help you. The teachers are concerned and supportive.

My former Roopu teacher still comes up to me and helps me.

You have a chance to repair things.

Teachers give you a chance to redeem yourself. Teachers can apologise and repair the relationship with students as well.

When there is bullying, teachers let you decide what you want to do. They don't just go away and do it.

Wrap-around support for students

This secondary school had five houses, each with its own dean responsible for the support and guidance of the students. Houses were subdivided into vertical form classes consisting of 15 students from across Years 9 to 13. All staff were form teachers, including the guidance counsellors and principal. Teachers stayed with the groups as they moved through the school. This vertical organisation of students encouraged friendships across ages and built bonds between the students and the form teacher. The house deans met with their form teachers weekly to monitor individual students.

The hub of the school's wrap-around support was a 'one-stop-shop' where guidance counsellors were located. There was also the careers adviser/Gateway coordinator; a nurse; Resource Teacher: Learning and Behaviour (RTLB) and a physiotherapist. The building was well located so that students could access services discreetly. There was a focus on normalising seeking help.

Counsellors and health professionals were open to using text messaging as a way of making contact with students and booking and confirming appointments. Students could text a request for an appointment. Counsellors or health professionals could also text students to make an appointment if they were concerned about the student's wellbeing.

The school placed a strong emphasis on supporting the transition of Year 9 students into the school. The counsellors and deans had a key role in this. The deans liaised with contributing schools to identify students' strengths and needs. The counsellors also used the 'Travellers programme'¹⁴ to identify individual student needs and put appropriate support in place. Peer support, overseen by the guidance team, operated in Term 1. This was supplemented by a tuakana teina programme where selected Year 13 students buddy with Year 9 students in form time.

The school considered student wellbeing to be inextricably linked to success as learners. It offered a comprehensive range of learning support programmes catering for all students at all levels. These included:

- > specialist help to address literacy and numeracy needs
- > peer reading and mentoring
- > individual and group interventions focused on learning how to learn
- > study skills and examination technique workshops
- > programmes for gifted and talented students.

Students could refer themselves for extra tutoring or for strategies to better manage their time and reduce the stress they might be experiencing, particularly at senior level.

Students took a leadership role in supporting their peers' sexual wellbeing through the Peer Sexuality Support Programme (PSSP). If students do not want to speak directly with a member of the PSSP team, they were able to text in their questions and receive a response that way.

14 Information on this, and other programmes, can be found in *Appendix 3*.

Student voice: what it feels like to be a student in this school

It feels like a family.

It's a welcoming place.

There's trust here – we know each other.

Normal is being nice.

You're able to express yourself and you can focus on the bigger picture rather than little things.

If they hear something's wrong in your family they will go to you.

The careers adviser encourages you, but puts in a bit of reality.

There's always music at the school – it makes you feel good.

It's okay to be different – I'm the only one of me.

Anyone can be accepted here.

This school makes me want to go to school.

This school gives everyone a voice.

You get to have a say.



This next example shows how one school developed systems, structures and practices to promote and respond to student wellbeing.

Developing a supportive environment to promote student wellbeing and learning

The school's special character underpinned its approach to student wellbeing. A strong commitment to student wellbeing was reflected in the school's vision: *A holistic approach to meeting the needs of the individual.*

The 'Connect 2 Succeed' (C2S) pastoral groups were the lynchpins of the school's approach to student wellbeing. These were vertical groups of Years 7 to 10 and Years 11 to 13 students. A learning coach led each group. All staff had a role as a learning coach. The groups met with their coaches for two sessions per week. A feature of each session was the way in which the coach meets individually with one or two students to discuss their progress with learning. Part of each session also involved deliberate acts of group teaching about topics and activities such as goal setting, revision techniques, careers planning and subject choices.

The role of the learning coach evolved from the initial goal of improving students' learning. The fact that the role now focuses on supporting students' overall wellbeing was acknowledged by both staff and students. Learning and wellbeing were seen as going hand-in-hand. The coaches sometimes acted as advocates for students with other teachers or senior leaders. They were the first point of contact with parents.

Three student-led learning conferences during the year have replaced the traditional subject teacher interviews. Timing for meetings was flexible to meet parents' needs. The learning conferences resulted in increased attendance at parent meetings from 30 to 90 percent.

A vertical house system, led by four deans (house leaders), overlaid C2S. Students in each house were divided into C2S groups and the dean coordinated the work of the coaches. The deans had a roving role rather than being allocated to any particular year level. Students could go to whoever they felt comfortable with. The downside of this was that the deans may end up with an inequitable work load. However, this approach was recognised by students as solution-focused.

Students had easy access to the deans and guidance counsellors. They could connect with them via email and, for some deans, text. In response to a crisis event four years ago counselling capacity was increased from 1.0 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) to 1.67 FTE counsellors.

Foundation classes provided a further layer of support for Year 7 to 9 students. These were homeroom classes for health, literacy, English, social studies and religious education. Homeroom teachers had the role of learning coaches in the C2S groups, which these students were part of, and also provided pastoral guidance.

Responding to specific wellbeing needs and concerns

Circumstances can change very quickly for students, for schools and for their communities. The way schools respond to wellbeing-related concerns, issues, crises and incidents is closely linked to the way in which their school culture and associated values and beliefs underpin their curriculum, responses and pastoral care decisions. A strong wellbeing culture provides a foundation to fall back on in time of need. It guides the caring practice in the school and the school community is more resilient in dealing with traumatic incidents and restoring students' wellbeing.

This next example is written from the perspective of a teacher and describes how restorative practices supported students to resolve conflicts and issues themselves.

A teacher's story

Last mufti day an older girl received some put downs about her appearance. There were tears... I approached the group of girls involved and asked "Do we need to meet to sort out what happened before school?" The girls said "No, it's fine." They had worked through the situation themselves. The girl who was put down had been able to share her feelings, the others listened and acknowledged her feelings and the 'wrong-doer' apologised. Restorative practice is the best thing we have ever done. It makes so much sense and fits with who we are as a Catholic school.

I have just been on playground duty. Now we hardly ever have children coming to us for help to sort out issues. Restorative practice strategies empower them by giving them words and questions to use for solving problems and resolving issues and conflicts themselves.

We [teachers on duty] wear a lanyard with the 'restorative chat' prompts and questions outlined, the aim being to reflect, repair and reconnect. This has been particularly successful in developing consistent expectations and practices across the school.

The next example shows the approach one school took to support students who were identified as needing additional support for their wellbeing and learning.

Daily check in

Vulnerable students in this school were tracked to monitor changes in their engagement and achievement levels. Each morning the Special Education Needs Coordinator (SENCO) took time to 'check in' with these students... to say hello, find out what had been happening and make sure they were okay for the day. These conversations were often enough for the student to get on with their day, or a signal that some more support was needed. The aim was to make students aware that people cared, and they were important. Having someone free to do this each morning was key.

In the following example, the actions and decisions of school staff were crucial to the 'wrap-around' support students experienced at the time of a critical incident in their school.

Managing a critical incident

During the school holidays the principal was informed that a Year 12 student who had been at this school since Year 9 had committed suicide.

Following notification of this student's death, the principal convened a crisis meeting at home on a Sunday evening which included representatives of external agencies. The group prepared a statement to be read to staff, another one for students and a statement for the media. Arrangements were made with the Ministry of Education for extra guidance staff (a former counsellor who returned from their new school temporarily) to be available. As the incident occurred in the school holidays there was time to confirm arrangements before the students returned to school. The student's friends were contacted by email.

The first day back at school a statement was read to all classes. Students were told that they could go to the school marae to talk with a counsellor or to simply be together to support each other. They were able to spend as much time as they wanted at the marae. The school provided transport to the funeral for those who wished to attend. After the funeral, all the students returned to the school marae.

A group of students were away on an international school trip at the time and heard the news via text and email before the school did. Teachers accompanying this group got together the students who knew the student well and supported them. They got back from overseas the day after the funeral and were gathered together by the deputy principal and the guidance counsellor to talk about what had happened.

Student voice: what it feels like to be a student in this school

They were proactive about it – they knew the people who were close and sought them out.

There was someone we knew and someone we didn't, so that gave us options of who to talk to.

We were close with the teachers and our dean. They were sad too, like us. She'd give us hugs.

The school helped us through it. They knew that people who were close were at risk. They looked out for us and stayed present.

This next example shows how a school identified a wellbeing issue for some boys and implemented a strategy that included support from the local community.

Knowledge building to implement and sustain improvement and innovation

This school was involved in several school improvement initiatives with a particular focus on improving outcomes for Māori and Pacific students. Using MacFarlane's Educultural Wheel¹⁵ as a driving force, the school developed a welcoming, culturally responsive curriculum. Getting to know families and the community was a key part of this work.

School leaders were concerned about the behaviour, achievement and engagement of a group of boys. Leaders identified a pattern to the incidents that teachers had to deal with in the playground. While girls tended to have issues in the first 10 minutes, for boys it was in the last 10 minutes of a break that issues occurred.

School leaders used Celia Lashlie's research¹⁶ about boys to guide further investigations and their thinking about what actions to take. They monitored how female staff in the school interacted with boys, and how male teachers interacted with them. They also looked at the behaviour of the boys in different classrooms and playground settings. School leaders looked at the information they had about the boys and their families. By checking school data, school leaders found that many of the boys still causing concerns did not have fathers or father figures at home.

School leaders decided to implement several initiatives to extend their care for the boys with a particular focus on strengthening connections across the school community. The board of trustees resourced an evening group, a 'boys' club', based in the local church. This group was also open to boys from another local school. Adults from the school and community provided a range of activities and acted as role models for the boys. Boys were provided with door-to-door transport to and from the venue. All adults were police vetted and understood the safety aspects that required this.

Teachers also arranged lunch time physical activities such as wrestling and rugby league. The increase in organised physical activities and playing for school teams helped the boys to work together, develop their fitness, and improve their overall sense of worth. Parents came to the school to help supervise these activities. Some of these parents had not normally been involved in the school. This was a valuable way of building a relationship with these parents. Because the school valued parental voice and had spent time getting to know their community through whānau hui, school leaders and teachers gained the trust of parents. Parents and other adults from the community were willing to step forward to help the children at lunchtimes and after school.

15 More information about Angus McFarlane's work can be found at <http://gifted.tki.org.nz/For-schools-and-teachers/Cultural-considerations/Maori-students>. See also *Appendix 3*.

16 See <http://www.celialashlie.co.nz/about>.

School leaders kept a careful eye on outcomes for students, seeking their feedback, feedback from parents, and monitoring attendance and school engagement and achievement. They monitored achievement and disciplinary interventions as indicators of positive outcomes of the initiatives. Incidents dropped dramatically with the overall cultural change and the focus on the boys. There were no more fights, detentions, stand downs or suspensions. Leaders also noted a drop in the graffiti around the school.

“We haven’t had a detention in four years, a stand-down in six years or a punch-up for five years. There are children in our school that have never seen a fight here.”

– Principal

Overall achievement levels, at or above National Standards, rose 15 percent as students were more focused on their learning.

“We have now got to a place where we can focus on learning. We couldn’t before.”

– Principal

A considerable shift in the culture of the school occurred and teachers were no longer a peace-keeping force, diffusing issues of behaviour on an ongoing basis. Teachers could focus more on learning in the classroom and relationship building in the playground.



Conclusion

The effective practice described in this report shows the variety of ways a group of primary and secondary schools promoted and responded to student wellbeing. They did this by carefully cultivating a positive school culture, based on values determined, understood and shared by their community. By being proactive about developing a strong culture of wellbeing, leaders in these schools were in a good position to respond to any issues or crises that arose.

School leaders and their communities had a clear vision of what student wellbeing meant in their context. This was always a holistic view, with the students as active participants in creating the culture of wellbeing. Students, their parents and whānau, teachers, leaders and the wider communities collaborated to develop a set of values that aligned with their vision of wellbeing.

The values tied all aspects of school practice together. They were integrated into everything school leaders and teachers did: from strategic planning, development of policies, school systems, relationships throughout the community and into the classroom. Values were evident in the schools' vision, goals, priorities and curriculum. This cohesion across systems, attitudes and actions provided clear and consistent expectations for behaviour.

Programmes to promote wellbeing were planned for in the curriculum. Values were explored explicitly and underpinned a restorative, instead of a punitive, approach to dealing with problems. Students were expected and supported to show leadership. They knew that their opinions were heard and were used in decision making.

School leaders effectively used multiple sources of evidence to find out about both individual and overall student wellbeing. They were able to identify vulnerable students and areas for improvement, and so were able to act appropriately as needed. Leaders recognised that enhancing student wellbeing was a shared responsibility and that partnerships with whānau, the community and relevant support services were vital.

While each aspect of the guiding principles for student wellbeing¹⁷ is important, what set these schools with good wellbeing practices apart was the consistency, coherence and balance across each of the principles. All parts of a school system – including leaders, teachers and support staff, students, parents, whānau and the wider community – worked together towards a shared vision of wellbeing to ensure opportunities to learn and thrive for all students. Appropriate systems, programmes and initiatives, curriculum, policies and plans underpinned the vision.

¹⁷ See *Appendix 2 – Guiding principles for student wellbeing*.

Appendix 1: Methodology

The examples of effective practice in this report have been drawn from information ERO gathered as part of 2014 evaluations into how well schools promoted and responded to student wellbeing. ERO identified 13 primary schools and three secondary schools as having features that clearly promoted wellbeing for all students. ERO undertook follow-up visits and gathered more information about practices that promote wellbeing for all students. ERO was also interested in the systems schools had in place to identify and respond when concerns, issues or events required more targeted support.

The schools in this effective practice report have not been named because of the sensitivity associated with some of the examples described.



Appendix 2: Guiding principles for student wellbeing

In *Wellbeing for Success: Draft evaluation indicators for student wellbeing (November, 2013)*, ERO identified five principles as common themes in the evidence and research on effective programmes and initiatives to promote and respond to student wellbeing.

The principles in Figure 2 are strongly tied to a holistic approach to student wellbeing and acknowledge student wellbeing as multi-dimensional. Each principle needs to be enacted in balance with each of the others for student wellbeing to be properly promoted.

Positive and trusting **relationships** are at the centre of effective efforts to promote student wellbeing, creating a sense of connection and belonging within the school community.

The **strengths** of students and their whānau are valued and used as the basis for promoting and responding to student wellbeing.

Cohesion across policies, practices, interventions and initiatives contributes to an integrated, joined up, well 'glued' and seamless approach to promoting student wellbeing.

Inquiry is dynamic, considers the school context, uses a wide range of information sources and acts upon findings to improve student wellbeing, driving improvements in both learning and teaching contexts.

Collaboration enables the inclusion and involvement of students, teachers, leaders, parents, whānau and community in promoting student wellbeing.



Appendix 3: Information about wellbeing programmes and initiatives

Positive Behaviour for Learning School-wide (PB4L)

PB4L is an evidence-based framework designed to help schools build a positive school culture. It guides school leaders in using data for decision-making and problem-solving, so they can create their own system of behavioural supports for students.

PB4L is aimed at changing the school environment, systems and practices, so that students are supported to make positive behaviour choices. It looks at building a clear, relevant and consistently applied set of school values that underpin everything that happens in a school.

The expectation is that, as students' behaviour improves, teachers will be able to spend more time teaching, so students will be more engaged and better able to achieve.

See: <http://pb4l.tki.org.nz/PB4L-School-Wide>

Wellbeing@School

Wellbeing@School is a toolkit to support schools' self review of their culture. It includes a range of survey tools to collect data from all community members, including teachers, students, parents and whānau.

Schools are able to use the surveys to focus on the experiences of specific groups of students, as well their overall school culture.

Once school leaders have accurate information about the experiences of people in their school, they are in a position to plan how to respond. The *Wellbeing@School* toolkit includes a template for creating an action plan to guide improvement of the school culture.

The surveys can be retaken at regular intervals to help leaders track their school's progress towards a safe and caring school culture.

See: <http://www.wellbeingatschool.org.nz/>

Restorative practice

Restorative practice (RP) is an alternative to a punitive disciplinary system. Instead of looking at punishing perceived wrongdoing, restorative practices look at making things right.

In schools using RP, there is a focus on understanding what happened, and why it happened. Individuals are then supported to identify what needs to be done to put the situation or relationship back to rights.

RP is seen as more effective at bringing about lasting change in behaviour, and building and maintaining positive relationships when compared to disciplinary approaches.

See: <http://www.restorativeschools.org.nz/restorative-practice>

Angus MacFarlane's Educultural Wheel

The Educultural Wheel was developed by Angus MacFarlane as a theory of student management. It was designed to support the development of positive interactions between teachers and Māori students, and built on what Māori students had identified as being most beneficial to their learning – the relationship they had with their teachers.

The Educultural Wheel shows how *Whanaungatanga*, *Kotahitanga*, *Manaakitanga*, *Rangatiratanga* and *Pumanawatanga* are interrelated, and vital for students' learning. It gives examples of what is included in each of these aspects.

See: <http://www.vln.school.nz/file/view/852642/educultural-wheel-angus-macfarlane-2011>

Quality Circle Time

Quality Circle Time is a method used to build social awareness and responsibility in schools. It is a whole-school approach, and used from early childhood settings through to secondary.

It involves a weekly meeting where the whole class sits in a circle and shares in exercises, games and discussions. The aim of each meeting is to encourage participation, and build self-discipline and communication skills.

See: <http://www.edgazette.govt.nz/Articles/Article.aspx?ArticleId=7126>

Peer Sexuality Support Programme (PSSP)

The Auckland Sexual Health Service provides the Peer Sexuality Support Programme (PSSP) to 25 secondary schools across Auckland. The aim is to help students make informed decisions about their own sexual health.

PSSP provides Years 12 and 13 students with the training, information and resources to support their peers to make healthy choices about their sexual health and sexuality. The student PSSP team are taught communication skills so that they can discuss all aspects of sexuality with their peers in a confidential way. These include subjects such as contraception, sexually transmitted infections, pregnancy and sexuality issues.

See: <http://www.ashs.org.nz/sexual-health-services.html>

Travellers programme

Travellers is a school-based programme for Year 9 students. A short, online wellness questionnaire is used to identify students who might benefit from a focus on building resilience.

Small groups of students, supported by trained school staff, then spend eight to 10 sessions exploring and reflecting on daily challenges and major life events. Sessions support students to accept that:

- > change can be stressful
- > some stressful situations cannot be avoided
- > not all situations can be changed, but the way you think about them can
- > fun, laughter and relaxation all help deal with stress
- > everyone needs support at times
- > challenges help you grow as a person.

See: <http://travellers.org.nz/>

Notes

Notes



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