

Learner wellbeing in DECS: from policy to practice



‘a child in a
state of
wellbeing is
like a fish in
water’

(Goldspink,2002)

Leigh Burrows
DECS & FUSA
2008

Wellbeing: a new fad or not?

Recently spotted in a memorandum written by the
Director-General of Education Alby Jones:

*..... the general wellbeing and education of the
students must be the prime concern.*

when was this?

August 1970

Monitor wellbeing, teachers advised

The Advertiser news.com.au/adelaide Now Wednesday, November 8, 2006 37

XANTHE KLEINIG
EDUCATION REPORTER

THE wellbeing of children should be monitored as frequently as air quality, an international expert says.

Belgian professor Ferre Laevers says a child's level of wellbeing and social involvement are key indicators of future criminal behaviour and delinquency. "Teachers ignore this at the risk of the child's, and society's health. We will

sell a seminar of 600 teachers today in SA.

"You are asking for problems in any school system if you can't guarantee a certain level of wellbeing for children while they are in the education system," he says.

Professor Laevers will train teachers and early childhood workers to keep an eye on key traits. "I would like to see that for every country and community as a way to measure where you are. Like they measure the quality of the air,

they should be able to measure wellbeing," he says.

Teachers should work to improve the levels of interest and wellbeing levels of those who rate poorly, he says.

"There are two directions that can go. The child might develop aggression and delinquency," he says. "There's a second pattern, the child damaging himself, hurting himself, in the end meaning suicide at the end of the road, as an adult."

Young people who do not

learn to care for themselves or their classmates do not develop a broader concern for others. Professor Laevers says, adding that SA is "fertile ground" for his approach to providing quality education.

The state education system's emphasis on the early years and its integrated approach to care from birth to the end of school are important, he says. The Our Children the Future seminar features a talk by Thinker in Residence Praser Mustard.

The current context of wellbeing and education.....

- Children's and young people's wellbeing is represented as a core value in the manifestos of most educational and health systems
- Growing body of research and evidence about wellbeing and its link to learning
- Deepening awareness of the need for an holistic approach and greater connection and collaboration across boundaries
- Importance of a multidisciplinary and multidimensional approach
- A gradual societal reorientation to wellbeing, connected with health and health promotion, strengths based practice, resilience
- **Wellbeing is a policy domain aligned to Goal 3 of DECS Statement of Directions 2005-2010**

Child and Student Wellbeing : *All staff are responsible, directly or indirectly, for child and student health and wellbeing.*

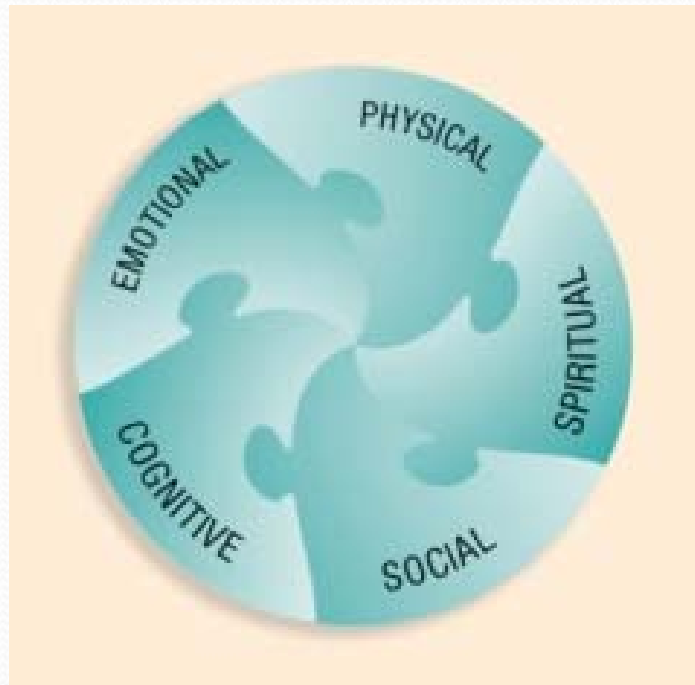
- Learner wellbeing
- Behaviour management
- Bullying and harrassment
- Child protection
- Attendance
- Children under the guardianship of the minister
- Active8
- Health support planning
- Drug strategy
- Swimming and aquatics
- Sport
- Crime prevention
- School watch
- Road safety
- EatWell

<http://www.decs.sa.gov.au/portal/staffinfo.asp?group=wellbeing>

Development of the DECS Learner Wellbeing Framework(2006) <http://www.decs.sa.gov.au/learnerwellbeing>

- A 'Matrix Team' formed with representation from across DECS – curriculum, early years, social inclusion, behaviour, child protection, disability, mental health, indigenous education, multicultural education – different approaches
- Need for a stand alone team to raise the profile but connecting with other parts of department , universities and outside agencies
- across central, district and site levels
- 'a different kind of conversation' – not deficit oriented, strengths based
- multidimensional perspective
- gave educators permission to talk about what we were already concerned about and focused on
- a language to help us connect with colleagues in other agencies eg CAMHS, CYWHS, Disability SA, MAP
- Reference group of leaders and team of project officers formed

Dimensions of Learner Wellbeing



The DECS Learner Wellbeing Framework contains five dimensions to learner wellbeing that overlap and interconnect with each other: cognitive, emotional, physical, social and spiritual.



Influences on Wellbeing

Protective

- Positive relationships
- Pro-social peer group
- Responsibility & helpfulness
- Feeling safe
- Engaging curriculum
- Connection & belonging
- Positive climate
- Success & achievement
- Recognition
- Sense of control of learning
- Feeling competent
- Meaningful pathways

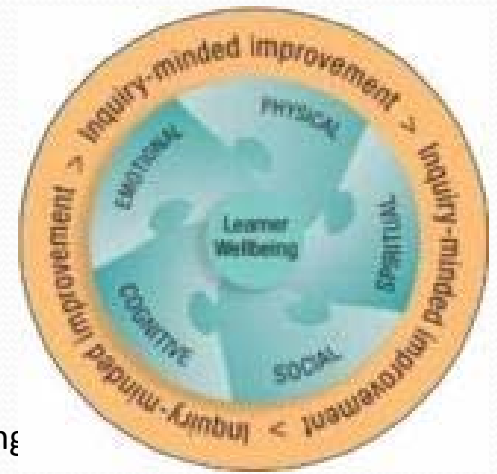
Risk

- Poor connection to site
- Bullying
- Peer rejection
- Failure
- Anti-social peer group
- Ineffective behaviour management

Inquiry projects across SA

- Student voice
- Engagement
- Learning styles
- Canteen
- Physical environment
- Exercise
- Behaviour management
- Curriculum aspects
- Partnerships
- Bullying
- Independent learning
- Learners leading an inquiry into wellbeing
- Understanding the values of an indigenous culture
- Active lifestyle
- Pastoral care
- Resilience
- Emotional intelligence
- Thinking skills
- Social inclusion

- Transitions
- Social skills
- Learning and wellbeing
- Wellbeing and the whole child
- Values
- Teacher wellbeing
- Wellbeing and students with disabilities
- African students- their learning goals and wellbeing
- Staff engagement & student engagement
- Circle of courage
- Student mentoring
- Healthy eating
- Working with families
- Connecting with community
- Attachment issues in the preschool
- Relationships
- Physical disabilities
- Restorative practices
- Friendly Schools, Friendly Families



Drug strategy Team within the Learner Wellbeing Team

- Promoting an integrated approach to wellbeing and drugs
- Wellbeing and resiliency in the context of drug education
- Ecstasy and related drugs cross sector seminar program involving teachers, parent representatives and agency partners
- Indigenous rural and remote initiative – drug education that builds on the strengths of students families and communities
- Adolescents and alcohol conference
- Partnerships with co-morbidity team CAMHS
- Binge drinking
- Foetal alcohol syndrome
- Ecstasy use in SA

Anti bullying research & resource development- Child and Student Wellbeing in DECS

- DECS, FUSA, UniSA partnerships – ‘coalition to decrease bullying, harassment and violence’
- Professional development resources
- Information brochures for young people
- DVDs- student scripted
- Links with ‘Bullying no way’ websites
- Cyber bullying information for parents
- Review of behaviour management policy integrated with wellbeing concepts and framework

www.decs.sa.gov.au/docs/documents/1/CyberBullyingECrimeProtec.pdf

Wellbeing and adolescent refugees newly arrived in Australia DECS Multicultural team & FUSA

DECS ESL Program – partnership with Flinders University

- research findings are impacting on teacher practice and professional development through providing evidence of the level of mental and emotional disturbance experienced by refugee background students and identifying particular predictors of student well-being for this group, including risk and protective factors.
- unaccompanied minors repatriated in Vietnam
- the well-being of child refugees who were formerly detained
- emotional and behaviour problems of refugee students attending New Arrivals Programs in schools in SA
- the well-being of young Sudanese and Iraqi refugees and their families in Cairo

www.decs.sa.gov.au/curric/files/links/bwPilgrim_Hall.pdf

http://www.decs.sa.gov.au/curric/files/links/Count_me_in.pdf

A professional development resource to support learners with learning and emotional difficulties



Recreating the Circle of Wellbeing



Government of South Australia
Department of Education and
Children's Services

Recreating the circle of wellbeing (DECS 2007)

resource development - Disability and Statewide Programs team

- Strengths based & solution focused
- Arose out of need to address emotional as well as cognitive aspects of learning for students experiencing difficulties and for particularly vulnerable students
- Underpinning literature (emotional intelligence, wellbeing, emotional aspects of learning)
- Support for teachers in developing own capacities- including self regulation
- Professional development activities
- Activities for the classroom
- Case studies- early years to secondary
- Arose out of experience of Learning Difficulties Team – providing a statewide responsive service
- About to be launched, distributed to sites and available on website

Early Childhood and Wellbeing

- Early childhood centres- cross government initiative

www.decs.sa.gov.au/families/a8_publish/

- Aboriginal Early Childhood and Wellbeing team

-Inclusion, professional development, support for staff

-Exploring wellbeing from an Aboriginal point of view

<http://www.decs.sa.gov.au/learnerwellbeing/default.asp?id=27960&navgrp=2398>

It is also crucial in ensuring that DECS approach to learner wellbeing does not support institutional racism by presenting a dominant culture version of learner wellbeing, but has relevance to the diversity of learners' cultural backgrounds (Stacey & Kathleen,2007)

Kids Matter project- Partnership between DECS, FUSA and UniSA

- connects with interagency work conducted by DECS – Child Health & Education Support Services (CHESS)
- primary school mental health promotion, prevention and early intervention initiative developed in collaboration with Dept Health & Ageing, *beyondblue*, Australian Psychological Society and the Australian Principals Associations Professional Development Council
- research team & project reference groups cover: social development, child psychiatry, learning and metacognition, professional development of teachers, research design and analysis of both qualitative and quantitative data, and measurement and evaluation.
- Child protective factors identified by team : social and emotional competencies, a sense of mastery and control , sense of optimism, problem solving skills & coping
- framework for evaluation of these child protective factors - the extent to which students are developing the six senses provided by the Beyond Blue schools research initiative (2003-2005). These six senses are: sense of self worth; sense of control; sense of belonging; sense of purpose, sense of future; and sense of humour. <http://caef.flinders.edu.au/kidsmatter/>

Healthy Minds/Healthy Futures: Child Mental Health and Wellbeing Study

- Partnerships between DECS, Adelaide University & CYWHS
- Predicting and Improving Mental Health Resilience in Early Childhood
- Summary of Research Findings From 2005 for Educators
- Collaborative strengths based resilience approach
- 560 families – Southern Sea and Vines District
- Using data to inform pre-school intervention programs,

http://decs.sa.gov.au/speced2/files/pages/chess/hsp/Research/final_2005_teacher_results.pdf

Building the capabilities of school communities to improve their wellbeing- DECS & FUSA- an ARC Linkage project

- A Flinders University and DECS research partnership
- Began as a local partnership, led to being awarded an ARC Linkage grant to expand the research and interventions to improve wellbeing in school communities
- Emphasis on student wellbeing as being connected with the school community
- Emphasis on building capacity for self regulation and engagement
- focus will on bringing the wellbeing of key groups in school communities into closer alignment with the objectives espoused in educational policy

ARC linkage project- nested projects & themes

- Social competence, coping strategies
- Teachers and social competence in the school yard
- Teacher wellbeing
- Leadership – student voice
- Learning and wellbeing
- Popularity
- Aspergers Syndrome
- School - community partnerships
- Involving students, teachers and parents/caregivers
- Connecting with outside agencies and professionals


When I hit kids I hurt myself

a middle primary student with AS & co-existing conditions including PTSD

- ARC linkage project- Asperger Study

When people are mean to me I get angry and I accidentally hurt people. I threw a rock, we were playing cops and robbers. When I hurt kids I hurt myself. I get mad at myself and hit my head. That's how I get my madness out, I stay angry for a long time. I would like not to be angry.

Now lets talk about good things...



Understanding the experience of the abused and neglected child assists us to develop compassion, patience and empathy. It is a key intervention in itself.

State Government Victoria (2006): 'Calmer Classrooms'

Wellbeing – a priority at all levels of DECS

- Learner Wellbeing Project (2006-2007) formed to develop a framework for birth- year 12

External evaluation of the framework (Kathleen & Stacey,2008) shows:

- It is widely known
- It is of great practical value for educators
- significant positive change in culture- behaviour, positivity, and learning outcomes reported by project sites
- Has facilitated a shift in thinking from problem saturated to holistic and proactive view of wellbeing
- Shows there is a strong relationship between wellbeing and learning

Learner wellbeing in DECS – the future?

- Proceeding in a number of directions across DECS
- Learner Wellbeing Project continuing - limited funding for some sites
- Many other continuing wellbeing projects in DECS involving partnerships with central office, districts and sites, universities and outside agencies
- Continuing to support children and young people to feel more like fish in water at school or pre-school.

thank you.....

burrows.leigh@saugov.sa.gov.au

leigh.burrows@flinders.edu.au