

Glenunga International High School Wellbeing Framework

Introduction

Glenunga International High School (GIHS) is a world leader in teaching, learning, and technology. We endorse core values of Excellence^{PB}, Opportunity^U, International Mindedness, and Harmony. It is the school's focus of Harmony that shapes the culture to be one of inclusion, respect, and diversity. Currently, GIHS operates within the Glenunga Pedagogical Framework for 21st Century Teaching and Learning which fits within the boundaries of the DfE Teaching for Effective Learning (TfEL) Framework and DfE Learner Wellbeing Framework.

Whilst the school community has a clear understanding of pedagogy, to maintain a platform of excellence it is important for GIHS to incorporate wellbeing as a key strategy and purpose that permeates teaching and learning. As such, wellbeing is a mindset that sits at the heart of the school's culture, practices, and intentions, and not a set of standalone interventions or programs. The promotion of wellbeing also relies on the development of effective relationships and connections and is considered the responsibility of all members of the school community. This paper outlines and discusses the wellbeing framework developed specifically for GIHS and provides a strategic platform to further embed wellbeing as part of the broader school culture.

Wellbeing

The subjective interpretation of wellbeing can lead to misunderstanding and misinterpretation of what wellbeing is and how it can be supported. GIHS adheres to a definition of wellbeing that places importance on individual factors including resilience, strength, positive emotion, connection to values, effective functioning, personal achievement, and physical health as well as broader constructs including healthy relationships, and the development of a culture that respects individual differences. Whilst the experience of positive emotion is an essential element of wellbeing, it is understood that students will face challenges and periods of adversity in life that provide opportunities for growth, learning, and development, and conceptualise these challenges as an aspect of 'normal' human experience. However, it is also important to be mindful that approximately 1 in 4 adolescents experiences a diagnosed mental health condition and therefore teaching, learning, and daily interactions must be respectful of these needs.

Connection Between Pedagogical and Wellbeing Frameworks

The Pedagogical Framework at GIHS sits within the context of the DfE TfEL and outlines four key areas of essential practice including: Personalised Learning, Effective Task Design, Collaboration, and Reflective Practice. Each of these practices is designed to prepare students for the 21st Century and provide the necessary skills to operate and succeed within the school environment and into the future. The Pedagogical Framework is also designed to reduce between-class differences, improve student outcomes, and create a culture of learning that is clearly communicated throughout the school environment. It is our moral purpose at Glenunga to deliver these essential practices as part of our commitment to student growth and development.

Like the Pedagogical Framework, the Wellbeing Framework considers the growth and development of the individual to be of paramount importance and strives to create safe conditions for rigorous learning. Specifically, we adopt a strengths-based, rather than deficit, model where the focus is on the growth and development of individual skill and strength. As part of the framework, GIHS considers evidence from studies in neurobiology and neuropsychology which indicates students are unable to learn at their best when faced

with emotional difficulties. Consequently, supporting wellbeing is expected to have flow-on effects to improve academic performance and achievement.

When conceptualising the wellbeing framework, it is important to understand wellbeing as a mindset that guides practice rather than a prescriptive set of instructions or specified intervention. The framework is designed to stretch and challenge thinking and provide some key concepts to incorporate into teaching and learning, thus supporting the concept that wellbeing sits both alongside and within the pedagogical framework.

The specific areas GIHS considers key to the promotion and enhancement of student wellbeing include:

- Relationships and Connectedness
- Creating Safe Conditions for Rigorous Learning
- Identity
- Social and Emotional Learning

It is important to highlight that the key areas identified above fit within a ***whole school approach*** and are driven by ***data and evidence-based practice***.

Relationships and Connectedness

Connectedness refers to the extent individuals perceive themselves to be personally accepted, respected, included, and supported by others within the school environment. Developing and fostering prosocial connections within the school environment is critical for adolescents as they follow a process of individuation that sees them rely less on family and parents and form attachments with adults and peers external to the home environment. Connection to adults is a key factor to promoting and enhancing adolescent wellbeing and resilience. Connection provides secure attachment, support networks, and psychosocial relationships that facilitate and foster the development of effective coping responses, opportunities to seek feedback for problem solving, and model emotion regulation. Further connectedness has been linked to enhanced academic performance over time.

Within the framework, connection can be enhanced through increased adult support, inclusion in peer groups, commitment to education, and positive school environments (both physical and cultural). The concept of Relationships and Connectedness within the Wellbeing Framework links to the concept of Collaboration within the Pedagogical Framework and highlights the importance of relationships to both learning and wellbeing.

Creating Safe Conditions for Rigorous Learning

The creation of safe physical, social, and emotional conditions for learning is an important aspect of all classrooms and learning environments. By ensuring individuals feel their emotional and physical safety is protected, they are more likely to participate in learning, acquire knowledge, and achieve their full potential. Thus, the concept of safe conditions of rigorous learning is underpinned by principles of wellbeing that consider the creation of safe environments as paramount to student growth and development. Whilst the classroom is generally the target to create safe conditions for rigorous learning, it is important to broaden this perspective to ensure all aspects of the school environment foster supportive yet challenging conditions.

Identity

To create an environment that fully supports the physical and emotional safety of the individual it is important to acknowledge, respect, and celebrate diversity. As such, exploring, acknowledging, and supporting individual identity is the cornerstone of a safe and inclusive school environment. Identity encapsulates the concept of recognising and growing individual strengths, connecting to values, promoting values-driven behaviour, and supporting values-based lifestyles, thereby strengthening self-esteem, creating a sense of self, and equipping individuals to achieve their personal best. Whilst connection to personal identity is a key factor to individual wellbeing, as a culture it is important to recognise, accept, and value individual differences and support the identity of both the self and others.

Social and Emotional Learning

Social and Emotional Learning provides students with the knowledge, skills, strategies, and understanding that promotes wellbeing, enhances positive emotion, improves social relationships, and increases self-awareness. By supporting social and emotional learning, individuals are better equipped to recognise and understand emotional experiences, focus and pay attention, regulate emotion, and improve decision making. Developing social skills is also likely to have positive influences at both the individual and organisational level by fostering a school culture of harmony, respect, and connectedness.

Whole School Approach

The wellbeing framework considers the whole school approach as key to the successful implementation of a wellbeing strategy. The whole school approach emphasises the importance and responsibility each member of the school community plays in supporting and promoting wellbeing. It also challenges the notion that wellbeing is separate to teaching and learning and instead considers wellbeing and pedagogy to be interconnected. Thus, the whole school approach can be considered a cultural shift in mindset and thinking that is driven by each individual to create a collective change in the perception and practice of wellbeing at GIHS.

Data and Evidence-Based Practice

GIHS is a data-rich school that places importance on measurement to assess and determine areas of success and identify areas for improvement. Similarly, the pedagogical practices utilised within GIHS are evidence-based with demonstrated links to academic achievement and success. Like pedagogy, wellbeing places significant importance on data to identify needs within the school, areas of strength, and areas for further development. It is important that wellbeing strategies, initiatives, and interventions are selected, constructed, and reviewed based on information obtained through data (both quantitative and qualitative) and reliable and valid measures. Further, adhering to evidence-based models of wellbeing and psychology (including Cognitive Behaviour Therapy) that are supported by the literature and research is key to ensuring intervention and practice is effective, efficacious, and yields positive outcomes.

Summary

The wellbeing framework highlights the key aspects to the promotion of wellbeing at GIHS. The framework provides a conceptual understanding of how wellbeing permeates teaching and pedagogy whilst emphasising areas to target as part of the implementation process. A key take-home message is the interpretation of

wellbeing as a mindset: that is, wellbeing is at the centre of the GIHS community's thoughts, practices, and intentions in everyday life and not just a set of one-off interventions or programs. The concept of a wellbeing mindset is even more crucial when consideration is given to the fact that young people spend much of their first 17 years in a school environment. These early years are key to shaping and exploring emerging identities and thus the school environment is not only the focal point for academic development but also social and emotional growth. When one considers that a school may be the only stable and enduring aspect of an individual's life, the role of the school has an even greater impact.

Alongside the development of a wellbeing culture, it is important to provide clear direction and instruction to assist individuals to develop knowledge, skills, and understanding to promote wellbeing throughout the school. Specifically, utilising existing structures (i.e. LEAP^{PB}, Health and PE, Science) to discuss and teach skills to promote wellbeing is a key factor in the implementation process. Furthermore, teaching wellbeing skills through LEAP^{PB} and other curriculum subjects will allow all students access to support and to better connect with home group and classroom teachers.

Whilst targeted intervention will be a key factor in realising the vision; promotion of everyday interactions and connections will be at the heart of a sustainable long-term commitment to enhancing and improving overall wellbeing. Hence, promoting ownership and responsibility for wellbeing at a whole-school level will provide the foundation for future wellbeing initiatives and developments.