

Wellington Girls' College - a review of student wellbeing

Wellington Girls' College has a culture of asking questions

- Principal

The school uses multiple ways to seek feedback about what the school is doing well and what can be done better. These include, for example: principal-parent forums; parent, whanau and fono group meetings; Year 12 leadership forums; Awhina student meetings; Student Council meetings; Year 13 leadership groups; staff learning groups, head-of-department and staff meetings and a range of surveys with students, staff, parents and whanau and the community. The information gathered is analysed for trends and shared across the school, often providing the trigger for new developments.

Below is an example of an evaluation that has strategic implications. The school is in the process of developing a long-term sustainable response to an important cluster of issues.

<p>This review came about as a response to a variety of wellbeing issues emerging through different channels. The pastoral care team noticed an increase in number of girls presenting with anxiety issues (including panic attacks) and eating disorders. These serious mental health issues were particularly pronounced at Year 11. Wellbeing issues had been a topic for discussion at a regularly scheduled student focus group. Leaders were also aware of concerns from anecdotal information and approaches from parents.</p>	<p>Noticing</p> <p>What is going on here?</p> <p>For which students?</p>
<p>The board of trustees initiated a review of how the school's systems worked for parents of at-risk students, consulting the parents of specific students as well as deans and the pastoral care team.</p> <p>The school also decided to use its professional learning group model to establish a learning group to look specifically at wellbeing more broadly across the school. This group did an initial stock take of the current situation by mapping out the support services that were available to students. The group explored various pre-designed surveys that were available, but eventually decided to develop their own, using ERO's publication Wellbeing for Success. A range of targeted surveys were sent to students, parents and whānau, staff and external agencies. The surveys were anonymous so that respondents, especially students, could be honest without worrying about being identified.</p>	<p>Investigating</p> <p>What do we know about what is currently happening?</p> <p>What do we need to find out?</p> <p>From whom?</p> <p>What does research tell us? What does effective practice look like?</p>
<p>Individual teachers in the learning group also conducted their own inquiry into wellbeing, with each teacher taking responsibility for a different aspect. Individually, they looked into relevant research literature and investigated other schools to find out what they were doing to support and promote student</p>	<p>Collaborative sense making</p> <p>What is our data telling us?</p> <p>What is working well and what isn't?</p>

<p>wellbeing. Participants used a Google site to share their insights and useful research readings.</p> <p>The learning group split into three sub-groups, with one sub-group taking responsibility for analysing the survey responses from students, one for community responses, and one for the responses from staff. The survey results showed that some aspects of current practice were seen as positive. However, the overall findings indicated that there was a lack of cohesion in the provision of support for wellbeing. Some students were not well supported.</p>	<p>How can we share our findings with others?</p>
<p>After reflecting on and discussing the results of the survey, and what they had discovered through their investigations, the learning group recommended that the school develop a more cohesive and strategic approach to supporting wellbeing. Given the complexity and importance of the issue, the school decided to adopt a deliberate and comprehensive approach to development. This started with the development of the Wellington Girls' College (WGC) Wellness Action Plan.</p> <p>Although the review and development work was still in progress when ERO visited in 2014, the school had already established a new Pastoral Care Coordinator role. The purpose of this role is to develop wellbeing resources appropriated for each year level in the school to use during form time. Consultation with various ethnic and cultural groups in the school was carried out in order to develop a responsive and inclusive school-wide definition of wellbeing and a vision statement for how the school will support student wellbeing. The school is developing a more holistic view of the outcomes that are important for its students.</p> <p>One of its strategic goals for 2015 was to implement the WGC Wellness Action Plan.</p> <p>Some of the key actions to date include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informing parents of the issues and the planned actions in the Principal's speech at Prizegiving 2014. • Reducing the number of credits in every NCEA Level 1 and 2 course. • Having Year 13 students choose the Mental Health Foundation as their school charity for the year. • Implementing a Wellness Day in March for all Years 11 to 13 students and staff, which incorporated speakers and workshops on a range of wellbeing issues, and subsequently running wellness pop-up sessions. • Holding the inaugural 'Real Teal Challenge' in April – a team event for the whole school 	<p>Prioritising to take action</p> <p>What do we need to do and why?</p> <p>What change can we make that will give us an immediate response to the issues we have identified?</p> <p>How can we involve other groups in the school in this review?</p> <p>How big is the change we want to make?</p>

<p>encouraging challenge, cooperation, team work and fun along the Wellington waterfront.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A whole staff meeting on building resilience and promoting wellbeing. • Employing a contractor to support staff with professional and personal growth. • The principal and DP involved with the establishment of the Wellington Wellbeing Network, which meets once a term to share expertise and work with professionals across a range of areas. • Review of the Junior health programme to respond to feedback from 2014. • 2015 learning group focusing on wellbeing applied to a classroom setting. • Launch of a wellbeing resource on the school's intranet. • The 2016-20 Strategic Plan has been developed this year and is explicitly targeting wellness as one of the goals. <p>As staff, students and parents have brought into focus and talk more about wellness they are now often asked about how a particular decision aligns with the wellness approach.</p>	
<p>Next steps</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing consultation to help identify trends and developments. • Planning already underway for 2016 Wellness Day. • Increasingly investigating ways to get additional funds to improve equity. 	<p>Monitoring and evaluating impact</p> <p>What difference are we making?</p> <p>What more do we need to do?</p>

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