



Thriving:

The framework for
assessing student well-being





The aim of virtually all school systems is to enable children to have fulfilling and successful careers and become contributing members of their local and global communities. Educators are called upon not only to develop children’s academic skills, but also to strengthen their social and emotional skills and provide opportunities for them to cultivate their unique talents and aptitudes. ‘Well-being’ is an overarching term used to capture the attitudes, feelings, and dispositions associated with achieving fulfilment and success. In the school setting, the term usually incorporates a long list of concepts – essentially everything that is *not* an academic outcome – as well as, many factors that influence a student’s well-being.

At The Learning Bar, we wanted a measure of well-being that would be specific enough for informing school policy and practice, and to connect the indicators of well-being to actions that school staff, families, and community leaders can take to improve student well-being.

Our definition of well-being:

Well-being is comprised of evaluations students make about the quality of their life. The evaluations are derived from being healthy, feeling safe, having pleasurable experiences, being accepted by others, being engaged in experiences that are personally meaningful, and having a sense of purpose in life.

Measures of well-being

Children are experiencing a dramatic change in their way of life during the Covid-19 pandemic. With many schools still closed and stay-at-home requirements in place, students are reporting higher levels of anxiety and feelings of isolation than ever before. Parents are already expressing concerns about their children’s well-being and teachers and school administrators are expecting an increase in the number of youth who will require counselling and other health-related services. Well-being has a profound effect on a child’s health and their ability to learn. Identifying and monitoring the right well-being indicators of students at school is more important than ever. These key indicators are captured within the measures of The Learning Bar’s well-being framework, shown below:





Measure descriptions

Life satisfaction

The question used in the life satisfaction measure is also used in the World Values Survey and in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA). This allows a school to compare its results with other schools in a district, province or state, and with national results for students in at least 80 other countries.

General health

This question was developed by The Learning Bar for the PISA for Development study and will be used by several countries in the PISA 2021 study. As with the measure of Life Satisfaction, results for a school can be compared with those of other schools and districts and with national results for several countries.

Orientation to well-being

Students' orientation to well-being distinguishes between whether students are mainly devoting their time and effort towards activities that are pleasurable or activities that strengthen their sense of purpose in life.

Goal-oriented

Goal orientation refers to a student's ability to set a relevant, attainable goal and exert deliberate and persistent effort to achieving it.

Self-regulation

Self-regulation is about having "a conscious control of thoughts, behaviors and emotions" (McClelland and Tominey, 2016, p. 4). It goes hand-in-hand with executive function, which refers to a set of processes that enable students and adults to adapt to the demands of their context in a flexible way, especially when there are competing distractions.

Cultural awareness

Cultural awareness refers to students' understanding of the differences between themselves and those from other cultures in their shared beliefs, values, attitudes, and behaviours, and how these differences affect how they learn individually and in groups (Davis & Wright, 2009; Earley & Ang, 2003).

Self-esteem

Self-esteem refers to a student's "belief and confidence in their abilities and worth" (Marsh, 1990).

Feel safe at school

Feeling safe at school pertains to students' feeling of safety at school as well as going to and from school.

Sense of belonging at school

Students' sense of belonging at school pertains to their feelings of being accepted and valued by their peers and by others at school.

Positive relationships

Positive relationships refer to students' friendships with their peers that help them form positive social connections and meaningful participation within the school.

Anxiety

Anxiety is characterised by "excessive, uncontrollable and often irrational worry about events or activities" (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). Students suffering anxiety tend to have feelings of fear, worry more than other students, and are overly concerned about what other students or teachers think about them.

Depression

Depression is a mental state characterised by feelings of sadness, discouragement and inadequacy that persist for long periods, from two or three weeks to several years. Students suffering depression can lose interest in school activities, feel tired almost every day, or are unable to concentrate. They may also have recurrent thoughts of suicide (American Psychiatric Association, 2013).



Giving all children the opportunity to thrive

The development of young peoples' overall well-being depends on a society's ability to provide the right kinds of resources to support healthy child development. Dr. Willms, founder of The Learning Bar, has consolidated 40 years of research to provide educators and policy makers with a comprehensive model that identifies the factors proven to have the biggest impact on children's development called Educational Prosperity.

Educational Prosperity follows a life-course approach broken down into six stages of development, from conception through to graduation. It identifies 'Prosperity Outcomes'; essential skills a child needs to develop in order to make the transition from one stage to the next, and identifies a set of family, institutional, and community factors, called 'Foundations for Success'. These foundations directly impact each stage of development and are critical to achieve the prosperity outcomes. Well-being is core to this model with different elements represented throughout the six stages of development. Within the Tell Them From Me (TTFM) Secondary Survey 'Health and Well-being' is a key Prosperity Outcome.

Conclusion

The TTFM Well-Being Survey allows you to deeply understand all aspects of your students' well-being and the role that your school environment plays in shaping it. A successful future starts with measuring students' well-being and we share your commitment to ensuring that all students develop the skills, knowledge and attitudes that will lead to fulfilling lives.