

Student Wellbeing



Position Statement

Introduction

Catholic education in Queensland is committed to the holistic development of each person's academic, spiritual, social, emotional and physical needs and seeks to create a synthesis of faith, culture and life.

The Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Declaration reaffirms that all schools in Australia must be committed to encourage confident and creative individuals who have a sense of self-worth, self-awareness and personal identity that enables them to manage their emotional, mental, cultural, spiritual and physical wellbeing.¹

The Australian Student Wellbeing Framework supports Australian schools to provide every student with the strongest foundation possible for them to reach their aspirations in learning and in life. The Framework is based on evidence that demonstrates the strong association of safety, wellbeing and learning. It has five focus areas: leadership, inclusion, student voice, partnerships and support.

Queensland Catholic Schools recognise that the wellbeing of children and young people is improved, and their learning outcomes optimised, when they feel connected to others and experience safe and trusting relationships.² Queensland Catholic schools are committed to the use of evidence-informed approaches that have been shown through research to build wellbeing capability in the areas of personal achievement, social competence and emotional resilience. They are also committed to acknowledging and promoting the dignity of every human person, in line with the foundational principle of Catholic Social Teaching.

Pope Francis has noted the importance of family to the wellbeing of children. He said, "The family tops all the indices of wellbeing among young people".³ Catholic schools in Queensland recognise the need to develop strong home school partnerships through engaging families in order to optimise student wellbeing.

Each Catholic School Authority is encouraged to use this position statement to frame wellbeing policies and procedures which are socially just, equitable, inclusive, educationally sound and suited to their particular context.

Definition

Wellbeing is described by the World Health Organisation as 'the state in which the individual realises his or her own abilities, can cope with normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community.'⁴

For the purpose of this position statement, student wellbeing is seen as encompassing the following domains: spiritual wellbeing, psychological wellbeing, physical wellbeing, social wellbeing, emotional wellbeing, cognitive wellbeing and cultural wellbeing.

¹ Education Council (2019), Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Declaration

² Education Services Australia (2018), Australian Student Wellbeing Framework.

³ Pope Francis (2015), General Audience St Peter's Square

⁴ World Health Organisation (2016) Mental Health: Strengthening Our Response (factsheet)

Spiritual Wellbeing

Spiritual wellbeing relates to a sense of meaning and purpose. It can include connection to culture, religion or community and includes: beliefs, values, morals and ethics; a sense of meaning and purpose; altruism; and a sense of connectedness to something larger than oneself.

Psychological Wellbeing

Psychological wellbeing incorporates both feeling good and functioning well; this incorporates having a sense of purpose and engagement.

Physical Wellbeing

Physical wellbeing is the ability to feel physically safe and healthy. It includes nutrition, preventative health care, physical activity and physical safety and security.

Social Wellbeing

Social wellbeing involves positive relationships and connectedness to others, including pro-social behaviour and empathy towards others.

Emotional Wellbeing

Emotional wellbeing relates to self-awareness and emotional regulation. It includes resilience and a capacity for self-reflection.

Cognitive Wellbeing

Cognitive wellbeing is associated with achievement and success. It includes the motivation and persistence to achieve.

Cultural Wellbeing

Cultural wellbeing includes strength in relationships and kinship, freedom from discrimination, promotion of language and cultural practices, spiritual beliefs, customary law and a clear sense of place, land and time.

Rationale

The Congregation for Catholic Education (2014) states that “It is important for schooling to enhance not only skills that are related to knowing and knowing how to do things, but also skills that apply to living alongside others and growing as human beings”⁵. Catholic schools, therefore, have a responsibility to promote the holistic development of every student.

Further in this document, the Congregation declares that Catholic schools must have, “a balanced focus on cognitive, affective, social, professional, ethical and spiritual aspects.”⁴

Pope Francis reminds us, “Young people are not meant to become discouraged; they are meant to dream great things, to seek vast horizons, to aim higher, to take on the world, to accept challenges and to offer the best of themselves to the building of something better. That is why I constantly urge young people not to let themselves be robbed of hope.”⁶

Secular commentators are equally insistent on the importance of wellbeing. “In education, wellbeing is important for two reasons. The first is the recognition that schooling should not just be about academic outcomes but that it is about the wellbeing of the ‘whole child’; the second is that students who have higher levels of wellbeing tend to have better cognitive outcomes at school.”⁷

The preamble to the Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Declaration categorically affirms that “Education plays a vital role in promoting the intellectual, physical, social, emotional, moral, spiritual and aesthetic

⁵ Congregation for Catholic Education (2014), *Educating Today and Tomorrow: A Renewing Passion*

⁶ Pope Francis, *Christus Vivit*, 2019

⁷ Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation, Sydney (2015), *Literature review: Student wellbeing*

development and wellbeing of young Australians.”⁸

The Australian Curriculum nominates Personal and Social Capability as one of the General Capabilities, stating, “Students with well-developed social and emotional skills find it easier to manage themselves, relate to others, develop resilience and a sense of self-worth, resolve conflict, engage in teamwork and feel positive about themselves and the world around them. The development of personal and social capability is a foundation for learning and for citizenship”.⁹

There is a strong, reciprocal relationship among wellbeing, engagement and learning, with research indicating that an approach that works on all three aspects simultaneously can produce a quality education.¹⁰

Position Statement

Queensland Catholic School Authorities aspire to the promotion of optimal wellbeing for all students in Queensland Catholic schools. Catholic School Authorities are encouraged to promote wellbeing with reference to the following domains: spiritual, psychological, physical, social, emotional, cognitive and cultural.

Implications

Catholic School Authorities and schools will give consideration to:

- Ensuring student safety
- Encouraging a sense of belonging
- Encouraging the valuing of spirituality
- Building and celebrating community
- Fostering student voice
- Fostering student leadership
- Providing developmentally appropriate and systematic pastoral care
- Providing clear values and behavioural expectations
- Providing trauma aware schooling practices
- Addressing bullying and cyberbullying
- Promoting good mental health
- Promoting good physical health
- Teaching explicit social and emotional skills through evidence-informed programs
- Educating young people in effective approaches to drugs and alcohol
- Ensuring equity and freedom from discrimination
- Maximising student engagement
- Recognising the role of the family and engaging them in the wellbeing of their young people
- Providing early intervention and targeted support
- Providing appropriate counselling
- Building school, home and community partnerships
- Providing spiritual support
- Celebrating cultural heritage
- Measuring and reporting on student wellbeing
- Responding to critical incidents

References

- Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (2014) Australian Curriculum
- Be You, (2018) Evidence Summary
- Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation, Sydney, (2015), Literature review: Student

⁸ Education Council (2019) Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Declaration

⁹ Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (2014) Australian Curriculum

¹⁰ Be You, (2018) Evidence Summary p.9

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- Congregation for Catholic Education (2014), Educating Today and Tomorrow: A Renewing Passion
- Education Council (2019), Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Declaration
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