



Using your Social-Emotional Wellbeing Survey results

How can schools support optimal social and emotional wellbeing?

The results from the ACER Social and Emotional Wellbeing Survey show that young people who have the highest levels of social and emotional wellbeing are supported at school to develop their abilities to control their worries, describe their feelings, and solve problems without fighting.

Students at the optimal level of wellbeing agree very strongly that their school teaches them how to make friends, respect others' feelings, cope with stress, and be confident, persistent and organised. These students say they have opportunities to discuss and act on ideas to make their schools better and safer. Additionally, they surround themselves with peers who behave well and work very hard.

School experiences are clearly very important in developing the social and emotional wellbeing of young people. Students depend on positive relationships with teachers and peers, and high teacher expectations for achievement and behaviour. They flourish when given opportunities to be involved in activities that accommodate their interests, and when given a voice in the making of school rules and planning activities. The healthiest students have teachers who deliberately and effectively develop students' resilience and interpersonal skills.

Improving Student Social-Emotional Wellbeing and Achievement Outcomes.

The Social-Emotional Wellbeing Surveys and the Social-Emotional Wellbeing Surveys School Report are designed to provide school communities with information they can use to develop policies, plans and strategies to improve the social-emotional wellbeing of students. There are two basic ways school communities can use the data contained in this report: **Informal Approach & Formal Approach.**

Informal Approach

A group of interested and responsible parties discuss the implications of the results of the survey for their students and school community.

Formal Approach

A group of interested and responsible parties use a model of organisational planning and problem solving to guide their efforts at developing a plan of actions that will be successfully implemented and produce a positive impact on students' achievement and social-emotional wellbeing.

Forming a Social-Emotional Wellbeing Committee (SEW Committee)

Committee members can be drawn from the following groups:

- District/region/area school administrators
- School principals/vice principals
- Student counsellors/welfare coordinators
- Special educators
- Classroom teachers
- Interested parents
- Community members (police, fire brigade, business)
- Community mentors
- Students.



Committees may choose to meet on a regular basis (e.g. fortnightly or monthly) to consider ways to improve the social-emotional wellbeing of students.

Informal Approach

1. Discussion of Social-Emotional Wellbeing Outcomes of Students

Agreement should be arrived at concerning the positive outcomes in the data and those areas that are of concern. Information from other sources can also be considered at this time (e.g. tardiness, fights, behavioural referrals).

Questions that can be raised include:

- A. What percentage of students have very low and low overall social-emotional wellbeing? How does this compare to 'All schools' data?
- B. Which of the positive elements of social-emotional wellbeing (e.g. happiness, getting along, feeling safe) do 30-40% or more of students demonstrate low or very low levels of? Which of the negative elements of social-emotional wellbeing (e.g. anger, feeling down, bullying) do 30-40% or more of students demonstrate high or very high levels of?
- C. In all areas of social-emotional wellbeing, are there any noticeable differences between boys and girls (e.g. greater percentage of girls worry than boys; greater percentage of boys under-achieve)?

The result of this discussion should result in a list of problems that constitute a central focus of the SEW Committee's work.

Committee members should also discuss in their first meetings how to keep the various constituencies (community members, teachers, staff, parents, students) informed of deliberations of the SEW Committee.

2. Discussion of Factors/Reasons within Surrounding Communities, Homes and Schools that Contribute to Low Levels of Student Social-Emotional Wellbeing

- Discuss factors in the community, school and home that contribute to the problems noted above.
- Look out for those weaker practices noted by students (those practices where more than 30-40% of students perceive an absence of the practice in their community, home or school).
- Discuss perceptions concerning the extent to which the following good practices exist in the environment of students:
 - A. Positive adult-student relationships
 - B. High expectations communicated for achievement and behaviour
 - C. Activities that accommodate students' interests
 - D. Opportunities for student responsibility and decision-making
 - E. Communication of positive attitudes, values and social, emotional and motivational competencies
 - F. Opportunities for students to engage in positive peer interaction
 - G. Parent involvement/interest in their children's education.
- Brainstorm and agree on a variety of other reasons for low levels of social-emotional wellbeing not examined in the survey (e.g. transition from primary to middle school; highly transient population, gangs).
- Draw up a list of the reasons for low levels of social-emotional wellbeing that are organised into three categories: Community Reasons, Home Reasons, and School Reasons.

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3. Discussion of Students' Areas of Strength and Weakness

- Draw up a list of students' weaker areas of development using information from all chapters.

Important to note:

- Students' social-emotional wellbeing depends not only upon the presence of positive practices in their communities, schools and homes, but also upon the mental make-up (attitudes, values, social-emotional skills, motivation) of students.
- Students who come from environments with relatively few good practices are likely to experience delays in the development of positive attitudes, values and social skills, emotional management skills, and motivation. Many of these students acquire negative attitudes.

4. Discussion of Recommendations/Solutions

- Brainstorm a range of ways to engage the surrounding communities, schools and homes in promoting social-emotional wellbeing and achievement in students (policies, programs, interventions).
- Take special note of the weaker practices perceived by students and discuss ways to strengthen these practices.
- Prioritise list of recommendations.

5. Sharing of Information/Recommendations with School Community

All interested parties should be kept informed of the SEW Committee's progress, e.g. in meetings (assemblies, staff, parent education, general) or in written form (newsletter).

Recommendations offered by the SEW Committee should be seen as suggestions, not mandates. Interested parties should be given opportunity for feedback.

6. Preparation of Summary Social-Emotional Wellbeing Document

The SEW Committee should, after due consultation, draft a document that presents the case for developing students' social-emotional wellbeing alongside developing their academic success as being the dual mission of education.

The document could include the following components:

- A. Data that indicates the social-emotional wellbeing problems of students within the community
- B. A call for including social-emotional wellbeing within the central mission of the school alongside achievement
- C. A description of community, school and home practices that influence student social-emotional wellbeing and achievement outcomes
- D. A description of the attitudes, values and social, emotional and motivational competencies of students that support their positive development and wellbeing
- E. A call for collective community, school and home action to improve students' social-emotional wellbeing outcomes
- F. A list of recommendations to be enacted over the short- and long-term.

Informal Approach - Summary Plan

INFORMAL APPROACH	TIMEFRAME
1. Convene meeting of interested parties	
2. Read SEW report, identify areas of concern, discuss	
3. List problem areas	
4. Inform general population of findings	
5. Discuss factors in community, home and school that contribute to problems	
6. Look for further evidence of listed problems	
7. Brainstorm reasons for low SEW (eg: transition from primary to secondary, transient populations...)	
8. Discuss areas of strength and weakness	
9. Brainstorm solutions	
10. Share information and recommendations with the school community	
11. Prepare a SEW document	

Formal Approach

1. Collect Data on Students' Social-Emotional Wellbeing Outcomes

- Quantitative data (e.g. Social-Emotional Wellbeing Survey results, standardised achievement tests)
- Qualitative data (e.g. results from interviews, focus groups) including the presence/absence of both positive and negative characteristics of social-emotional wellbeing.

2. Set Goals

- Based on a review of the data on student outcomes and potential contributing factors, specific goals should be identified.

Goals can be formulated to:

- increase overall levels of students' social-emotional wellbeing as well as being focused on specific elements of social-emotional wellbeing (e.g. increasing the number of students who feel safe and free from danger)
- decrease the percentage of students who experience high levels of worry
- improve practices in school, home and community (e.g. improving teacher–student relationships, providing students with more responsibility and decision making).

Different goals can be specified for boys and girls.

Different goals can be specified for different problem areas identified in the Social-Emotional Wellbeing Surveys (e.g. resilience problems, work management, social interaction, and alcohol and drug problems).

Goals should also be formulated in terms of increasing the development of students' internal positive attitudes, values and social-emotional-motivational competencies (e.g. increase level of work organisation in boys; increase emotional resilience of all students).

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3. Good Practices (Recommendations)

- In identifying programs/interventions designed to achieve previously specified goals, two avenues should be explored to identify “Good Practices” - those practices that have a track record of proven effectiveness.
- First, published research available in professional journals should be consulted to identify research-based practices that have been found to influence student outcomes of concern.
- Second, efforts should be made to determine if schools in the surrounding community have successfully implemented a practice that has successfully affected the same or similar student outcomes of concern.
- In both instances, efforts should be made to determine whether a practice being considered has been “proved” to be successful with students who share the same or similar demographic characteristics with the students of concern.
- Recommendations should be examined for “constraints” and “facilitators” that will contribute to successful implementation.

Before final recommendations are agreed to, a ‘short list’ should be provided to teachers, parents, students and members of the community, and feedback sought.

4. Evaluation (Outcomes and Quality Assurance)

- In the planning stage, it is important to list ways in which student progress towards and achievement of goals listed in Step II will be assessed.
- The use of student performance data during the implementation of a practice enables adjustments to be made in the way in which the process is being implemented.
- The use of outcomes measures will help determine whether the practice is having the desired effect and will enable subsequent judgements to be made concerning the continuation or elimination of the practice (‘Exit Strategy’).
- It is also important to determine along the way the success with which the practice is being implemented. Sometimes referred to as Quality Assurance, a checklist will need to be developed that lists the component parts of the practice and allows for a determination of the extent to which the component parts are being successfully implemented.

5. Professional Development and Community Education

Before a good practice is implemented, it is vital to determine the extent of professional development time and resources needed in order for the practice to be successfully implemented. Particular attention should be paid to the amount of staff development time required to launch the practice and the ongoing formal (e.g. additional staff training) and informal (e.g. staff meetings, grade level meetings) time required. Additionally, the availability of professional development assistance needs to be identified from existing school personnel as well as external consultants.

6. The Responsibility of Leadership

There is little question that the success of any practice in improving student outcomes is greatly influenced by the actions and words of school administrators, including school district/regional administrators (superintendent, assistant superintendents) and school administrators (principal, vice-principal). Two dimensions of successful leadership relative to the management of school improvement have been identified in the literature:

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- a. **Pressure** in encouraging others to join together in the process of examining problems and student needs including 'data of concern', as well as in determining goals, good practices, professional development needs of staff and methods of evaluation.
- b. **Support** of staff by providing ongoing interest, reinforcement, encouragement, enthusiasm, needed resources, professional development time, and shielding involved staff from any additional and unnecessary responsibilities.

7. Summary Document

The last stage in organisational planning is to summarise what has been agreed to, including an overview of the previous six stages. This document should be circulated to all members of the school, and to students' homes and the community.

Summary form for Organisational Problem-Solving Model

1. Collect data on students' social-emotional wellbeing outcomes and contributing factors.

List/describe all student social-emotional data of concern:

List/describe contributing factors to social-emotional outcomes of concern (school, home, community):

2. Goals

List goals for students (increases in positive social-emotional wellbeing, decreases in negative social-emotional wellbeing characteristics):

List goals for changing/improving factors (community, school and home practices):

3. Good practices (recommendations)

Provide a list of policies, programs and interventions that are seen as evidence-based or good practices that have the potential for achieving the goals listed above:

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4. **Evaluation (outcomes and quality assurance)**

List student outcomes to be examined during implementation of good practice:

Describe quality assurance of implementation of policy/program:

5. **Professional development and community education**

Provide statement of professional development/community development education requirements and availability of staff and resources to meet requirements:

6. **The responsibility of leadership**

Provide statement of leadership responsibilities:

7. **Summary document circulated**

Describe how document will be written and circulated:

Formal Approach – Summary Plan

FORMAL APPROACH	TIMEFRAME
1. Collect qualitative and quantitative data	
2. Set goals	
3. Research good practices – what interventions have been successful for like schools?	
4. Inform school community of measures chosen	
5. Design an evaluation tool during the planning stage to check intervention is having desired effect	
6. Professional development and community education	
7. Leadership – to motivate staff, provide time, resources and reinforcement for initiatives	
8. Summary document	
9. Circulation to school community	

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