Growing Great Schools

BEING AN AGENT OF SCHOOL CHANGE FOR WELLBEING: RELATIONSHIPS AND RESILIENCE

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WELLBEING…

- "The gross national product does not allow for the health of our children, the quality of their education, or the joy of their play. It does not include the beauty of our poetry or the strength of our marriages; the intelligence of our public debate or the integrity of our public officials...it measures everything, in short, except that which makes life worthwhile." (Robert Kennedy)

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WORKSHOP OUTLINE

Session 1: 2.00-3.15

- Introductions
- Positive psychology
- Defining wellbeing
- Why wellbeing should be core school business
- Risk and resilience
- Double whammy kids
- Personal factors in wellbeing
- Positive emotions

Session 2: 3.30-5.00

- Environmental factors in wellbeing
- Connectedness
- Relationships
- Social capital
- Strengths based approaches
- Being an agent of change

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IMAGINE…

- School A:
  - Hierarchical structure.
  - High levels of control.
  - Limited opportunities for participation.
  - Emphasis on academic success / winning
  - Low tolerance of difficult behaviours.
  - Focus on getting rid of problems
  - Promotes itself as a 'good school' with excellent results
- School B:
  - Focus on the quality of relationships throughout
  - Emphasis on the value of the 'whole child'
  - High expectations for all
  - Values diversity and inclusion.
  - Many opportunities for participation – together with responsibility
  - Focus on the positive
  - Promotes itself as a 'caring school.'

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ASK YOURSELF?

- Which school would you rather work in?
- Which school would you prefer your own children to attend?
- Which is most likely to have better behaviour?
- Which is most likely to promote mental health and wellbeing?
- Which school is most likely to achieve better academic outcomes for everyone?

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MISMATCH AND MIXED MESSAGES

- Concerns about mental health: 3 in every class
- www.youngminds.org.uk/training_services/policy/mental_health_statistics
- What Works for Wellbeing
- whatworkswellbeing.org/
- Health concerns to promote resilience
- www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/355770/Briefing2_Resilience_in_schools_health_inequalities.pdf
- Awareness of levels of abuse
- Employers demanding life skills
- Rhetoric on evidence based practice
- Emphasis on academic outcomes
- Government statements on discipline
- Pupil exclusions
- Disrespect for teachers

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TRADITIONAL PSYCHOLOGY AND POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY

- Traditional
  - Diagnoses difficulties
  - Responds/reacts to problems
  - Addresses deficit, difficulty or pathology
  - Provides therapy, treatment and support
  - Looks primarily to change in the individual
- Positive
  - Focuses on what enables people to flourish
  - Pro-active
  - Identifies and builds strengths
  - Solution focused
  - Not only individuals but also community and systems

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POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY ASKING DIFFERENT QUESTIONS

- What does wellbeing mean
- What do children and young people need for wellbeing?
- What do we need for a happy, healthy and civil society?
- How are we promoting wellbeing?
- How can we intervene in negative cycles so they become positive spirals?
- What works, what are we already doing well and how can build on this?

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KEYES AND HAIDT (2003)

- Wellbeing is not simply an absence of mental illness but the presence of predominantly positive feelings and psychosocial functioning.
- It is about FLOURISHING rather than languishing.

We are flourishing when

- we accept and like most parts of ourselves
- we see ourselves developing into better people
- we have warm and trusting relationships
- we have a degree of self-determination (Deci and Ryan)

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POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY AND AUTHENTIC WELLBEING: PERMA*

- Predominantly positive emotions
- Engagement
- Relationships
- Meaning and Purpose
- Accomplishment/Achievement

* Seligman: Flourish 2011

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PRILLELTENSKY (2006)

Well-being is a positive state of affairs, brought about by the simultaneous satisfaction of personal, organizational, and collective needs of individuals and communities

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NEW ECONOMICS FOUNDATION NIC MARKS (2008)

- Doing well – positive psycho-social functioning
- Feeling good – about yourself, the world
- Doing good – the moral dimension of wellbeing
- Feeling well – good health

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5 WAYS TO WELLBEING

- Connect
- Be active
- Keep learning
- Notice
- Give

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THE MESSAGE…

- Wellbeing is NOT just subjective 'happiness'
  - It is being resilient, connected with others, having healthy relationships and a positive approach to life's opportunities and challenges.
  - Individual and community wellbeing are symbiotic and inseparable
  - A focus on wellbeing is in everyone's interests
  - Social justice and ethics are part of wellbeing
  - "Wellbeing begins with 'we' "

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POSITIVE SCHOOLS AND POSITIVE EDUCATION IN AUSTRALIA

- www.positiveschools.com.au/
- www.kidsmatter.edu.au/
- www.mindmatters.edu.au
- growinggreatschools.com.au/
- www.pesa.edu.au

- Next year Positive Schools in the UK!

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WELLBEING AND WELFARE - A DIFFERENT FOCUS

WELFARE

- Individual students
- Reactive
- Specific, add-on
- Picking up pieces
- Finding the time
- Experts and professionals

WELLBEING

- All students
- Universal intervention
- Pro-active
- Part of school life
- Relationships and resilience
- Planning time
- Everyone is a teacher for wellbeing

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WHEN WELLBEING IS CORE SCHOOL BUSINESS THERE IS…

- … greater student engagement and academic outcomes for all
- … better mental health and resilience
- … more pro-social behaviour
- … more teacher satisfaction and retention

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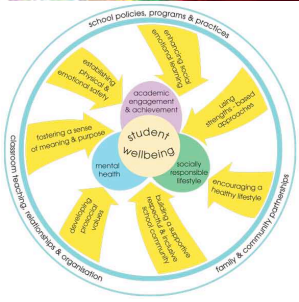
STUDENT WELLBEING RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

NOBLE, MCGRATH, ROFFEY AND ROWLING 2008 DEEWR



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WHAT DOES WELLBEING IN SCHOOL LOOK LIKE? SUGGESTED PATHWAYS

- Physical and emotional safety
- Pro-social values
- A supportive and caring school community
- A strengths based approach
- A sense of meaning and purpose
- A healthy life-style

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RISKS

- Risk factors include all the usual suspects: Poverty, mental health issues, addictions, criminality, abuse, trauma, displacement etc.
- A child is also at risk when there are less chronic difficulties such as family breakdown
- Poor adult models also have an impact on student learning / values / behaviours
- Most students are NOT at risk – but we need to make sure they stay that way

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'BUBBLE WRAPPED' KIDS ARE ALSO VULNERABLE

- Over-protected
- Risk averse parenting
- Demand driven
- Rights rather than responsibilities
- Not expected to contribute
- Focus on 'me' rather than 'we'
- Not independent
- Not resourceful
- Not resilient to adversity
- Not given access to *authentic* wellbeing

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KAUAI STUDY (WERNER ET AL)

- 698 children born in 1955
- Children at risk followed up at 1,2,10,18, 31, 40 years.
- Non resilient group had major problems in learning, mental health, delinquency, teenage pregnancy
- A third of children at risk defied prediction and did not have the problems above
- What made the difference for this cohort?

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PERSONAL FACTORS

- A positive outlook
- A sense of humour
- Pro-social orientation
- Intelligence with problem-solving abilities
- Persistence
- Confidence and self-esteem
- Androgyny
- Willingness and ability to talk about issues

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A POSITIVE APPROACH

- Looks for what is good in a situation
- Puts difficulties into perspective
- Doesn't sweat the small stuff
- Celebrates small steps
- Uses mistakes as learning opportunities
- Is thankful rather than resentful
- Is a self fulfilling prophecy and makes an immense difference to outcomes

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ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS

- Having someone believe in the best of you
- High expectations
- A sense of belonging

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DOUBLE WHAMMY

- Children living with
  - loss / family breakdown
  - violence /trauma
  - special needs
  - abuse or neglect
  - mental health problems
  - addictions
- often can't concentrate, be cooperative or make friends easily
- They may then get
  - teased and bullied,
  - negatively labelled
  - into trouble
  - punished – perhaps excluded
- They do not see themselves as successful or belonging
- The problems are seen as 'theirs'

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CHANGING BEHAVIOUR – NOT JUST MANAGING IT

- Acknowledging feelings
- Self-concept development
- Relationships – words matter
- Agency – increases responsibility
- Participation – enhances connectedness.

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THE VALUE OF A STRENGTHS FOCUS

- Living up to expectations
- Construction of a positive self-concept
- Reputation
- Honouring diversity
- Easier to start with a positive and build than begin with a deficit and change

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RELATIONSHIPS AND FEELINGS

- Exist everywhere all the time
- Make all the difference to our quality of our lives
- But we often only give them attention when they go wrong
- We need to focus on raising awareness of the positive
- We need to be pro-active

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IN A HEALTHY, POSITIVE RELATIONSHIP I WOULD EXPECT:

- Trust and respect
- Positive communication
- Being accepted for myself
- Views taken into account
- Give and take
- Affection and warmth
- Feeling good and having fun
- Support
- Equality
- Focus on strengths

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CIRCLE SOLUTIONS
A PHILOSOPHY AND PEDAGOGY FOR RELATIONSHIPS

THE RAPIDS PRINCIPLES

- Respect – we listen when one person is speaking (so be aware of not taking up all the air-space). There are no put-downs
- Agency – having the right to make decisions that concern you –and in this case looking at what you can influence
- Positivity – being constructive, promoting positive feelings and not using valuable time bemoaning what we are unable to change – having a strengths and solutions focus – enjoyment
- Inclusion – we talk and work with everyone
- Democracy – we all have an equal voice
- Safety – only say what you want to say, no-one is pressured

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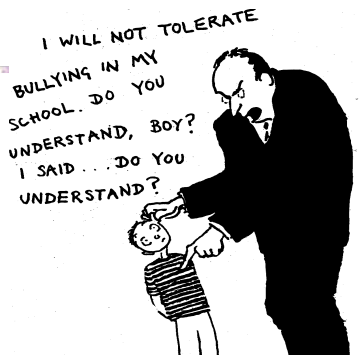

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A CONTROLLING RELATIONSHIP

- Does not model good relationship skills
- Undermines protective factors
- Does not internalise pro-social values
- Is wearing
- Leads to resentment and rebellion
- Reduces the chance of positive behaviour

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TEACHER-STUDENT RELATIONSHIPS MAKE THE DIFFERENCE

- Hattie. J. (2009) *Visible Learning: A Meta-analysis of over 800 meta-analyses of effective education* Routledge
- Expert teachers '*respect students as learners and people, and demonstrate care and commitment for them'*

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IN CHARGE

- Use your position to empower students
- Offer choice and agency
- Use inclusive language and work with the whole class
- Have high expectations and communicate clearly with 'I' statements
- Positively re-inforce
- Reminders before reprimands
- Strengths and solutions language
- Clear meaningful consequences, respectfully delivered.
- Tomorrow is a new start

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IN CONTROL

- Use authoritarian power – people have to do what YOU say (or else)
- Focus on what people are not doing
- Refer to the rules
- Single out individuals
- Blame, shame and belittle
- Try and 'make' people do things
- Threaten or bribe
- Exclude those who do not conform
- Use deficit language

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WORDS MATTER

What we say TO people

- How we talk to people has an impact on our relationship with them

What we say ABOUT people

- How we talk about people constructs how we perceive and position them
- This influences belief which influences action and inaction.

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WHAT MIGHT WE SEE IN A TOXIC SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT?

- Bullying
- Cliques
- Exclusion
- Prejudice
- Put downs / negative communications
- Inappropriate use of power
- Cool to be cruel
- Lack of relational skills
- Focus on rules
- Depressed, disconnected, anxious kids (and adults)

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BUILDING SOCIAL CAPITAL

- Social capital is what happens in the myriad of interactions that occur every day that facilitate participation, engender relational trust and promote reciprocal support.
- "Acts of tea, acts of love, acts of laughter"

(Mma Ramotswe in *The First Lady's Detective Agency* by Alexander McAll-Smith)

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FROM A TOXIC ENVIRONMENT TO HIGH SOCIAL CAPITAL

- From feeling unacknowledged to feeling valued
- From feeling rejected to feeling included
- From feeling ignored to being heard
- From feeling disempowered and helpless to having some control
- From feeling intimated to feeling confident / safe
- From feeling anxious/fearful to being comfortable
- From feeling a failure to feeling successful
- From feeling miserable and negative to feeling positive/ optimistic

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POSITIVE EMOTIONS BUILD SOCIAL CAPITAL

- A feeling of being valued enhances cooperation
- A feeling of being cared for enhances understanding and compassion
- A feeling of being respected promotes respect for others and willingness to listen to them
- A feeling of being included enhances commitment and motivation
- A feeling of fun relieves stress and fosters belonging
- A feeling of belonging enhances resilience
- Feeling good improves creative problem-solving abilities

All of this promotes well being and caring communities

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WELLBEING FACILITATORS

- A focus on 'the whole child' within the 'whole school'
- Leaders who have vision, passion and credibility
- Authentic consultation, skilled communication and support
- Schools that see themselves as learning organisations
- Initiatives on resilience, positive behaviour, safe schools, restorative practices, social and emotional learning with an appropriate pedagogy
- Strong dynamic learning support teams
- Pro-active intervention, not just reactive intervention
- Professional training for staff
- Solution focused and strengths based approaches
- Focus on student engagement
- Focus on teacher wellbeing

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WELLBEING INHIBITORS

- Unhelpful belief systems - about education, schools, students, teacher role etc…especially undervaluing relationships
- Low relational expectations
- Focus on problems rather than building strengths
- Looking for someone to blame and someone else to fix
- Negativity - what we can't do rather than what we can
- Insistence on conformity rather than flexibility
- Lack of consistency in approach - unpredictable environment
- Looking to vulnerable / challenging students to change rather than changing school and classroom contexts
- Reactive nature of systems
- Assessments and labelling rather than interventions
- Authoritarian systems and approaches
- Educational psychologists not valued as a resource
- Time factors

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EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGISTS CAN BE…

- Initiators
- Supporters
- Advisors
- Models
- Conversationalists

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THEY ARE WELL PLACED TO…

- Contribute to the wellbeing discourse - words matter
- Identify and acknowledge what is working well
- Support developing good practice/conceptual frameworks
- Provide information about what is effective
- Be an advisor / confidante to the executive
- Provide support to staff
- Model emotionally literate practices
- Involve parents and teachers in planning
- Indicate useful professional development / resources

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USE YOUR TIME AND ENERGY EFFECTIVELY

- Do not spend anything on things you can't do anything about. What are these?
- What do you have control over?
- What might you influence?
- How might you do that?

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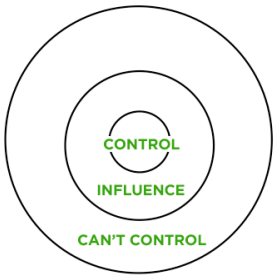

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PEOPLE NEED…

- to see that the change is in their interests
- to feel it is their choice to change
- know what will make a difference
- to see what might be achievable
- have resources and support to make a start
- to be motivated by success to keep going
- to have achievements acknowledged
- to be resilient and not be demoralised by setbacks
- to feel they are part of something worthwhile

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A CONTINUUM OF OPPORTUNITIES

- Modeling good practice
- Smiling, greeting, asking, acknowledging
- Mentioning, pointing out, dropping in ideas
- Sharing good practice
- Supporting good practice
- Suggestions for building on good practice
- Celebrating achievements and positive changes
- Opportunities for active collaboration
- Offering contribution to policy development

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THE ECOLOGY OF SCHOOLS

- What is good for teachers is usually good for students and vice versa
- What happens in one part of the school has impact on what happens elsewhere
- Staffroom conversation can determine what happens in the classroom - how students, families, priorities are seen
- The way schools are managed effects how teachers see themselves and their role.
- A wise leader (and change agent) takes account of school ecology.

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A TEACHER RETURNING…

- *The teachers here really feel supported, cared about, looked after and valued, and that translates over into the classroom … I'm just blown away by how kind the teachers are to students here … that's just a follow-on of the whole culture … everyone on the same side - the staff are supportive of each other, and that carries across into the classroom … I used to hate doing yard duty, because … there would really be open antipathy … So this year - when I'm out there I smile, well, usually, you never got a smile back, always now, I get a smile back.*

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THE TIPPING POINT *

- Social epidemics are driven by a handful of sociable, energetic, influential, knowledgeable people who…
  - Are able to deliver messages that 'stick'
  - take responsibility for making things happen
  - are net-workers and connectors
  - share what they know
  - think positively
  - test out their intuition
  - attend to the little things in context
  - infect others with their enthusiasm
  - nurture collaboration

** Malcolm Gladwell 2000*

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STRENGTHS OF CHANGE AGENTS.

- Are you a connector? This person establishes networks, knows who best to have coffee with and how to engage.
- Are you a maven? This person has high level information and knowledge which enthuses them and which they want to share.
- Are you a sales person? This person is persuasive, can deliver memorable messages that fit with what people want in their lives.
- Can you be all three?!

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SOLUTION FOCUSED (APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY) QUESTIONS

- What is going well here?
- What can we build on?
- What is the most achievable next step?
- Who is best placed to support this?
- What has worked well in the past we can learn from?
- What resources do we have to help?

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THE VISION OF THE SCHOOL LEADER

- The Head teacher is usually the most important change agent in their school. Wherever possible work at getting them on board
- What do they want for their school?
- What is already in place and working well? Is this acknowledged / celebrated?
- How can the wellbeing agenda take their vision forward?
- What can you do to help them achieve their vision
- What one step might you suggest that builds on what is there? What can you tweak?
- What is most likely to have a quick and positive effect?

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IDEALISM AND REALISM

- It is the idealists who have a positive vision for where they are going who end up more realistic than those who stay with the current picture and say 'what can you do?'
- Change is inevitable - you either let it happen to you or you can be active in determining the direction its going in.
- Sow seeds and water them!

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TICKET OUT THE DOOR

- What was the most useful thing you learnt?
- What was the best feeling you had all day?
- What is one thing you will do differently or more of?
- If you would like to be connected with Wellbeing Australia: Positive Schools : Circle Solutions
- write your email address

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USEFUL WEBSITES

- www.sueroffey.com
- www.wellbeingaustralia.com.au/wba
- www.circlesolutionsnetwork.com
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