State of Evidence
Wellbeing Interventions and Impact on Student Learning

Key messages from a systematic review summarising the impact of school-based wellbeing interventions on student academic and non-academic outcomes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Qualified articles (reported 78 studies) screened from 4,850 studies included in this Review</th>
<th>Extracted outcomes (125 Academic and 306 Wellbeing outcomes)</th>
<th>School-aged children (5-18 years old) including children with learning difficulties or disabilities</th>
<th>Majority of studies from US and UK with 26% from Australia (only 1) and elsewhere</th>
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**Wellbeing interventions make a difference to student outcomes**

Overall, students in the interventions were up to +4 months ahead in learning (0.31**) compared to students in control groups. Interventions had a moderate positive impact on student wellbeing (0.22**).

Programs that promote social-emotional skills positively impact literacy and numeracy with gains of +2 months (0.10*).

**Everything that schools do to support student wellbeing counts**

All interventions types examined in this review found positive impacts on academic and wellbeing outcomes but those that were most effective:
- foster school belonging and engagement
- provide mentoring
- build social-emotional skills

**To impact academic outcomes, longer programs needs to be sustained**

However, short duration programs (under 3 months) can impact wellbeing, when well implemented.

Programs delivered by teachers can be as effective, if not better than those delivered by expert professionals if teachers are trained and well-supported.

**Disadvantaged students benefit most from tailored support**

Programs designed to assist disadvantaged students were effective in reducing behavioural problems and internalising symptoms such as anxiety and depression.

**We need more robust evidence in Australia about program impact to identify features of effective implementation**

Over 200 programs available to schools but only one Australian study met the inclusion criteria in this review.

Over three-quarters of studies related to improving mental wellbeing, while only 18% related to physical wellbeing and 5% on preventing harm.

Over 300 different wellbeing outcomes were extracted from the 75 articles, reflecting how ‘undefined’ wellbeing is in educational research.

Even within the narrow criteria of experimental and quasi-experimental designs, the range of research parameters were vast, reflecting the lack of consistency in program evaluation in education.

**Effective wellbeing promotion is systemic and usually involves programs that are:**
- short: delivered within a Term – thus manageable and sustainable in a crowded curriculum
- universal – building awareness and capacity of the whole community, reduces stigma
- explicitly taught by the trained classroom teacher – building the teacher’s capacity first
- delivered in regular sessions – building the student’s capacity through practice and repetition
- delivered to groups of students – ranging from 11 students up to classroom size, and
- developmentally differentiated – recognising that wellbeing is influenced by stages in life, particularly during transition and adolescence.

† Note: This systematic review presents the best evidence of program impact, not necessarily the best program. Wellbeing programs have been selected for inclusion in this systematic review because they met selection criteria that minimises reporting bias and may not be a reflection of their quality. It is important to understand this difference when interpreting the results and outcomes of this systematic review. The full Report and Addendum is available [here](#).