Extrait du School forging new paths

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Australian Scolarships Group

The State of Student Social and Emotional Health

- English - For an inclusive and motivating school -

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School forging new paths

Excerpts and findings from the ASG Student Social and Emotional Health Report for media, parents, educators and the community.

ASG Student Social and Emotional Health Report

The Australian Scholarships Group (ASG) has commissioned and funded the ASG Student Social and Emotional Health Report as part of its ongoing contribution to supporting children's education. The Report makes a valuable contribution to the expansion of collective knowledge on the topic of student social and emotional health.

International researcher Professor Michael E Bernard, from the Faculty of Education, University of Melbourne, co-authored the report in conjunction with Andrew Stephanou and Daniel Urbach from the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER).

The Report's name reflects ASG's holistic approach to supporting children's education and the range of programs it has initiated within the community to achieve this aim.

Within this information and the body of the ASG Student Social and Emotional Health Report, the authors use the term "Social and Emotional Well-being" as a synonym for the term "Social and Emotional Health".

The ASG Student Social and Emotional Health Report unveils groundbreaking findings into the social and emotional well-being of more than 10,000 Australian students from Prep through to Year 12, as perceived by both students and their teachers.

The findings show that social and emotional well-being of young people is a product of internal factors, such as resilience, learning capabilities, and social skills and values, and the external influences of school, home and the community.

Thanks to this research, the social and emotional health of students can not only be described, but also the factors that contribute to strong social and emotional health can be identified.

The ASG Student Social and Emotional Health Report describes the methodology, key findings, recommendations and actions that parents, schools, and the community can undertake to help improve student social and emotional health.

The complete ASG Student Social and Emotional Health Report and a range of additional information is available from the Australian Scholarships Group website at: www.asg.com.au/socialemotional or can be sent to you on request, please phone ASG's Corporate Communications on 03 9276 7775.

Importance of student social and emotional health

Student social and emotional health is an important area of growing focus within the community, government and educational sectors. Social and emotional well-being is establishing itself as a permanent fixture rather than a transitory blip on the radar screen of education.

At federal, state and school levels, student well-being policies are being formulated and funding is being provided to promote positive emotional and social outcomes for all students. Schools are increasingly being held responsible for putting in place plans, programs and practices to promote positive student social and emotional health and to prevent problems of poor mental health.

Children and young people with a positive state of social and emotional health are more likely to successfully meet the physical, intellectual and social changes required through childhood and adolescence.

Ongoing support of the social and emotional health of young people is vitally important, especially in the secondary years of schooling when the focus tends to be on academic achievement and where the influence of adults wanes and peer group influence grows.

A series of recommendations is outlined in the ASG Student Social and Emotional Health Report that addresses policies, programs and practices for improving the social and emotional health of all students.

Defining student social and emotional health

The definition of student social and emotional health used in the ASG Student Social and Emotional Health Report is based on current research that indicates there are two distinct dimensions of student social and emotional well-being; one a positive one, the other, a negative one.

Students who have positive social and emotional well-being are likely to display the following social, emotional, behavioural and learning indicators.

Presence of Positive Indicators of Social and Emotional Well-being:

The young person generally appears to ...

- have positive self-esteem (likes him/herself)
- volunteer to make his/her community a better place
- like being in school
- get along with classmates including those who are different
- get along with teachers
- be interested in helping others participate in a wide range of activities
- relate positively to family
- feel like he/she belongs in school
- make responsible choices to stay out of trouble
- feel safe and free from physical harm

Absence of Negative Indicators of Social and Emotional Well-being:

The young person generally does not appear to...

- engage in unhealthy behaviour (alcohol, drugs)
- have significant periods of time when he/she feels down
- act impulsively, be lonely or a loner
- under-achieve in one or more areas of schoolwork
- be very stressed
- act dishonestly (lie, cheat or steal)
- worry too much about what others think of him/her
- lose his/her temper
- get into trouble a lot
- physically bully or verbally taunt other students

Factors that Contribute to Student Social and Emotional Well-being

As indicated in the Report, student social and emotional well-being is influenced by their environment as well as their internal social emotional characteristics.

The Report indicates the following "Environmental" factors that exert a positive influence on student social and emotional well-being:

- Positive adult-child relationships
- Communication of high and realistic expectations for achievement and behaviour
- Opportunities for students to be given responsibilities and to be involved in decision-making
- Peers engaged in pro-social behaviour and doing their best in school
- Provision of places/activities that accommodate students' interests
- Teaching of positive attitudes, values and social and emotional competencies
- Multiple opportunities to be successful.

The Social and Emotional factors that strongly influence their well-being include:

- resilience - rational attitudes, coping skills
- positive social orientation - social skills and values
- positive work orientation - learning capabilities including work confidence, persistence, organisation, cooperation

Children and young people with a positive state of social and emotional well-being are more likely to successfully meet the physical, intellectual and social changes required through childhood and adolescence. As such, it is important for information to be made available to schools (and educational policy makers) on the extent of positive social and emotional well-being of groups of students. Such information will enable resources and programs to be allocated in areas of greatest need.

Until recently, there have been few if any measures of the social and emotional well-being of young people. The ACER Social and Emotional Well-Being Surveys developed by Professor Michael Bernard were used to provide data

on the social and emotional health of young people as contained in the Report.

What Have We Learned About Student Social and Emotional Well-being?

A continuum of social and emotional well-being emerges from this study .Six levels of student social and emotional well-being have been identified.

- Level 6: Highest level
- Level 5: Very high level
- Level 4: High level
- Level 3: Low level
- Level 2: Very low level
- Level 1: Lowest (poor mental health)

Percentages of Students in Sample at Different Levels of Social and Emotional Well-being

	Student Survey	Teacher Survey
Level 6	3%	28%
Level 5	27%	20%
Level 4	27%	14%
Level 3	24%	15%
Level 2	16%	6%
Level 1	3%	17%

What have We Learned About Students with High Levels of Social and Emotional Well-being?

Students with high levels (high, very high, highest) of social and emotional well-being display across these levels increasingly fewer negative indicators of social and emotional well-being and increasingly more positive indicators.

They display increasing degrees of resilience, positive social orientation and positive work orientation. They also perceive increasing high levels of positive interactions with adults, peers and youth-oriented programs in their homes, schools and community.

What have We Learned About Students with Low Levels of social and emotional well-being?

Students with low levels (low, very low, lowest) of social and emotional well-being display across these levels increasingly greater numbers of negative indicators of social and emotional well-being and increasingly fewer positive

indicators. They display decreasing degrees of resilience, positive social orientation and positive work orientation.

They also perceive across the low levels decreasing positive interactions with adults, peers and youth-oriented programs in their homes, schools and community.

Important findings

Important Finding 1:

Large percentages of students experience different social and emotional difficulties.

- Four in ten students say they worry too much.
- Three in ten students say they are very nervous/stressed.
- Two in ten students say they have felt very hopeless and depressed for a week and have stopped regular activities.
- A third of all students say they lose their temper a lot and are sometimes quite mean to other people (bully).
- Two-thirds of students say they are not doing as well in their schoolwork as they could.
- Four in ten students say they have difficulty calming down (poor resilience).

Important Finding 2:

Social and emotional health decreases from primary to secondary school.

The percentage of students in the sample with higher levels of social and emotional well-being does not increase with age/years of schooling. Data indicate that in secondary schools, on average, the number of students who have higher levels of social and emotional well-being decreases with years of schooling, whereas the number in lower years increases with years of schooling.

Important Finding 3:

Six levels of student social and emotional well-being identified from highest to lowest.

Six different levels of student social and emotional well-being have been identified as a result of a Rasch analysis of the ACER surveys and labelled: Lowest, Very low, Low, High, Very high, Highest.

Important Finding 4:

Students with low levels of social and emotional well-being found to have multiple challenges.

Students with high levels of social and emotional well-being have many inner and external assets.

Students with lower levels of social and emotional well-being are likely to experience many negative emotions and behaviours (feeling down, stress, under-achievement, bullying), as well as few positive emotions and behaviours (getting along with teachers, volunteering).

They are likely to demonstrate few social and emotional capabilities (low resilience, learning capabilities and social skills and values) as well as to perceive few positive actions of adults, peers and youth-oriented programs in their schools, homes and communities.

Students with higher levels of social and emotional well-being are likely to experience fewer negative emotions and behaviours and a greater number of positive emotions and behaviours.

They are likely to demonstrate many social and emotional capabilities as well as to perceive many positive actions of adults, peers and youth-oriented programs in their schools, homes and communities.

Important Finding 5:

Students at different levels of social and emotional well-being with the same childhood problem may require different types of interventions

Students at all levels of social and emotional well-being demonstrate different childhood problems (bullying, getting into trouble, feeling stressed, feeling down, under-achievement).

Therefore, important to identify the level of social and emotional well-being of a student with a childhood problem in order to know what to do.

Important Finding 6:

Teachers perceive student social and emotional well-being differently from the way students perceive themselves.

Consistent differences are found in the ways that students view their social and emotional characteristics in comparison with the ways in which teachers perceive them. Teachers may be unaware of the extent of the emotional difficulties of students (anxiety, stress, anger), rating students as possessing lower levels while students say they possess higher levels.

Important Finding 7:

Specific social-emotional characteristics contribute larger amounts to overall student social and emotional well-being.

Student Social and Emotional Well-being Survey:

- Doing my best in my schoolwork
- Describing how I feel
- Not having difficulty calming down quickly when upset
- Not worrying too much
- Volunteering to do things that make school and community better
- When angry, thinking before acting.
- When uptight, using physical exercise
- Not having difficulty controlling oneself when angry
- Not having difficulty controlling how worried they get
- Not believing that they shouldn't have to do schoolwork, that is boring
- At school, learning about feelings and how to cope with stress
- At school, spending time learning about making friends and solving problems
- At school, at least one teacher talks with them about things other than school
- Where they live, adults make opportunities for young people to do things to make their community a better place

Teacher Social and Emotional Well-being Survey:

- Does not lose concentration when faced with demanding tasks (younger children)
- Raises hand to answer a difficult question
- Puts in extra effort in subjects/classes he/she finds difficult
- When learning something new or difficult, shows independence by not immediately asking for teacher help (younger children)
- Checks work when completed to make sure it's correct
- Does not require an adult present to help him/her calm down (younger children)
- Does not become easily distressed when he/she makes mistakes or when others are negative
- Does not become easily frustrated and does not give up when attempting a new task he/she finds difficult
- Does not have a hard time settling down after participating in an exciting or physical activity (younger children)
- Does not require an adult present to help him/her to calm down (younger children)
- Expresses feelings easily using words
- Does not go through periods of time feeling bad about things happening at home or school (younger children)
- Volunteers to make school and home safer and better.
- Is achieving to potential (is not under-achieving).
- Goes out of his way to help someone who seems unhappy.

Important Finding 8:

Girls' overall social and emotional well-being higher than boys.

In both student and teacher surveys, girls display, in comparison with boys, significantly higher levels of social and emotional well-being. Significant gender differences were obtained on individual social and emotional characteristics (boys higher in getting into trouble a lot, not being able to stand following rules; girls higher in helping classmates

who seem unhappy, finding someone to talk with to calm down, organisation, having friends who try to do their best in schoolwork).

Important Finding 9:

Students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds shows delays in some of their social and emotional characteristics.

According to the results obtained from teacher perceptions of students' social and emotional characteristics, students from the highest 10% socio-economic level were rated significantly higher than students from the lowest 25% socio-economic level on a number of characteristics (raises hand to answer a difficult question, does not require an adult present to calm down, participates in many activities, achieves to potential in schoolwork).

Important Finding 10:

Social and emotional competence is a vital contributor to student social and emotional well-being.

The data clearly indicate that the social and emotional competence of students is a very important contributor to student social and emotional well-being with students at higher levels of social and emotional well-being displaying well-developed social and emotional capabilities in three domains:

- Resilience (coping skills and rational attitudes leading to self-management of emotions and behaviours),
- Positive social orientation (social skills and values leading to positive relationships and adaptive behaviour)
- Positive work orientation (learning capabilities supporting academic success including work confidence, persistence, organisation and cooperation)

Students at lower levels of social and emotional well-being demonstrate delays across the three domains.

Important Finding 11:

(i) Evidence of positive parenting found in children with higher levels of social and emotional well-being. For children with lower levels of social and emotional well-being, the parent report card is not as good, with children reporting that their parents less frequently engage in positive parenting practices.

- It is clear from the data that parenting is a crucial contributor to children's social and emotional well-being and that the parents of children with higher levels of social and emotional well-being are, according to their children, doing a good job.
- Children with higher levels of social and emotional well-being are likely to perceive that they have parents who accept who they are, are interested in their education, provide activities that accommodate their interests, and who make time for them and listen.
- Higher levels of children's social and emotional well-being also appear supported by parent conversations with their children concerning how to make friends and solve problems, the importance of confidence, persistence

and organisation to school success, as well as different social values such as respect, honesty, fairness, caring, responsibility and being a good citizen.

(ii) The actions of parents that contribute most to high levels of children's social and emotional well-being have been identified.

The parenting actions that contribute most to student social and emotional well-being include:

- Having a parent who talks about feelings and coping with stress
- Having a parent who spends time talking about how to make friends and solve problems
- Child having a "say" at home about the way things are done
- Providing interesting things to do at home with family
- Having a parent who asks questions about what I am learning

Important Finding 12:

(i) Teachers make a difference to student social and emotional well-being.

Teachers of students with higher levels of social and emotional well-being receive "good marks" from students.

Students with low levels of social and emotional well-being do not rate their teachers as highly.

(ii) The actions of teachers that contribute most to high levels of student social and emotional well-being have been identified.

The most important actions that teachers take that contribute to overall social and emotional well-being include:

- Teaching students about feelings and how to cope with stress
- Teaching students about making friends/solving problems
- Talking with students about things other than school
- Giving students a "say" in classroom rules and a voice in school affairs.

(iii) A majority of students at the lowest level of social and emotional well-being perceive relatively few positive actions of teachers.

They do perceive that teachers:

- Discuss "school rules" and what happens if they behave badly
- Say something positive to them when they have done their best
- Remind them about doing their best in schoolwork

They do not perceive that their teachers:

- Try hard to help and be nice to them
- Care about them
- Help them believe they can be successful

Important Finding 13:

The community contributes to student social and emotional well-being.

It is evident that the actions of adults, peers and the existence of youth-oriented programs in the community are an additional context for understanding student social and emotional well-being.

Students with low levels of social and emotional well-being do not perceive many connections with positive adults, peers and programs outside.

Teacher-student perceptions

Comparisons

A comparison of teacher perceptions with student self-perceptions of student social and emotional well-being illustrates similarities in specific indicators of student social and emotional well-being. It can be seen that students rate themselves higher in many negative emotional indicators (lose temper, worry, stress) than teachers rate students. Teachers rate the incidence of under-achievement higher in students than do students. Overall, students and teachers differ markedly from each other on about half of the different positive and negative indicators of student social and emotional well-being.

teachers say	students say
86% of students are happy	89% say they are happy
82% of students get along with most of their teachers	84% say they get along with most of their teachers
15% of students do not feel like they belong in school	23% say they do not feel like they belong in school
18% of students get into trouble a lot	22% say they get into trouble too much
13% of students have felt hopeless and down	20% say that during the past six months, they have felt so hopeless and down almost everyday for one week that they have stopped doing their usual activities
28% of students do not go out of their way to help someone who needs help	20% say they do not go out of their way to help someone who seems unhappy or needs help
20% of students have very few friends	18% say they are lonely
70% of students are achieving in school as best they can	85% say they are going well in school
33% of students do not volunteer	51% say they do not volunteer to do things to make their school and community a safer and better place to live
30% of students under-achieve in much of their schoolwork	48% say they could do a lot better in their schoolwork
23% of students worry too much about their schoolwork or what others think of them	42% say they worry too much about their schoolwork or what others think of them
16% of students bully or verbally taunt other students	37% say they are quite mean to other people
13% of students lose their temper a lot	35% say they lose their temper a lot
17% of students are not calm	31% say they feel very stressed
35% of students do not participate in many activities inside and outside of school	24% say they do not participate in many different activities inside and outside of school (clubs, sport, music, drama)

A similar set of comparisons concerning a selection of indicators of student social and emotional capabilities associated with Resilience, Positive Social Orientation and a Positive Work Orientation is presented below. It will be seen that the greatest agreement between students and teachers is in their perception of student capabilities and behaviour in the social domain. In terms of Resilience, teachers rate students higher in their ability to manage their emotions than do students. In the area of Positive Work Orientation, students and teachers are close to agreement in their perceptions of students' work disorganisation and pessimism when tackling difficult work.

However, teachers rate students considerably lower in work confidence, effort, and students wanting to do their best in their schoolwork, than students rate themselves. Overall, there are more agreements in perceptions of teachers and students concerning different social and emotional capabilities than differences.

teachers say	students say
87% of students respect others including classmates from different cultural backgrounds	94% say that they think it is important to treat others, including classmates from different cultural backgrounds, with respect
82% of students demonstrate good friendship-making skills (sharing, waiting turns, listening, conversation skills)	90% say they know how to make friends
85% of students like to meet new people	89% say they like to meet new people
79% of students are good at working cooperatively with others on projects	87% say that they are good at working cooperatively with others on projects
81% of students can be trusted to do what they say they are going to do	86% say they can be trusted to do what they say they are going to do
78% of students have good empathy skills (understand how other people feel)	84% say they are good at understanding how other people feel
81% of students try hard not to say or do things that hurt other people's feelings	81% try hard not to do or say things that hurt other people's feelings
85% of students care about the environment	80% say they care about the environment (parks, waterways, animals) and do want to make their community a better and safer place to live
80% of students like helping someone with a problem	79% say they like helping people with problems
71% of students do not make sure everyone has a fair chance to win, even if it means they lose	75% say they do not try to make sure that everyone has a fair chance to win, even if it means they lose
33% of students give up too easily	35% say when they do not understand something, or something is boring, they give up too easily
36% of students do not plan their time so that so that they get all their work done when it is due	33% say they do not think about planning their time so that they get all their work and jobs done on time
31% of students do not have good conflict resolution skills	32% say they have difficulty resolving conflicts without fighting

teachers say	students say
32% of students are disorganised	31% say they are very disorganised, forget material they need for class, have messy papers and do not write down homework clearly
25% of students cannot control how down they get when someone teases them, they are not included by classmates, or receive a poor grade	32% say they have difficulty controlling how depressed they get
28% of students put themselves down when they do not do well on a piece of work	31% say that when they do badly in their schoolwork, they think "I'm a failure"
30% of students do not believe they have what it takes to be successful in their most difficult classes/subjects	31% say that when they don't understand something, they think "I don't really have what it takes to be successful"
78% of students want to do their best in their schoolwork	93% say they want to do their best in their schoolwork
60% of students put in extra effort in subjects/classes they find difficult	82% say that they are persistent and try very hard to complete all their schoolwork
36% of students do not express their feelings easily	61% say that it is hard for them to describe how they feel deep down
19% of students do not calm down when very upset	48% say they have difficulty calming down quickly when they get very upset
25% of students act without thinking when angry	47% say that when they get angry, they act without thinking
24% of students cannot control how nervous they get in pressure situations	39% say they have a hard time controlling how worried they get
21% of students have difficulty controlling themselves when very angry	37% say they have difficulty controlling themselves when they get angry
17% of students think that everything they do at school should be fun and exciting and if it isn't they shouldn't have to do it	36% say that they shouldn't have to do schoolwork that is boring
17% of students condemn others for perceived slights and believe that retaliation is deserved	32% say that when someone who treats them badly is a bad person and that it is okay to hurt them back
41% of students do not show real confidence when doing difficult schoolwork	31% say they are not confident when doing difficult schoolwork
14% of students think that rules are stupid and they shouldn't have to obey them	27% say that they cannot stand having to behave well and follow rules

Considerations

For governments, parents, schools and communities

- Almost 50% of students perceive they are not learning about their feelings and how to manage stress, while 40% say they are not learning about how to make friends or how to solve interpersonal problems. However, for many schools, academic achievement still remains at the core of school mission statements with social and emotional learning and well-being relegatedto student welfare and pastoral care.

- High levels of student social and emotional well-being are associated with parents who are not only actively involved in their children's lives but who spend time discussing the skills they need to both understand and manage emotions, including coping with stress, how to make friends and manage conflicts. At federal, state and local levels there should be an increased investment in parents with a particular focus on strengthening school-home links, so that parents can have ongoing access to effective parenting practices.

- It is also clear that teachers are important contributors to student social and emotional well-being and there is now a collection of good teaching practices that support student well-being. Student social and emotional learning and well-being should become an integral part of initial teacher training and ongoing teacher professional learning and development programs.

- Intervention programs for individual students with low levels of social and emotional well-being should identify ways that they can be better connected to positive adults in the community, develop stronger connection with their family as well as strengthen their connection with teachers and programs at school. Increasingly, student support programs feature a team consisting of personnel responsible for student welfare, teachers, specialist staff, parents and, when necessary, members of community organisations and agencies.

- Schools with high percentages of students with lower levels of social and emotional well-being need to work in close partnership with community members, organisations and agencies to help strengthen the links between 'at risk' students and their families and support services, positive programs and adults outside of the home and school.

- Boys' achievement (and behavioural problems) can partly be explained by the lower levels of social and emotional well-being of boys relative to girls. To close the gender gap in achievement and provide full equity and access for boys, a broad-based approach is advocated that includes strengthening community, school and home practices that meet the unique learning style, sex-role identity and social-emotional needs of boys.

- While state governments are employing questionnaires that survey student attitudes, they generally do not comprehensively measure the internal and external social and emotional characteristics that comprise overall student social and emotional well-being. It is recommended that on an annual basis, data is collected on the various domains of student social and emotional well-being and the results are used to guide government as well as school planning and decision making.