

eSmart Guidance: Planning for student wellbeing

How schools can strengthen their students' wellbeing by becoming eSmart

Schools play a vital role in protecting and supporting their students' wellbeing. Schools undertake to provide positive, nurturing environments where students build confidence, social and emotional skills, resilience, healthy life habits, and strategies to deal with wellbeing challenges.

What is wellbeing?

The Australian Student Wellbeing Framework states:

'Wellbeing is a multi-faceted concept involving much more than just physical health. It's a combination of a person's emotional, mental and social health and it also reflects how they feel about themselves and their life in general.'

VicHealth's framing (from the Foresight Project on Mental Capital and Wellbeing) states:

'[Mental wellbeing is a] dynamic state in which the individual is able to develop to their potential, work productively and creatively, build strong and positive relationships with others and contribute to the community.'

Factors that make up wellbeing include:

- Being involved in supportive relationships
- Feeling that your life has meaning and purpose
- Feeling connected to others in your community
- Feeling a sense of control of your emotions
- Engaging in activities that are important to you.

Threats to students' wellbeing

Protecting and strengthening students' wellbeing is a particular priority for schools in 2021.

Various factors can threaten students' wellbeing. Examples include bullying and cyber bullying; we know that students who experience these are at elevated risk of concerns including:

- Loneliness or relationship problems
- Diminished school engagement or attainment
- Disordered sleeping or eating
- Mental or physical health concerns

- Use of alcohol or other drugs
- Self-harm and/or suicidal ideation.

The challenges associated with remote learning during the COVID-19 pandemic also posed threats to students' wellbeing, despite the hard work done by schools to keep their students connected and supported. Many schools are now working with students whose wellbeing was affected by stress and anxiety, social isolation, exposure to unsafe behaviours online, loss of confidence in their own abilities, diminished school engagement / attainment, and increased exposure to disadvantage or violence in the home.

Australian Student Wellbeing Framework aligned with the eSmart Schools Framework

The eSmart Schools Framework is a system level intervention which helps schools to build supportive and connected online and offline social environments – environments that promote prosocial behaviours and reduce risk factors for antisocial behaviours like bullying and cyber bullying, which can have serious impacts on students' wellbeing. The Framework sits across the entire school community, including teachers, students and parents.

This document highlights how the actions of the eSmart Schools Framework support the five elements of the Australian Student Wellbeing Framework and their principles and practices.

The eSmart Schools Framework and the Australian Student Wellbeing Framework were designed independently of each other, but they can be seen as aligning and functioning to support each other, so that the work done under one framework can support endeavours within the other. This is in the spirit of working 'smarter, not harder'.

The vision of the Australian Student Wellbeing Framework is that Australian schools are learning communities that promote student wellbeing, safety and positive relationships so that students can reach their full potential.

The Framework encourages committed leadership that builds a school culture where everyone belongs, and students actively participate in their learning, where families and communities collaborate, and the diverse needs of all are supported.

We believe that through their eSmart journey, schools strengthen their alignment with the Australian Student Wellbeing Framework and put the right conditions in place to prevent and address threats to student wellbeing both on- and offline.

eSmart supports schools to develop structures, approaches, knowledge and skills that help to strengthen their capacity to safeguard students' wellbeing. All of the eSmart Actions can be seen as helping to strengthen a school's position under the Australian Student Wellbeing Framework.

A review of eSmart Schools by Jeanette Pope, Director of Research at FYA (2015) found that strengths of the model included the development of more positive and respectful school cultures, a stronger sense of school safety among students, and greater inclusion of social and emotional learning, values, rights and responsibilities into the curriculum. This speaks directly to schools' role in safeguarding student wellbeing.

However, it is important to recognise that working through eSmart does not necessarily mean that a school has fulfilled all its needs under the Australian Student Wellbeing Framework. To meet the vision of the Australian Student Wellbeing Framework fully, schools may well need to take additional steps in relation to students' wellbeing. These steps may not be specified as eSmart actions, although they will likely align with the spirit and structures of eSmart.

Australian Student Wellbeing Framework Element 1:

Leadership – Visible leadership to inspire positive school communities

Principals and school leaders play an active role in building a positive learning environment where the whole school community feels included, connected, safe and respected.

Effective practices include:

- Develop the school's vision and values, building on existing strengths, to enhance student learning and sustain the safety and wellbeing of the whole school community.
- Actively seek and incorporate students' perspectives about safety and wellbeing in order to promote positive learning outcomes.
- Communicate the priorities for student learning, safety and wellbeing and encourage collaborative partnerships to enact the school's vision and values.
- Collaboratively develop whole school policies, plans and structures for protecting the safety and promoting the wellbeing of staff, students, and families.
- Regularly monitor and review school capacity to address the safety and wellbeing of the whole school community in order to identify areas of strength and those requiring improvement.

Schools can work towards the Australian Wellbeing Framework Element 1 by pursuing the following actions from Domains 1, 2, 3 and 5 of the eSmart Schools framework:

- 1.1 – The eSmart Committee meets regularly to review the steps required to implement eSmart.

- 1.2 – The school has established guidelines that provide a consistent approach to the supervision of student behaviour on school grounds, including when students are online.
- 1.3 – The school has established and regularly uses a system to manage ethical collection and analysis of data (incident data) to prepare for and respond to anti-social behaviour.
- 1.4 – The school has established and is using a confidential reporting system for students to safely disclose incidents – including bullying, cyber bullying and other forms of anti-social behaviour.
- 1.5 – The school has established an induction process for students and staff.
- 2.1 – The school has incorporated eSmart into its existing policies and has communicated it to all members of the school community.
- 2.2 – A whole-school approach to behaviour management, explicitly outlining expected student behaviours and guiding staff to appropriately respond to offline and online anti-social behaviours.
- 2.3 – The school has a set of Acceptable Use Agreements in place to cover relevant digital technology, age ranges and social media.
- 3.1 – A strong set of prosocial values embedded across all aspects of the school and evidenced in relationships between staff, students and families.
- 5.4 – Students regularly develop and deliver information about bullying, cyber bullying and cyber safety for a range of purposes and audiences, including families, peers and community.
- 5.5 – Students develop and share resources and are involved in teaching of the positive use of digital technologies for a range of purposes and audiences, including families, peers and community.

Australian Student Wellbeing Framework Element 2:

Inclusion – inclusive and connected school culture

All members of the school community are active participants in building a welcoming school culture that values diversity, and fosters positive, respectful relationships.

Effective practices include:

- Recognise and value the role and contribution of staff, students and families in building and sustaining school connectedness.
- Respect the diversity of the school community and implement proactive strategies in order to build a cohesive and culturally safe school.
- Teach, model and promote values and behaviour in order to create and maintain supportive and safe learning environments.
- Foster and maintain positive, caring and respectful student–peer, student–teacher, teacher–parent and teacher–teacher relationships.

- Engage in professional learning to build capacity for enhancing the social, emotional and learning outcomes of all students and in order to promote staff wellbeing.

Schools can work towards the Australian Wellbeing Framework Element 2 by pursuing the following actions from Domains 3, 4, 5 and 6 of eSmart Schools framework:

- 3.1 – A strong set of prosocial values embedded across all aspects of the school and evidenced in relationships between staff, students and families.
- 3.2 – A set of protocols that specifically show what positive, respectful relationships look like offline and online.
- 3.3 – The school provides ways for students to formally and informally interact in cross-age groups in order to foster supportive relationships across the school community.
- 4.1 – Teachers have a consistent whole-school approach to fostering positive student peer relationships through their teaching practice.
- 4.2 – Staff role-model smart, safe and responsible use of digital technologies, in accordance with explicitly stated expectations about teacher behaviour.
- 4.4 – The school implements a professional learning program for teachers that increases their capacity to integrate the smart use of digital technology into their practice and respond to incidents.
- 5.1 – The school is embedding a plan that supports explicit teaching about rights and responsibilities, social and emotional learning and awareness of the dynamics of bullying and cyber bullying.
- 5.2 – The school includes the teaching of digital intelligence in the curriculum (including cyber safety) and maintains related teacher knowledge and skills through professional learning.
- 6.1 – The school actively involves parents/carers in a wide range of activities and events within the school community.

Australian Student Wellbeing Framework Element 3:

Student voice – authentic student participation

Students are active participants in their own learning and wellbeing, feel connected and use their social and emotional skills to be respectful, resilient and safe.

Effective practices include:

- Provide opportunities for authentic student decision-making over matters that affect them.
- Create and maintain inclusive and interactive learning environments to encourage active student participation to foster a sense of connectedness.
- Actively engage students through the use of evidence-informed, strengths-based approaches to enhance their own learning and wellbeing.
- Explicitly teach social and emotional skills using evidence-informed practices related to personal safety, resilience, help-seeking and protective behaviours across the curriculum.
- Collaborate with students to develop strategies to enhance wellbeing, promote safety and counter violence, bullying and abuse in all online and physical spaces.

Schools can work towards the Australian Wellbeing Framework Element 3 by pursuing the following actions from Domains 3 and 5 of the **eSmart Schools framework**:

- 3.3 – The school provides ways for students to formally and informally interact in cross-age groups in order to foster supportive relationships across the school community.
- 5.1 – The school is embedding a plan that supports explicit teaching about rights and responsibilities, social and emotional learning and awareness of the dynamics of bullying and cyber bullying.
- 5.2 – The school includes the teaching of digital intelligence in the curriculum (including cyber safety) and maintains related teacher knowledge and skills through professional learning.
- 5.4 – Students regularly develop and deliver information about bullying, cyber bullying and cyber safety for a range of purposes and audiences, including families, peers and community.
- 5.5 – Students develop and share resources and are involved in teaching of the positive use of digital technologies for a range of purposes and audiences, including families, peers and community.

Australian Student Wellbeing Framework Element 4:

Partnerships – effective family and community partnerships

Families and communities collaborate as partners with the school to support student learning, safety and wellbeing.

Effective practices include:

- Proactively build collaborative relationships with families and communities to create a shared understanding of how to support student learning, safety and wellbeing.
- Develop strategies to sustain culturally respectful partnerships with families and communities that are welcoming and inclusive.
- Build partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and community organisations to ensure a culturally safe environment and a two-way reciprocal exchange of knowledge on wellbeing issues.
- Build links with community organisations, services and agencies to assist schools in the early identification of need and to collaboratively plan targeted support for all students and families, including those from vulnerable groups.
- Regularly monitor and review school capacity to respond to specific instances of student and family need to protect their safety and wellbeing within the context of the school's urban, regional, rural or remote location.

Schools can work towards the Australian Wellbeing Framework Element 4 by pursuing the following actions from Domains 1, 3, 5 and 6 of the **eSmart Schools framework**:

- 1.3 – The school has established and regularly uses a system to manage ethical collection and analysis of data (incident data) in order to prepare for and respond to anti-social behaviour.
- 3.1 – A strong set of prosocial values embedded across all aspects of the school and evidenced in relationships between staff, students and families.
- 5.4 – Students regularly develop and deliver information about bullying, cyber bullying and cyber safety for a range of purposes and audiences, including families, peers and community.
- 5.5 – Students develop and share resources and are involved in teaching of the positive use of digital technologies for a range of purposes and audiences, including families, peers and community.
- 6.1 – The school actively involves parents/carers in a wide range of activities and events within the school community.
- 6.2 – The school uses a variety of ways to regularly communicate with parents/carers about both offline and online behavioural expectations.
- 6.3 – The school has links with local community organisations to promote a consistent message about appropriate offline and online behaviours.

Australian Student Wellbeing Framework Element 5:

Support - Wellbeing and support for positive behaviour

School staff, students and families share and cultivate an understanding of wellbeing and support for positive behaviour and how this supports effective teaching and learning.

Effective practices include:

- Actively seek the involvement of school staff, students and families in the promotion and recognition of positive behaviour.
- Embed wellbeing and positive behaviour support strategies that are evidence-informed, promote resilience and align with the needs of the school community.
- Implement a whole school systemic approach to wellbeing and positive behaviour with tiers of support to meet the diverse needs of staff, students and families.
- Engage in professional learning to support the consistent implementation of the school's plan for wellbeing and support for positive behaviour.
- Critically analyse and evaluate school data to inform decision-making in order to effectively respond to the changing needs of students and families.

Schools can work towards the Australian Wellbeing Framework Element 5 by pursuing the following actions from Domains 1,2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 of the **eSmart Schools framework**:

- 1.3 – The school has established and regularly uses a system to manage ethical collection and analysis of data in order to prepare for and respond to anti-social behaviour.
- 2.1 – The school has incorporated eSmart into its existing policies and has communicated it to all members of the school community.
- 2.2 – A whole school approach to behaviour management, explicitly outlining expected student behaviours and guiding staff to appropriately respond to offline and online anti-social behaviours.
- 2.3 – The school has a set of Acceptable Use Agreements in place to cover relevant digital technology, age ranges and social media.
- 3.2 – A set of protocols that specifically show what positive, respectful relationships would look like offline and online.
- 3.3 – The school provides ways for students to formally and informally interact in cross-age groups in order to foster supportive relationships across the school community.
- 4.2 – Staff role-model smart, safe and responsible use of digital technologies, in accordance with explicitly stated expectations about teacher behaviour.

- 4.3 – Staff adhere to an agreed set of approaches for positive classroom management and are skilled at responding appropriately to both online and offline antisocial behaviour.
- 4.4 – The school is implementing a professional learning program for teachers that increases their capacity to integrate the smart use of digital technology into their practice and respond to incidents.
- 5.3 – The school is embedding smart, safe and responsible use of digital technology into our curriculum. Professional learning is provided as required.
- 5.5 – Students develop and share resources and are involved in teaching of the positive use of digital technologies for a range of purposes and audiences, including families, peers and community.
- 6.1 – The school actively involves parents/carers in a wide range of activities and events within the school community.
- 6.2 – The school uses a variety of ways to regularly communicate with parents/carers about both offline and online behavioural expectations.

Through measuring their steps towards becoming eSmart, schools can demonstrate in concrete ways how they are aligning with national standards for student wellbeing.

Further reading

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