

Foster school connectedness using the WISE model

Summary

This practice uses the WISE model to help you incorporate the four major components of school connectedness into your everyday actions at school, both in the classroom and throughout the school.

The four major components of the WISE model are:

W = warmth and empathy

Use empathy, respect, and understanding to help establish warm relationships with students.

I = inclusion

Find a role and sense of belonging for students.

S = strength focus

Notice, identify, and encourage all students' strengths.

E = equity and fairness

Support students' differences, remove discrimination, and practice a strong sense of fairness.

Australian Professional Standards for Teachers related to this practice

- 1.1 – physical, social and intellectual development and characteristics of students
- 4.1 – support student participation
- 4.3 – manage challenging behaviour

For further information, see [Australian Professional Standards for Teachers AITSL page](#)

Preparing to Teach

Why is it important?

As a teacher, you play a vital role in promoting school connectedness in your classroom and throughout the school.

Greater school connectedness means that diverse students are more likely to:

- enjoy academic success
- demonstrate prosocial behaviour through an increased sense of direction and purpose



- experience increased self-esteem
- feel optimistic
- have increased peer and teacher support
- have higher academic motivation and achievement
- intervene to prevent acts of peer-to-peer violence such as bullying
- be resilient
- experience high levels of wellbeing in subsequent years.

Importantly, students with greater school connectedness are less likely to engage in antisocial or health-risk behaviours and are less likely to experience depressive symptoms.

There are several benefits of greater school connectedness for you as a teacher, including:

- classes will be easier to manage
- more opportunities for meaningful contact with students
- students will be more responsive and warmer
- you can be yourself.

The WISE model

You can incorporate the WISE model into your everyday practice by using the following methods:

Warmth and empathy

You can help to create a warm school environment by:

- recognising the importance of relationships between all school members, including teachers, students, administration, and parents
- continually developing and working on these relationships.

Tips to create warm relationships at school:

- Use a person's name when addressing them.
- Greet others warmly.
- Give positive feedback when appropriate.

Inclusion

Aim to create an environment where both students and teachers feel included and like they belong in the classroom, group, and school. Inclusion occurs when students feel a sense of empowerment and perceive an atmosphere of tolerance and acceptance.

Tips to foster inclusion:

- Create tasks or roles for the less-connected students.
- Create peer networks such as buddy systems.
- Promote cultural awareness and tolerance for differences.

Strength focus

You can achieve a strength focus by recognising your own strengths and those of your students and by creating tasks and an atmosphere where strengths can be promoted and cultivated.



A strength focus requires:

- recognising and believing in the abilities of yourself, students, and colleagues
- building skills and competence
- fostering your own strengths by acknowledging when you do something well.

Tips to foster your students' strengths:

- Encourage persistence
- Recognise achievements, no matter how small they seem
- Challenge and encourage students to come up with their own ideas.

Equity and fairness

An equitable environment is one where there is openness and equal opportunity for all students and staff.

Tips to provide opportunities to demonstrate equity and fairness:

- Recognise and embrace differences.
- Be consistent.
- Set clear rules and boundaries.

In the classroom

Putting the WISE model into practice

Download and print the WISE model [here](#).

You can work through the steps that follow, or access them online via the Teachers & Support Staff section [here](#).

Warmth and empathy

List some of the things you do, and would like to do more of:

- to promote a warm environment in your classroom
- to promote a warm environment in your school.

For more ideas look [here](#).

Inclusion

List some of the things you do, and would like to do more of:

- to create an environment where all students in your classroom feel included
- to create an environment where teachers and other school personnel feel included in your school.

For more ideas look [here](#).

Strength focus

List some of the ways you recognise:

- your own strengths
- your students' strengths and create tasks and an atmosphere where strengths can be promoted and cultivated
- your colleagues' strengths.

For more ideas look [here](#).

You can use this activity to promote a strength focus in your classroom:

[Redefining profiles](#)

Equity and fairness

List some ways you:

- create an equitable environment in your classroom
- create an equitable environment in your school.

For more ideas look [here](#).

You can use these activities to promote equity and fairness in your classroom:

[Diamond 9](#)

[Autobiography](#)

Helping students understand their strengths

- Use the following activity to help students to understand their strengths:
- Share a story about a famous person who has succeeded despite adversity
- Brainstorm to help the students to create a list of possible strengths this person may have needed in order to overcome adversity
- Ask the students to choose someone they know or have learned about who has succeeded despite adversity, and to make a list of possible strengths this person needed in order to overcome adversity
- Ask the students to make a list of their own strengths and provide assistance to students that need it
- Encourage the students to match some of their strengths with those of their chosen person.

Weekly progress report

Create a weekly strength-focused, verbal progress report:

- At the end of each day, make a note alongside each student's name of an effort or achievement that you noticed them doing during the day. At the end of the week, choose a noticeable effort or achievement for each student



- Share that effort or achievement for each student in a verbal progress report to the whole class in the first 15 minutes of the first class of the following week
- Display a copy of the report in the classroom for the remainder of the week, month, or term.

Materials informing this practice

More information can be found at www.autismteenwellbeing.com.au. The Autism Teen Wellbeing website provides resources and strategies to help build protective factors against depression and anxiety for vulnerable young people by cultivating a sense of belonging and the ability to regulate emotions in the face of stress.

Designed for parents, teachers, schools and communities to support wellbeing in teenagers on the autism spectrum, the website is the culmination of three years of collaborative research, led by the Queensland University of Technology (QUT). The research and website development were financially supported by Autism CRC and Positive Partnerships.

