



How do we measure connectness? (continued)

Safety: The extent to which students reported feeling safe in the school

Teacher support: The most common theme that emerged from research is whether students feel close to or valued by teachers and school staff.

What is MBC doing to increase connectness?

- Friday morning pastoral care sessions designed to teach students SEWB skills and provide opportunities for students to mix with one another
- The use of Heads of year to follow up pastoral care issues
- The appointment of a School Psychologist and a Chaplain
- The 11/8 peer mentoring program
- Greater involvement of the Student Council in organizing events at the College
- After-school tutoring
- Welcoming exchange students from Japan and Europe
- Opportunities for students to represent the College interstate and overseas eg Canberra trip, Melbourne volleyball tour, Europe trip, Bali mission trip.
- The creation of Sports and Arts captains to assist these areas within the College.
- Staff vs. students lunchtime activities such as table tennis and other sporting events
- Camps in Year 9, 11 and for the Student Council
- Social events for each year group once a term
- Year 12 mentors

How parents foster connections to school?

1. Model respectful, positive, cooperative behavior in your everyday interactions
2. Participate in school events
3. Show interest. Be involved in your child's academic and social activities
4. Maintain regular contact with your child's teachers
4. Monitor your child's homework completion and work with him or her on homework assignments that involve family participation
6. Be present when things go wrong
7. Know your child's friends and their parents
8. Ask school leaders what you can do to support them
9. Volunteer at school
10. Join the Parents and Friends Association.



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Resilience Robbers

Michael Gross is the well-respected creator of 'Parenting Ideas'. According to Michael, these are 7 common parenting mistakes that reduce children's resilience:

Mistake 1:

Fight all their battles for them

There is nothing wrong with going into bat when kids struggle or meet with difficulty inside or outside school but make sure this is the last option, not the first.

Resilience notion 1:

Give kids the opportunity to develop their own resourcefulness.

Mistake 2:

Make their problem, your problem

Sometimes parents can take too much responsibility for issues that are really up to the children to work out or decide.

Resilience notion 2:

Make their problem, their problem

Social and Emotional Well-being



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What is Social and Emotional Well-being?

The NSW Commission for Children and Young People defined emotional well-being as:

"... children and young people's ability to relate to each other and their social environment, adapt to change and cope with adversity."

Why is SEWB important?

Studies have shown that young people with positive SEWB will be less likely to use alcohol and illegal drugs, less likely to engage in violent or deviant behaviour, have a later sexual debut and be less likely to experience emotional distress and suicidal thoughts or attempts. There is also a strong relationship between positive SEWB and high academic achievement.

Indicators of healthy SEWB

The young person generally appears to:

- Be happy
- Have positive self-esteem
- Volunteer to make his/her community a better place
- Like being in school
- Get along with teachers
- Get along with classmates including those who are different
- Be interested in helping others
- Feel like he or she belongs

- Make responsible choices to stay out of trouble
- Feel safe and free from harm
- Be positive about the future
- Participate in a wide range of activities
- Relate positively with family

Indicators of deficit SEWB

The young person generally appears to:

- Have his/her feelings easily hurt
- Engage in unhealthy behaviour
- 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 school work
- 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



Mistake 3:

Give kids too much voice

In this era of giving children a voice it is easy to go overboard and allow them too much of a say in what happens to them. Kids often take the easy option to avoid hard or unpleasant situations.

Resilience notion 3:

Make decisions for kids and expect them to adjust and cope

Mistake 4:

Put unrealistic or relentless pressure on kids to perform

Expectations about success and achievement are important. Too low and kids will meet them. Too high and kids can give up. Too much and kids will experience anxiety.

Resilience notion 4:

Keep expectations in line with children's abilities and don't put excessive pressure on them.

Mistake 5:

Let kids give in too easily

Resilient learners link success with effort. They don't give up because they don't like the teacher or when confronted with multi-step or more complex activities.

Resilience notion 5:

Encourage kids to complete what they have started even if the results aren't perfect.



What does MBC do to enhance protective factors and minimise risk factors?

Two interrelated ideas are important to discuss:

- 1) Having an Social and Emotional Learning program in place
- 2) Increasing connectness at the school

Protective factors that enhance SEWB

Research suggests that there are several positive practices, capabilities or assets have been identified in the community, school and home that contribute to positive outcomes. These include:

- Positive relationships with peers and teachers
- Close, confiding relationship with at least one adult
- Feelings of positive regard
- Sense of security
- Communication of high and realistic expectations for achievement and behaviour
- Opportunities and skills for achievement
- Opportunities and skills for communication
- Recognition of contribution and achievements
- Opportunities for students to be given responsibilities and to be involved in decision-making
- Provision of places and activities that accommodate students' interests
- Teaching of positive attitudes, values and social and emotional competencies

Risk Factors that contribute to problems with SEWB

- Absenteeism
- Alienation
- Bullying and harassment
- Disengagement
- Isolation
- Low academic achievement
- Violence and abuse
- Poor diet
- Use of drugs

Social and Emotional Learning (SEL)

What is SEL?

The process through which children and adults develop the skills, attitudes and values necessary to understand and manage life tasks such as cognitive learning, forming relationships and adapting to the demands of growing up in today's complex society.

What does an SEL program teach?

SEL programs provide systematic classroom instruction that enhances children's capacity to recognise and manage their emotions, understand and appreciate the perspective of others, establish and attain goals, identify and solve problems and use a variety of interpersonal skills.

What SEL program does MBC use?

We are using an Australian program called, "You Can Do It" education. This program runs from primary school right through to the senior school. The program uses a Cognitive Behaviour Therapy approach that centres around the idea that our thinking can influence our emotions which can then influence our behaviour. Students are taught how to change their thinking (Habits of the Mind) and in so doing, learn to keep calm, work through challenges and to have a more positive approach to problem-solving. The program also teaches 5 keys to success:

Confidence, Persistence, Resilience, Getting Along and Organisation.

These keys help to strengthen students' Social and Emotional Well-being and give them the skills

they need to succeed at school and in life beyond school.

Connectness

What is connectness?

School connectness refers to the belief by students that adults in the school care about their learning and about them as individuals.

Why is connectness important?

Researchers say that by high school, as many as 40-60% of students are disengaged from school. This disengagement worries educators and researchers who say that a sense of connection to school is vital to childrens' and adolescents' academic engagement. They also say that engagement to school can help protect youth from a variety of health threatening behaviours. According to researchers Adena M.Klum and James P. Connell:

"Researchers have found student engagement a robust predictor of student achievement and behaviour in school regardless of socioeconomic status. Students engaged in school are more likely to earn higher grades and test scores and have lower drop-out rates."

How do we measure connectness?



Academic engagement: The extent to which students are motivated to learn and do well in school

Belonging: This includes being proud of one's school, feeling respected, being able to talk to teachers and feeling like school staff are interested in the students

Discipline/fairness: The extent to which students perceive the rules of the school to be enforced fairly

Liking for school: whether students looked forward to going to school

Extra-curricular activities : Participation in out-of-school activities

Student voice: This includes opportunities for students to participate in decision making

Peer relations: This includes the presence of friends and students' feelings of loneliness
(Continued on back)

Safety: The extent to which students reported feeling safe in the school

Mistake 6:

Neglect to develop independence

Don't wait until they are teenagers to develop the skills of independent living. Start early and promote a broad skill set so that they can look after themselves.

Resilience notion 6:

Don't routinely do for kids what they can do for themselves

Mistake 7:

Rescue kids from challenging or stretch situations

There are many times kids are put in situations that are outside their comfort zones for a time. For instance, giving a talk, singing at the school concert or going on a school camp may be challenges for some kids. They are all situations that kids usually cope with so show your confidence in them and skill them up rather than opt for avoidance

Resilience notion 7:

Overcoming challenges enables kids to grow and improve

Sometimes the manageable hardships that children experience such as a friend moving away, not being invited to a party or completing a difficult school project are fabulous learning opportunities. They help kids to stretch and grow. Dealing with them effectively also teaches kids they are capable of coping when they meet some of life's curve balls.

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YCDI Education - An example of the Habits of Mind in action:

