

Affiliated Schools Research Program Final Report

Implementing personalised wellbeing learning at Maribyrnong Primary: A wellbeing pedagogy professional learning and action-research initiative

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Part 1. Achievements statement

Implementing personalised wellbeing learning at Maribyrnong Primary: A wellbeing pedagogy professional learning and action research initiative

A/Prof. Thomas Nielsen (UC), Dr. Jennifer Ma (UC), Anna Thorpe (MBYP)

1.1. Mental health and wellbeing context in schools



1 in 7 young people (4-17 years)
experience a mental health
condition



Over **half** of Australian
teachers may be
suffering from anxiety



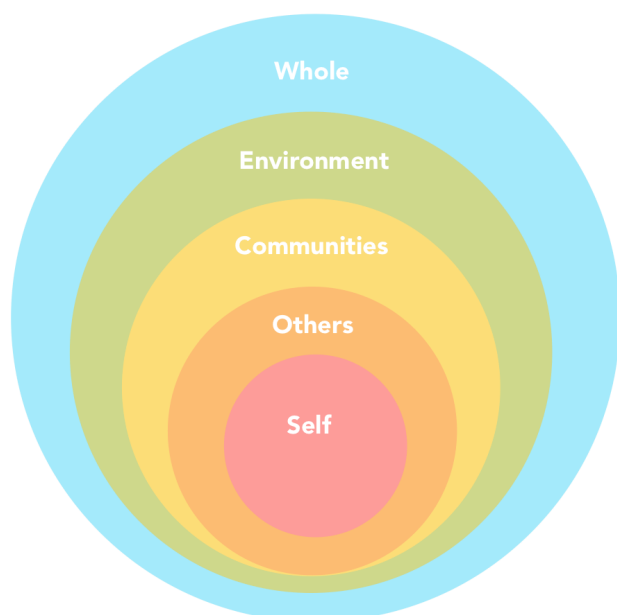
Sources of stress

Worldwide, school performance is a major source
of stress, worry, and anxiety in **young people**.

For **teachers**, common sources include dealing
with students' behavioural challenges, meeting the
needs of disadvantaged students, increasing time
pressures, workloads and accountability, and
limited social and structural support.

See: Banks and Smyth (2015); Connor (2003); Lawrence et al. (2015); Stapleton (2019)

1.2. Project deliverable: Professional learning on wellbeing education



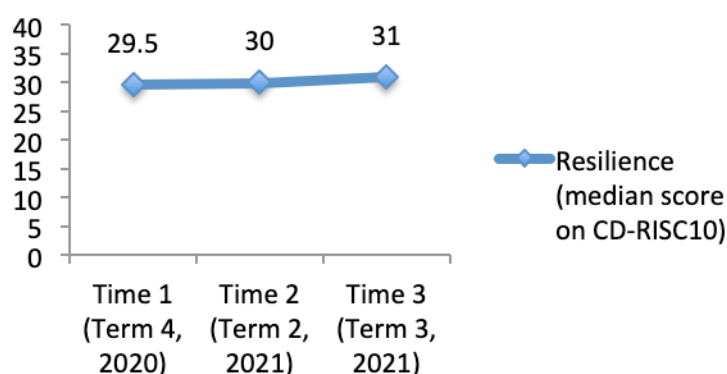
Staff were introduced to **Curriculum of Giving® (CG)** wellbeing frameworks developed by A/Prof. Nielsen and Dr. Ma (<http://www.thomaswnielsen.net>).

Mapping of personal and professional practice across each of the '**Five Domains of Giving**' (pictured left) and '**SELF CARE AIMS™**' wellbeing domains (Sleep, Exercise, Love & Laughter, Food, Creativity, Achievement, Residence, Environment, Autonomy, Income, Meditation & Mindfulness, Study) was undertaken to identify areas of wellbeing improvement at the school for students and staff.

Specific attention was paid to how CG principles could help provide a ‘bigger picture’, streamlining **synthesis** of the national curriculum, policy requirements and existing frameworks, such as values and Positive Behaviour for Learning (PBL), used at the school. Professional learning was incorporated, via co-construction, into Maribyrnong Primary’s ‘Curriculum of Social Concern’, which overlays the CG principles of promoting social concern and giving for eudaimonic wellbeing and resilience into the school’s K-6 inquiry units (Term 3, 2021 for K pictured below).

	Big Understanding	Key Inquiry Prompt Questions	Inquiry Learning Areas	Social Concern Question	School Value	Writing Experiences
K	There are special places within our community	What is a community? What are living things? How do we care for our environment?	HASS The Arts	How do we care for places that are special to us? How can we care for our school community?	Responsibility Respect Inclusion	- Labelled diagrams - Maps - Shared writing - Oral language - Quality picture books - Beginning writing - Build vocabulary

1.3. Project outputs: Staff wellbeing and engagement



Staff **resilience** was identified as an important wellbeing target. Staff (N=32-35) reported consistently low levels of **resilience** compared to the general population. Staff **resilience** was highly related to their **flourishing wellbeing** (up to 72.2% overlap in variance).

In order of frequency, key thematic **wellbeing challenges** reported by staff (N=48) included:



Staff challenges	Student challenges
1. Lack of support (n=23)	1. Lack of support (n=22)
2. Workload (n=17)	2. Energy & stress (n=14)
3. Student needs & behaviour (large range, high needs; n=15)	3. Interpersonal issues (behavioural disorders; n=12)
4. Staff togetherness (n=6)	4. Home life (trauma; n=4)
5. COVID-19 (changing curriculum; n=5)	5. Space (lack of quiet spaces; n=4)
6. Parents (lack of engagement; n=2)	6. Remote learning (equity of resources; n=1)

1.4. Project achievements and impact

44%

of staff were initially unsure of or had a low **understanding of personalised and project-based learning** around health and wellbeing.

65-69%

of staff reported engaging with the professional learning content for their **personal wellbeing and professional practice** at follow-up.

Part 2. Executive Summary

2.1. Project context & aim

Evidence around the mental health and wellbeing challenges experienced by students and teachers is building in response to the COVID-19 global public health crisis. This project aimed to support the educational wellbeing needs, goals, and challenges (including COVID-19 related) experienced by the Maribyrnong school community through the co-construction, implementation, and evaluation of an evidence-based, personalised wellbeing framework.

2.2. Project approach

The project combined professional learning and action-research design to collaboratively tailor and pilot evidence-based wellbeing practice at Maribyrnong primary ($N=45$ staff, 520 students) over a 10-month period. Document analysis, professional learning sessions, online staff surveys conducted at set time points across the year, periodic classroom observations, and staff interviews were used to collect data around school and staff members' understanding and experiences of wellbeing challenges, personalised learning for wellbeing, and school and individual practice/s.

2.3. Project outputs

Aligning with the ACT Government's Future of Education strategy (ACT Education Directorate, 2018), this project aimed to:

- (1) Teach the evidence-base for guiding, enhancing or complimenting existing practice/initiatives (e.g., Positive Behaviour for Learning (PBL)) to staff, helping them connect wellbeing principles to professional practice to support teacher and student engagement and wellbeing across educational contexts. Reference was made to the Curriculum of Giving® wellbeing frameworks developed by A/Prof. Nielsen and Dr. Ma, of which professional learning resources can be found here: <http://www.thomaswnielsen.net/downloadablecontentlinks/>;
- (2) Guide the co-construction/implementation of the wellbeing evidence-base to develop a personalised wellbeing learning framework and pedagogy for the school, with a strong focus on staff and student empowerment and sustainability (e.g., based on personal lived experience, utilising individual and school strengths/resources);
- (3) Quantitatively and qualitatively evaluate: staff pedagogy and wellbeing, with direct translation of research findings into practice to benefit the school community;
- (4) Communicate research to stakeholders to provide meaningful school-specific recommendations for continued personalised wellbeing development into the future.

2.4. Impact of the project

At the start of the project, over a third of staff (34.4%) reported being unaware of existing personalised and project-based learning practices around health and wellbeing at Maribyrnong Primary, and 44% were unsure of or had a low understanding of personalised and project-based learning for health and wellbeing. After delivery of the professional learning, over two-thirds of staff (65%-69) reported engaging 'sometimes', 'always', and 'very often' in the Curriculum of Giving (CG) professional learning content for their personal wellbeing and professional practice, respectively. For example, one staff member stated that the content helped in *"casting a lens over current curriculum practices and how we can enhance the giving aspect and create more authenticity."* Maribyrnong Primary is currently in the process of refining their incorporation of the CG professional learning into

their 'Curriculum of Social Concern' and K-6 inquiry unit planning documents, with an aim to promote students' sense agency, belonging, autonomy, and value to their local, national and global communities.

2.5. Key findings

Identifying the educational wellbeing needs, goals, and challenges experienced by the Maribyrnong school community was an important step for facilitating co-construction tailored to context. Staff resilience (i.e., ability to adapt and bounce back in response to challenges) was identified as an important wellbeing target for Maribyrnong Primary. Staff ($N=32-35$) reported consistently low levels of resilience, measured by the CD-RISC 10 (Campbell-Sills & Stein, 2007; Connor & Davidson, 2003), with mean scores falling in the lowest and second lowest quartiles compared to the general population. Staff wellbeing, measured by the Flourishing Scale (FS; Diener et al., 2010) and World Health Organisation Well-Being Index (WHO-5; World Health Organization, 1998), was strongly correlated with resilience. This finding suggests that supporting staff resilience is likely to also impact staff levels of eudaimonic or meaningful wellbeing and recent mood, and vice versa.

Staff ($N=48$) identified six key, overlapping wellbeing challenges for staff and students to address at the school. In order of frequency, staff challenges included: lack of support (*"staff feeling helpless when they need assistance"*), workload (*"stress from reporting, tired"*), student needs and behaviour (*"pressure of having a large range of students with very high needs"*), staff togetherness (*"difficult to work as a whole unit"*), COVID-19 (*"stress of the changing curriculum due to COVID"*), and parents (*"lack of engagement with parents and carers of challenging students"*). The challenges that staff believed students experienced included: lack of support (*"lot of student[s] with high needs"*), energy and stress (*"feelings of tiredness and stress"*), interpersonal issues (*"growing number of students suffering with trauma, mental illness, etc."*), home life (*"external trauma/situations"*), space (*"lack of sufficient quiet spaces in open plan classrooms"*), and remote learning (*"equity of resources was difficult for some students"*).

Staff also identified seven barriers and facilitators to co-constructing and implementing a personalised wellbeing curriculum of pedagogy at the school. In order of frequency, this included: time (*"outside of what we do already!"*), lack of behavioural consequences and consistent implementation of positive behaviour for learning (PBL), funding/external support (*"resources and money"*), staff engagement (*"staff feeling undervalued, under pressure and unsure what to do"*), common language (*"policies and procedures need to be more clear cut and also commonly known and referred to"*), teacher education (*"knowledge about differentiated learning tasks to meet student need"*), and student engagement (*"= positive student wellbeing, positive staff wellbeing"*).

Overall, it was clear that staff were in favour of implementing more preventative wellbeing measures at the school, with the caveat that these need to be effectively resourced with staff time appropriately taken into account. It was also clear that, through professional learning, overarching wellbeing frameworks, such as the Curriculum of Giving® (CG), can provide a 'bigger picture', streamlining synthesis and synergy of existing curriculum requirements and frameworks, but that concretising of pedagogy tailored to the school's needs to be led and implemented by staff in situ to enact meaningful change.

Part 3. Detailed Report

3.1. Aims and context

This action-research project aimed to support the educational wellbeing needs, goals, and challenges (including COVID-19 related) experienced by the Maribyrnong Primary School community through the co-construction and pilot implementation and evaluation of an evidence-based, personalised wellbeing framework. The project aimed to integrate personalised wellbeing learning into school policy and existing practice (e.g., Positive Behaviour for Learning (PBL)) to build staff and student wellbeing, student engagement, and school relationships.

Key research questions included:

- (1) What aspects of teacher and student wellbeing are targeted when teachers and students are provided opportunities for personalised and project-based teaching and learning around health and wellbeing?
- (2) In what ways does personalised wellbeing pedagogy promote relationships at Maribyrnong Primary School and complement existing school practices, such as Positive Behaviour for Learning (PBL)?

The professional learning delivered to Maribyrnong Primary school staff was based on A/Prof. Nielsen and Dr. Ma's consolidation of over 10 years of wellbeing education research, where they have worked to unify the evidence-base across the various research traditions to distil what drives deep, transformational wellbeing change (Nielsen, 2011, 2014; Nielsen & Ma, 2016; Nielsen & Ma, 2018). A/Prof. Nielsen and Dr. Ma base their approach on inter-disciplinary research that demonstrates that altruistic motives and high levels of self-efficacy are key protective factors for teacher wellbeing (Beltman et al., 2011), and that teachers' overall wellbeing and pedagogy tends to improve through teaching wellbeing principles and practices to their students (Owen, 2016). Because teachers have been found to hold the key to improving student wellbeing (Hattie, 2003, 2009), this project focused on building a community of inquiry with teachers as action researchers.

Previous pilot studies (Nielsen & Ma, 2016; Nielsen & Ma, 2018) conducted by A/Prof. Nielsen and Dr. Ma found that teacher engagement and integration of social concern and giving-based wellbeing education research/principles enhanced existing curricula and promoted positive learning and wellbeing experiences for staff and students in outdoor education contexts.

3.2. Approach and methods

This project involved a combination of professional learning and mixed methods action-research conducted over a 10-month period. The project was encouraged as a school-wide initiative to promote the wellbeing of the Maribyrnong Primary School community, which comprises of over 520 students and 45 staff.

3.2.1. Phase 1

The first phase of the project involved developing a community of inquiry and shared vision (Term 4, 2020 to end of Term 1, 2021), where A/Prof. Nielsen and Dr. Ma delivered professional learning to all school staff. In these sessions, staff were provided with the wellbeing evidence-base for guiding, enhancing or complimenting existing practice/initiatives and were encouraged to connect wellbeing

principles to their current school and classroom contexts. Ideas and materials developed in these sessions formed part of the data collection and co-construction of the school's wellbeing framework and pedagogy for piloting. Specifically, principles and frameworks from the Curriculum of Giving® (CG), developed by A/Prof. Nielsen and Dr. Ma, were incorporated into Maribyrnong Primary's 'Curriculum of social concern' planning documents developed by teachers.

An online survey was administered via Qualtrics to participating staff prior to the first Professional Learning session to obtain demographic (i.e., age, gender, level of education, employment status, time in profession, marital status) and wellbeing information (via the Flourishing Scale (FS; Diener et al., 2010) to assess trait-based eudaimonic wellbeing, The World Health Organisation (Five) Well-Being Index (WHO-5; World Health Organization, 1998) to assess state-based subjective wellbeing, and the 10-item Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC 10; Campbell-Sills & Stein, 2007; Connor & Davidson, 2003) to assess resilience). The online survey included open-ended questions about staff members' understanding and experiences of school wellbeing challenges and personalised learning for wellbeing, as well as existing school and individual practice/s.

3.2.2. Phase 2

The second phase of the project involved the pilot implementation and evaluation of Maribyrnong Primary's personalised learning for wellbeing framework and pedagogy (Terms 2 to 3, 2021). At time of report publication, Maribyrnong Primary are currently in the process of refining their incorporation of the CG professional learning into their 'Curriculum of Social Concern' and K-6 inquiry unit planning documents and, as such, comparisons of newly implemented and existing practice would have to be part of further, collaborative initiatives.

A second and third (pre and post) online survey was administered via Qualtrics to participating staff in Terms 2 and 3, 2021, to track their wellbeing over time and to explore levels of engagement with the professional learning content. Qualitative data was also collected via document analysis (i.e., school policy and curriculum planning documents), periodic school/classroom observations (x4 in Years K, 1, 6 and the Learning Support Unit), and staff interviews (x4) to assess staff personalised teaching and learning for wellbeing.

Quantitative data was analysed using the statistical package SPSS (IBM Corp, 2012). Correlations were computed to assess the strength of relationships between different measures of staff wellbeing measured across the three time-points. Change in teacher wellbeing scores was analysed using paired samples *t*-tests. To explore whether demographic factors and personal and professional engagement with the professional learning contributed to differences in staff wellbeing scores, χ^2 tests and binary logistic regression models were conducted. Qualitative data (open-ended questions, document analysis, school/classroom observations, and staff interviews) were analysed in NVivo (QSR International, 1999) using thematic methods, applying the COREQ checklist (Tong et al., 2007).

3.3. Key findings and outcomes

- **Maribyrnong Primary staff demographics:** Out of the staff that participated in the first online survey ($N=48$), one quarter were aged 30-39 and over two-thirds (64.6%) were aged 40-49. The majority of the sample was female (87.5%), had a bachelor's degree (62.5%), and were employed full-time (77.1%). Under half (45.9%) had been teaching for 11 or more

years, and half had been teaching specifically at Maribyrnong Primary for less than 4 years. This demographic information provides insight into the generalisability of the study findings to other school samples and highlights where staff communications and professional learning opportunities may be better be targeted at the school.

- Staff resilience is a key wellbeing target for Maribyrnong Primary:** Staff who completed all three online staff surveys ($N=32-35$) reported consistently low levels of resilience measured by the CD-RISC 10 (Campbell-Sills & Stein, 2007; Connor & Davidson, 2003), despite reporting relatively high levels of wellbeing, measured by the Flourishing Scale (FS; Diener et al., 2010) and the World Health Organisation (Five) Well-Being Index (WHO-5; World Health Organization, 1998). Staff members' mean resilience scores were in the lowest and second lowest quartiles compared to the general population. This finding suggests that while the profession as a whole and day-to-day educative efforts may provide staff with a sense of meaning, purpose, and feelings of contribution and engagement in their daily activities and to others' wellbeing, which is extremely commendable, current structures and practice are not yet effectively facilitating optimal staff resilience. Further efforts to explicitly target staff resilience at the school-level is needed to support staff to feel that they are able to adapt and bounce back in response to the many challenges that form a significant part of their profession, acknowledging that this would require resources and time to meaningfully shift and may, in itself, represent change or challenge that could temporarily compound existing pressures experienced by schools. Some examples that came out of the SELF CARE AIMS™ mapping showed that concrete starting points could include more opportunities for staff to be able to: practice mindfulness alongside promoting this in their students, purchase healthy food options from the school canteen, and feel supported by the school's physical environment in terms of cleanliness.
- Targeting staff wellbeing will likely have an impact on staff resilience, but does not provide the whole picture:** Significant positive correlations ($p < .01$) were found between resilience and the two measures of wellbeing used in this project. The variance explained (R^2) in resilience by flourishing wellbeing ranged from 18.92% to 72.2%, and 16% to 58.9% by the WHO-5 wellbeing, across each of the three time points (Term 4, 2020; Term 1 and 2, 2021). No significant demographic differences were found for staff engagement with the professional learning content or staff resilience and wellbeing. This finding suggests that whilst supporting staff resilience is likely to also impact staff levels of eudaimonic wellbeing (flourishing) and recent mood, and vice versa, the extent to which these constructs overlap can change over time depending on external factors not accounted for in the present project. Additional research is needed to quantitatively and qualitatively identify the structural, individual, and student-based factors that may directly and indirectly contribute to staff resilience at the school, some of which may be better facilitated through increasing staff awareness and use of existing or emerging supports and opportunities at the school.
- Six key wellbeing challenges – to staff and students – identified by staff suggest opportunities for a streamlined, dual-focused wellbeing approach:** In order of frequency, reported staff challenges included: lack of support, workload, student needs and behaviour (large range of high needs), staff togetherness, COVID-19 (changing curriculum), and parents

(lack of engagement). Student challenges included: lack of support, energy and stress, interpersonal issues (e.g., behavioural disorders), home life (trauma), space (lack of quiet spaces), and remote learning (equity of resources).

Staff wanted to see personalised and project-based learning around health and wellbeing implemented to address these areas of need in the school and highlighted the importance of wellbeing strategies to assist students early on (e.g., trauma informed practices, basic welfare, nutrition, mental health support, wider Socio-Emotional Learning (SEL) programs) and practical workshops for staff wellbeing techniques (e.g., greater emotional tool box around self-care and social-care) that can also apply to student wellbeing and not add to existing staff workload. Staff emphasised the need to have a consistent approach supported by resources, such as having more Learning Support Assistants, access to counsellors, and sensory and calm down spaces.

- **Seven key barriers and facilitators identified by staff to consider when co-constructing and implementing a personalised wellbeing curriculum of pedagogy:** In order of frequency, staff reported that the lack of: time (*"outside of what we do already!"*), behavioural consequences and consistent implementation of Positive Behaviour for Learning (PBL), funding/external support (*"resources and money"*), staff engagement (*"staff feeling undervalued, under pressure and unsure what to do"*), common language (*"policies and procedures need to be more clear cut and also commonly known and referred to"*), teacher education (*"knowledge about differentiated learning tasks to meet student need"*), and student engagement (*"= positive student wellbeing, positive staff wellbeing"*) were key barriers to overcome. Structural barriers, such as the lack of staff time, engagement, and common language may be directly addressed through more efficient, whole-school approaches to planning, training, and implementation. For example, a collective approach that aims to engage educators in 'smarter', more streamlined ways of working would facilitate more time and space for staff creativity and autonomy, as opposed to prescriptive 'silo-ed' approaches which can be viewed by staff as adding unnecessarily to their existing workloads in already resource limited environments.

3.4. Impact

At the start of the project, 44% of participating staff ($N=48$) were unsure of or had a low understanding of personalised and project-based learning for health and wellbeing, and over a third (34.4%) reported being unaware of existing personalised and project-based learning practices around health and wellbeing at Maribyrnong Primary. These findings indicate that further work at both the system and school levels could improve educators' knowledge of personalised wellbeing learning for the promotion of different student outcomes. In this regard, educators would be supported by becoming more aware of personalised learning practices being used, more broadly, in the sector to ensure that individual practice continuously reflects updated evidence in the field. It is also important for educators to be aware of the personalised learning practices currently being used at their school in order to promote shared practice and a 'common language', which was highlighted as a key implementation goal by staff in this project.

After the delivery of the professional learning, over two-thirds of staff (65%-69) reported engaging 'sometimes', 'always', and 'very often' in the Curriculum of Giving (CG) professional learning content for their personal wellbeing and professional practice, respectively. Maribyrnong Primary is currently in the process of refining their incorporation of the CG professional learning into their 'Curriculum of Social Concern' and K-6 inquiry unit planning documents for implementation. The school aims to observe how the incorporation of a 'social concern' lens in these K-6 inquiry units can provide authentic learning experiences and support student wellbeing. Maribyrnong Primary leadership are interested in then exploring how the promotion of student wellbeing may then influence staff wellbeing and resilience.

3.5. Engagement, dissemination and sustainability

At the start of this project, over two-thirds of staff (65.5%) reported being aware of existing personalised and project-based learning practices around health and wellbeing at the school. Staff noted this to include: Positive Behaviour for Learning (PBL), general health and wellbeing (e.g., student engagement policy, classroom language), and Social-Emotional learning (SEL) practices. Engagement was noted to be at varying degrees for each of these, though, more highly reported to range from moderate to good for PBL.

However, staff also reported several challenges or areas of improvement that will need to be addressed to promote their sustainability in current practice. This included around: access and engagement (*"a more consistent approach by all staff..."*; *"the information and support are available but ultimately the staff member or family have to access it. There is still stigma about 'not coping'."*), PBL (*"what could we be doing better for supporting students who do not sit comfortable within this positive framework"*; *"... we need to develop restorative practices around negative or undesirable behaviours..."*; *"not enough time for the teachers to enter data. Therefore, it is not accurate."*), student behavioural problems (*"rather than taking the child for an hour and bringing them back with no consequences, procedures need to be put into place to protect the wellbeing of staff in schools..."*; *"I think all schools need a school psychologist full time."*), and SEL (*"I feel that people try and engage but it does get moved to the backburner at times when more important and immediate needs arise. Targeted intervention is time consuming as the needs are so varied"*).

One of the aims of this project was to help staff connect wellbeing principles to existing professional practice to support staff and student engagement and wellbeing, specifically via professional learning on the Curriculum of Giving® and through identifying Maribyrnong Primary's educational wellbeing needs, goals, and challenges. With the co-construction of Maribyrnong Primary's 'Curriculum of Social Concern' based on this professional learning and the project findings, it is hoped that the school will continue to refine and implement their whole-school planning and pedagogy to promote student and staff wellbeing through giving for meaningful learning and living in synergistic ways with the national curriculum and existing policy requirements and frameworks. Post-project, A/Prof. Nielsen and Dr. Ma will continue to support Maribyrnong Primary in an informal advisory role and will provide follow-up professional learning via consultancy upon the school's request. A/Prof. Nielsen and Dr. Ma will also actively seek additional research funding opportunities (i.e., UC-ACT ED Affiliated Schools Research Program, Ian Potter Foundation) to support the partnership with Maribyrnong Primary, with an aim to build the scope of the current project to include additional population groups and school sites.

Findings from this project will be disseminated via presentations to the school and its networks, the University community, at local/international conferences, and in academic publications targeted to Q1 outlets (e.g., Educational Research, Elementary School Journal, Australian Journal of Education, Australian Educational Researcher, Journal of School Health, Curriculum Inquiry) by late 2022.

3.6. Wider implications

Project findings around the staff wellbeing challenges at Maribyrnong Primary school corroborate those identified in the literature regarding teachers' common sources of stress from over a decade ago (Beltman et al., 2011; Kyriacou, 2001). Interestingly, in this project, the wellbeing challenges identified for students by staff were also largely in alignment with the staff wellbeing challenges reported, highlighting opportunities for dual-focused wellbeing approaches that concurrently promote student and staff wellbeing at the school. This presents an interesting paradigm shift, as consideration of educators and their wellbeing in schools is often viewed as having much less of a priority than that of their students, even though research indicates that these tend to go hand-in-hand (McCallum & Price, 2010).

In the first phase of this project, and upon identifying the multitude of challenges to educators' wellbeing (many of which are outside of the direct control of schools), the Maribyrnong Primary Executive became in favour of focusing educators' time and energy on identifying new ways of engaging and improving their students' wellbeing, with the hope that improved student wellbeing would lead to improved teacher wellbeing. However, staff were found to have chronically low levels of resilience, suggesting that a one-directional approach may not be sufficient to support staff in feeling that they are able to adapt and bounce back in response to challenges encountered at the school and in the profession, at least in the limited project period in which this was assessed (10-months). The fact that over 50% of Australian teachers are estimated to be suffering from anxiety (Stapleton, 2019) may be related (although it is noted that anxiety was not measured in this study) and, as such, the relationship between low teacher resilience, anxiety, and other mental health and professional challenges requires further investigation in order to better understand pathways for risk and protection in schools.

Recent longitudinal data from the UK suggests that teachers' anxiety spiked sharply in response to the COVID-19 school lockdowns and announcements of re-opening, and that head teachers were more likely to leave the profession as a result (Allen et al., 2020). In this project, COVID-19 was found to impact staff perceptions of the school being able to function as a community hub due to the cancellation of many face-to-face events, such as assemblies and celebrations, which were reported as creating an increase in parent, staff, and student stress levels. Yet, COVID-19 also presented some positives for staff in regards to facilitating new information and communications technology (ICT) and online collaboration skills with students and staff. Staff also reported how the COVID-19 experience helped them to look at education and its delivery through a different lens—particularly in regards to better understanding how change can impact people in different ways and in providing an opportunity for families to better understand the complexities of teaching and the needs of their children first-hand. With continued uncertainty around what education looks like for students in COVID-19 contexts, as well as of how teachers can continue to deliver high quality education within pandemic and other restrictions, it is clear that the wellbeing of school communities remains a significant challenge fraught with complexity, but also possibly one offering new perspectives and

ways of working that may help schools re-imagine what 'business as usual' looks like to better adapt to current and future crises.

3.7 Conclusion and reflections

From this project it is clear that: (1) further support and strategies which focus on and promote staff wellbeing continue to be a desirable outcome for the school; (2) the tension of demands from external agencies and from within the school continue to be challenges to implementation; and (3) staff understanding of the benefits of wellbeing pedagogy was increased, but implementation requires additional streamlining and time to develop in order to have a measurable impact on the staff themselves.

A key takeaway for the researchers of this project was that the Curriculum of Giving® (CG) professional learning can provide a 'bigger picture', streamlining synthesis and synergy of existing curriculum requirements and frameworks, but concretising of pedagogy tailored to the school's needs to be led and implemented by staff in situ. The researchers experienced many of the wellbeing challenges identified in the literature and by the staff themselves (i.e., lack of time and resources to engage), which is understandable and to be fully expected given the multi-layered demands placed on educators (including COVID-19 related) and the short-term duration of this project. As a consequence, whilst the CG principles of promoting social concern and giving for eudaimonic wellbeing and resilience was incorporated, via co-construction, into Maribyrnong Primary's 'Curriculum of Social Concern' and K-6 inquiry units at its broadest level, concretising the wellbeing education evidence into existing pedagogy and practice would be an aspiration that the researchers would like to help with and follow up on at a later stage to further address and deliver upon the project's original aims and research questions. Ultimately, finding ways to collaboratively navigate the many tensions between the responsibilities and agendas present across multiple school levels (Directorate, leadership, staff, students) is highly needed to ensure that all involved recognise the value of and are able to engage whole-heartedly in such projects, and so that schools continue to have the resources and capacity to take ownership of any co-created action-research outputs long after projects officially end.

Appendices

Appendix A. Financial report - Redacted

Appendix B. References

- ACT Education Directorate. (2018). *The Future of Education: An ACT Education Strategy for the Next Ten Years*. ACT Government: Education.
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