

Spotlight Student Wellbeing

Helping School leaders discover the importance of a more holistic approach to education and it's connection with student wellbeing.

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Student Wellbeing

Students' academic competence has long been measured by schools and systems of schools.

Increasingly, school leaders across the globe acknowledge the importance of a more holistic approach to education; one in which students' academic, social and emotional development is understood as equally important and mutually reinforcing goals. Indeed, student wellbeing is a new paradigm for improving outcomes.

However, when we look at the status of student wellbeing in the Australian context, the statistics are alarming:

- **25%** of students experience bullying¹
- Almost **one in seven (13.9 %)** of 4-17 year-olds were assessed as having mental disorders in the previous 12 months. This is equivalent to 560,000 Australian children and adolescents.²
- Based on these prevalence rates it is estimated that in the previous 12 months:
 - **298,000** Australian children and adolescents aged 4-17 years had ADHD
 - **278,000** had anxiety disorders
 - **112,000** had a major depressive disorder, and
 - **83,600** had conduct disorder.³
- **20%** of adolescents may experience a mental health problem in any given year.⁴
- **50%** of mental health problems are established by age 14.⁵
- **10%** of children and young people (aged 5-16 years) have clinically diagnosable mental problem⁶ yet 70% of children and adolescents who experience mental health problems have not had appropriate interventions at a sufficiently early age.⁷

Tackling student wellbeing is a very significant and growing challenge for educators.

¹ Kids Help Line: Bullying. <https://kidshelpline.com.au/teens/issues/bullying>

^{2 & 3} Australian Psychology Society (2018): The framework for effective delivery of school psychology services. www.psychology.org.au/getmedia/249a7a14-c43e-4add-aa6b-decfea6e810d/Framework-sch ools-psychologists-leaders.pdf

⁴ World Health Organisation. Caring for children and adolescents with mental disorders: Setting WHO directions. [online] Geneva: World Health Organization. Available at: http://www.who.int/mental_health/ media/en/785.pdf [Accessed 14 Sep. 2015]

⁵ Kessler RC, Berglund P, Demler O, Jin R, Merikangas KR, Walters EE. (2005). Lifetime Prevalence and Age-of-Onset Distributions of DSM-IV Disorders in the National Comorbidity Survey Replication. Archives of General Psychiatry, 62 (6) pp. 593-602. doi:10.1001/archpsyc.62.6.593

⁶ Green, H., McGinnity, A., Meltzer, Ford, T., Goodman, R. 2005 Mental Health of Children and Young People in Great Britain: 2004. Office for National Statistics.

⁷ Children's Society (2008) The Good Childhood Inquiry: health research evidence. London: Children's Society.

Student Wellbeing

‘Wellbeing’ can be a catch-all term to describe several states of being. It may seem difficult to measure wellbeing because it can be rather conceptual.

What exactly is student wellbeing?

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) defines student wellbeing as “a sustainable positive mood and attitude, health, resilience, and satisfaction with self, relationships and experiences at school”.

Similarly, in its “Scoping study into approaches to student wellbeing”, the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) defines student wellbeing as: “a sustainable state of positive mood and attitude, resilience, and satisfaction with self, relationships and experiences at school”.

It also adds that “a student’s level of wellbeing is indicated by the degree to which the student demonstrates effective academic and social and emotional functioning and appropriate behaviour at school”.

Internationally, definitions of and approaches to student wellbeing are similar. The OECD’s “Student wellbeing report” refers to the psychological, cognitive, social and physical functioning and capabilities that students need to live a happy and fulfilling life. In the OECD’s view, a student’s wellbeing is the result of interactions among four distinct but closely related domains: psychological, social, cognitive and physical.⁸

The psychological, social, cognitive and physical domains are ubiquitous when it comes to student wellbeing frameworks (elaborated below).

Suffice to say that a broad consensus informs our understanding of what student wellbeing is. But why is wellbeing so important? And how does wellbeing connect to other student outcomes such as academic performance?⁸

⁸ OECD: “Students’ well-being: What it is and how it can be measured”, in PISA 2015 Results (Volume III): Students’ Well-Being, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264273856-6-en> (2017).⁹



The Case for Making Wellbeing Central

The link between student wellbeing and academic outcomes is well established, thanks to decades of research. The link between poorer wellbeing and poorer outcomes is similarly well established.

For example, a large study of student wellbeing published by the Journal of Positive Psychology found that those students who reported high results on factors such as **“feeling good”** and **“doing good”** reported “superior grades, higher self control and lower procrastination than students who were moderately mentally healthy or languishing”.⁹

By contrast, students with poor mental health experience substantial challenges with their learning and school performance. A national survey conducted by The University of Western Australia which interviewed 6,000 families as part of Young Minds Matter found that “mental disorders affected one in seven students in the previous 12 months and students with mental disorders scored lower on average than students without mental disorders in every test domain and year level”.

The report recommended “a need to improve the effectiveness of interventions to reduce the prevalence of mental disorders in children experiencing socio-economic disadvantage and to improve the effectiveness of programs to help students”. Importantly, that report also emphasised that **“Teachers are not mental health professionals and should not be expected to diagnose and treat mental disorders.”**¹⁰



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A concern for educators is the growing number of students who identify as experiencing mental health challenges.

The Mission Australia Youth Survey of 2019 reported that 43% of young people (15-19) feel 'extremely' or 'very concerned' about coping with stress; a three fold increase since 2012¹¹.

Critically for schools, the same study found that a third of students would turn to a teacher or school counsellor for help instead of family and friends.

This is further supported by research conducted by the Australian Psychology Society which recorded the following:

- **One in six (17.0%)** children and adolescents aged 4-17 years had used services for emotional or behavioural problems in the previous 12 months.

Of this group

One in seven (14.8%) used health services

One in nine (11.5%) used school services

Just over half (53.5%) of 4-17 year-olds using services used both.

- **Data for the 95.9% of 4-17 year-olds** attending school or another educational institution showed that:

- A school staff member was among those to suggest that some help for emotional or behavioural problems was needed in **two fifths (40.5%)** of cases
- **One in nine (11.5%)** students had used a school services for emotional or behavioural problems in the previous 12 months.

Parent Expectations: Identify & Refer

The aforementioned statistics align with growing parent expectations of schools. According to social research group McCrindle's Future of Education 2019 Report "almost all parents (97%)¹² believe schools should have a holistic focus and play some role in the management of wellbeing." The report also found that "almost half of parents (46%) believe schools should provide individualised support for wellbeing but refer on to other experts. Similarly Gen Y teachers see themselves as the first line of defence and will then refer on to experts."

Against this backdrop of a fast growing wellbeing challenge, and increased pressure on schools to 'Identify' emergent individual cases, research has generated a wealth of positive education of wellbeing frameworks.

⁹ Howell, 2009 - Flourishing: Achievement-related correlates of students' well-being. Journal of Positive Psychology, 4, 1-13.

¹⁰ UNSW: <http://www.news.uwa.edu.au/2017121810236/study-links-mental-health-poor-school-results>

¹¹ Mission Australia Youth Survey 2019 discussed on The Research Files Episode 49: Survey data to inform student wellbeing planning.

¹² McCrindle: Future of Education 2019 https://educationfuture.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Education-Future-Report_2019.pdf

Student Wellbeing Frameworks in Australia

In Australia there exist a number of wellbeing frameworks with which schools can align, both national (such as the Australian Student Wellbeing Framework and the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth framework) and at the state level (such as The Wellbeing Framework for Schools in NSW and the Student Learning and Wellbeing Framework in QLD). Some independent schools have even developed their own frameworks.¹³

While all of the frameworks construct 'wellbeing' in their own distinctive terminology/language, many of the core components of these frameworks are actually very similar.

For example, in most frameworks, the capacity for students to have resilience and be able to "bounce back" is seen as a key facet of healthy wellbeing. Resilience appears in (to name a few):

- The ARACY framework, under **Participating**¹⁴
- NSW student wellbeing framework, under **Emotional Wellbeing**¹⁵
- SA student wellbeing, under **Empowering**¹⁶
- Panorama Education SEL Framework, under **Learning Strategies**¹⁷
- Australian Student Wellbeing Framework, under **Participation**¹⁸
- ACER Social-Emotional Wellbeing (SEW Survey), under **Emotional Skills**¹⁹

Beyond similarities at the level of specific behaviours, Australian wellbeing frameworks share similarities at the domain level.

For example, all frameworks identify to some degree (though often with different labels) cognitive wellbeing (achievement, persistence, grit); emotional wellbeing (resilience, self-awareness); social wellbeing (positive relationships); and physical wellbeing (sleep, health). Some frameworks extend wellbeing into the spiritual domain, although this is not universal.

As noted above, these domains (cognitive, emotional, physical, social) are essentially universal insofar as they also appear in the OECD's definition of student wellbeing. In addition to similarities in their construction, Australian wellbeing frameworks tend to be deployed in very similar ways; that is, Australian schools typically start with data to analyse wellbeing.

¹³ Wellbeing Framework: <https://www.spcc.nsw.edu.au/cessnock/our-community/wellbeing>

¹⁴ ARACY wellbeing framework: <https://www.aracy.org.au/the-nest-in-action/the-nest-in-action>

¹⁵ NSW Department of Education: Student Wellbeing <https://education.nsw.gov.au/student-wellbeing/whole-school-approach/media/documents/Wellbeing-Framework-for-schools-Accessible.pdf>

¹⁶ Education SA wellbeing: https://www.education.sa.gov.au/sites/default/files/wellbeing-for-learning-and-life-framework.pdf?acsf_files_redirect

¹⁷ Panorama Education SEL: <https://www.panoramaed.com/social-emotional-learning-sel>

¹⁸ Student Wellbeing HUB framework: https://studentwellbeinghub.edu.au/media/9310/aswf_booklet.pdf

¹⁹ ACER wellbeing: https://www.acer.org/files/SEW_A4_Brochure_2018v3.pdf

How Data is Used to Diagnose Wellbeing

Many Australian schools currently collect data to help them **understand how their school is faring on the wellbeing front.** Surveys are central to this evidence-based approach.

For ARACY, surveys allow schools to “share evidence-informed school practices for enhancing student wellbeing.”²⁰ For BeYou (which aligns with the Australian Student Wellbeing Framework), surveys “empower all members of the learning community to share their voice about mental health and wellbeing”. Surveys “capture subjective data relating to perceptions and levels of understanding of mental health and wellbeing from the perspective of all learning community members”.²¹

Annual and anonymous

Just as most wellbeing frameworks depend on data-collection and analysis, most schools collect wellbeing data in identical ways: through large-scale, anonymous surveys distributed annually. ACER’s Annualised Social-Emotional Wellbeing (SEW) Survey, for example, describes itself as “a confidential strength-based survey for students aged three to 18 years.” The SEW Survey provides schools with information about their student population (whole school, specific year levels or targeted groups), which can be used to direct planning and problem-solving efforts. The survey collects data anonymously and has, depending on year level, between 50 and 76 statements that require a strongly disagree to strongly agree response.

Similarly, the Tell Them From Me (TTFM) survey used by NSW government schools provides school principals and school leaders with insight into student engagement, wellbeing and effective teaching practices at their school, from the perspective of students.

The survey is offered once a year. The survey has a large number of statements to respond to and normally takes students 20 minutes to complete.²² The Attitudes To School Survey (Victorian Government Schools) is an annual student survey offered by the Department of Education and Training (VIC) to assist schools in gaining an understanding of students’ perceptions and experience of school. The survey contains 52 questions with responses ranging from “not at all” to “all the time”.

And finally, BeYou’s Educator Survey is “designed to help gather mental health and wellbeing-related perceptions from all educators and staff within the learning community. Responses gathered from educators can be used to highlight what we are doing well, and identify what we can focus on as part of our commitment to continuous improvement. The survey takes approximately 20 minutes to complete and includes 48 questions. The responses are anonymous and only summarised results are used to help us better understand how to improve mental health and wellbeing in our learning community.”²³

²⁰ ARACY student wellbeing: <https://www.aracy.org.au/events/event/the-student-wellbeing-action-network-symposium>

²¹ BeYou wellbeing: <https://beyou.edu.au/>

²² CESE student surveys: <https://surveys.cese.nsw.gov.au/ttfm-surveys/student-survey>

²³ BeYou surveys: <https://beyou.edu.au/planning-and-implementation-tools/be-you-surveys>

Limitations of current approach to data collection and analysis

Large-scale anonymous surveys can provide interesting data. A recent review²⁴ of the ATSS found that “statistically significant coefficients appear sporadically for student motivation, connectedness to peers, a stimulating learning environment, class behaviour, and, surprisingly, student distress.” The authors go on to clarify that “while it is plausible that positive attitudes towards school contribute to student achievement it is also plausible that successful students and their teachers have more positive attitudes to school.”

Across the board, the data collected is both aggregate and anonymised and can give researchers and school leaders some very interesting insights.

However, there are some serious limitations to annual, aggregate, anonymous survey approaches:

1. They are a point-in-time annual survey and thus fail to capture wellbeing trends over a school term or year.
2. They are large surveys and subject to survey fatigue.
3. Most importantly, they provide no capability for early intervention, especially at the individual student level.

The necessity of early intervention

As African-American writer Frederick Douglass put it: “It is easier to build strong children than to fix broken adults.”

Douglass’s point of view correlates with evidence that, like many conditions, early intervention is key to long term health and minimising impact.

Early intervention is key for student wellbeing as well. The Child Family Community Australia’s paper on Defining and delivering effective counselling and psychology found that “almost all well conducted studies of mainstream counselling interventions have concluded that regardless of the model used, the average effect size of counselling is substantial and compares well with effect sizes achieved in established medical practice”.²⁵

School counsellors and similar styled programs that provide services for students around wellbeing have been known to not only impact wellbeing but also student success in other areas. From an academic perspective, The American School Counsellor Association shows that student counsellors (with ratios of 1:250 students) had a significant effect on student attendance, mathematics, writing and verbal scores.²⁶

Finally, the Effectiveness of School-Based Mental Health Services for Elementary-Aged Children found that “considering serious barriers precluding youth from accessing necessary mental health care, the present meta-analysis suggests child psychiatrists and other mental health professionals are wise to recognise the important role that school personnel, who are naturally in children’s lives, can play in decreasing child mental health problems.”²⁷

Annual and anonymous surveys are not helping schools identify specific cases for intervention, so what is the alternative?

²⁴ Melbourne Institute Working Paper: https://melbourneinstitute.unimelb.edu.au/downloads/working_paper_series/wp2016n26.pdf

²⁵ Child Family Community Australia: Defining and Delivering effective counseling and psychology: <https://aifs.gov.au/cfca/sites/default/files/cfca38-effective-counselling.pdf>

²⁶ American School Counselor Association: <https://www.schoolcounselor.org/asca/media/asca/Publications/Effectiveness-RatiosOutcomes-Infographic.pdf>

²⁷ Journal of American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry: The Effectiveness of School-Based Mental Health Services for Elementary-Aged Children: A Meta-Analysis

Most modern solutions have been incremental improvements on large scale paper based surveys. **Improvement in technology and usability open the door to the use of Pulse surveys as the new approach to collecting and acting on wellbeing data in schools.**

How can it be done better?

A key barrier to facilitating behaviour change and performance improvement is complexity. If the process of change is too complicated or too hard, people disengage.

Pulse check-ins overcome this challenge by:

- Frequently collecting small bits of data as opposed to large annual surveys.
- Utilising AI to prioritise the data capture of the most important areas at that particular time.
- Enabling students and staff who are experiencing immediate wellbeing challenges to seek help.

Pulse check-ins help schools transform:

- From measuring to monitoring
- From intuitive to evidenced based decision-making
- From out-of-date to up-to-date approaches and methods
- From tunnel-vision to full-field perspective
- From insight to action.

Leaders of schools and school networks need to make decisions about how to improve all aspects of their schools. However, the information they currently have at their disposal is limited in that it is aggregate, anonymous, and quickly out-of-date thanks to the emphasis on annual data collection.

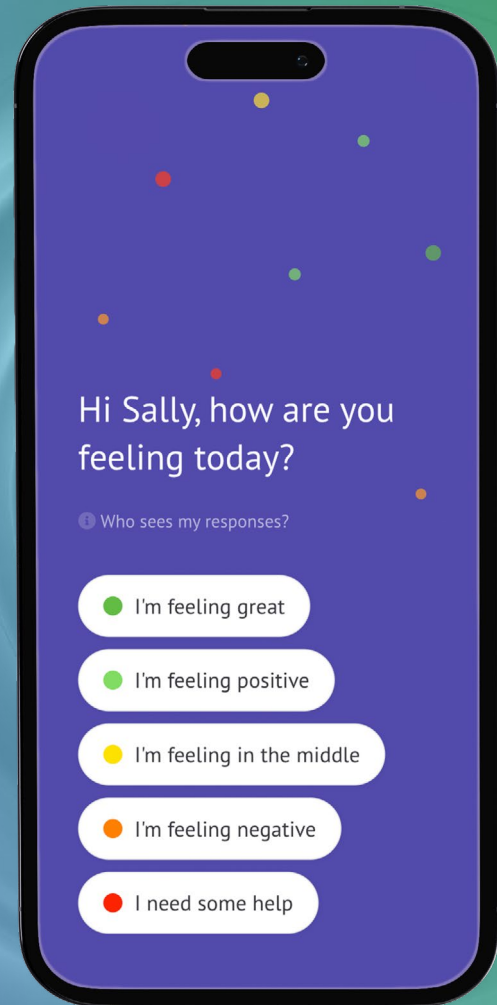
By combining real-time, predictive indicators of a school's culture with predictive analytics, Pulse enables leaders to act quickly and frequently to enhance wellbeing. It gives leaders an understanding of what it's actually like being in their school: simultaneously building a comprehensive picture of the school's organisational health and **providing increased capability to intervene to address wellbeing issues as early as possible.**



Linewize Pulse

Linewize Pulse is an AI-driven application that collects weekly wellbeing and engagement inputs from students, teachers, staff, and leaders.

The AI engine adapts every week and its real-time insights provide guidance on immediate next steps, while predictive insights will help leaders act before major issues emerge. Designed principally for action, not research, user-friendly dashboards provide leadership with actionable insights in as little as a week.



What sort of data does Linewize Pulse collect?

Data is collected in the following areas:

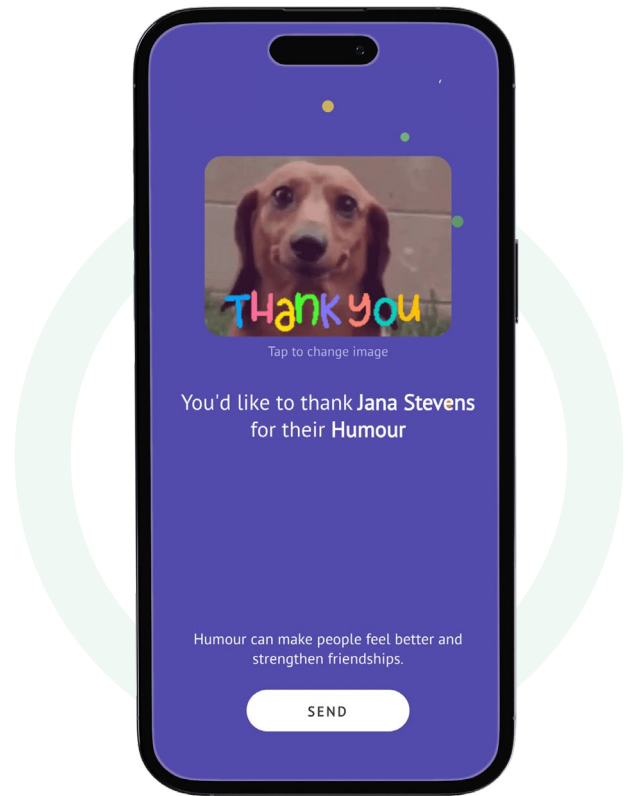
- Student engagement and wellbeing
- Staff engagement and wellbeing
- Work environment
- School Values and Vision
- Leadership and style
- Community Engagement
- Teaching and Learning.

How it Works

Pulse can gather data from every stakeholder in the school: Students, Teachers, Parents & Non Teaching staff.

Pulse check-ins can be completed in less than 60 seconds.

1. Once a week participants are prompted to answer 5 questions using the School Pulse app.
2. Students that need help can use the check-in to reach out.
3. Each week the questions change so many data points can be captured over time.
4. A unique picture of the school's health begins to emerge.
5. Every week new data provides a 'school health' picture over time.



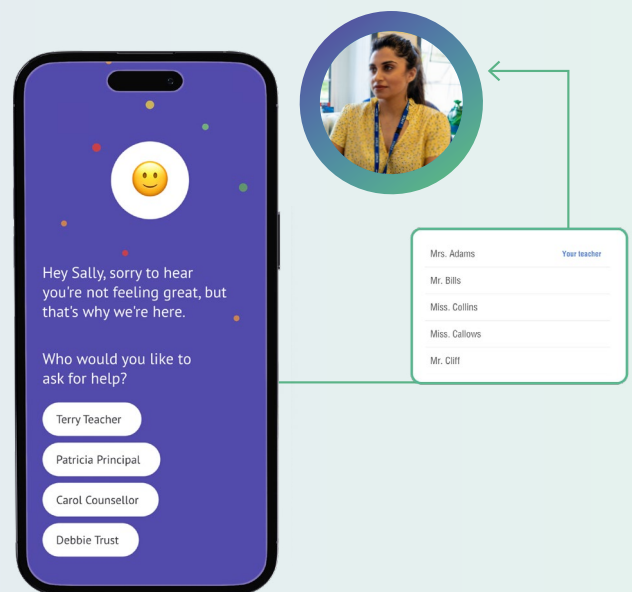
What does this mean for schools?

Leaders of schools and school networks obtain an unprecedented insight into their schools: they get to see what it's actually like to be a student/teachers/staff member/leader/parent at the school.

More specifically, leaders will get visibility of leading indicators of future cultural, wellbeing or organisational health issues.

Did you know?

Most students reach out during school hours, and only 1 in 400 check-ins result in a reach out.



Conclusion

All schools in Australia (and many across the globe) recognise that student wellbeing is **fundamental to student outcomes**.

However, evidence shows that a significant and growing number of Australian students are struggling with their wellbeing, and are turning to schools (rather than friends and family) for help.

Although many Australian schools have adopted wellbeing frameworks and collect wellbeing information, these current approaches are limited. Because data collection tends to be conducted via aggregate, annual, anonymous surveys, school leaders have little insight into wellbeing issues as they emerge, and no way of using data to assist with early interventions.

This is problematic because evidence tells us that early interventions by schools through counsellors or other targeted programs are directly correlated with improved student wellbeing.

Linewize Pulse helps schools improve wellbeing by enhancing data collection and analysis, empowering students (and staff) to ask for help, and enabling early, targeted intervention.





Linewize is a unique response to the challenge of today's connected learning environments, supporting the integration of technology, education and engagement to create cyber safe communities where students thrive.

Web: www.linewize.io
Email: sales@linewize.io



Linewize is part of Qoria, a global technology company, dedicated to keeping children safe and well in their digital lives. We harness the power of connection to close the gaps that children fall through, and to seamlessly support them on all sides - at school, at home and everywhere in between.

Find out more
www.qoria.com