

Volume 5

Nov. 2022

TeachBetter

Professional Development Insights for Teachers in China

Message from the Editor	2
TeachBetter in Review	3
It's Data Time	4
Speaking of Data...	5
Sessions in a Nutshell	6
Teacher Toolkit	11
Seen and Not Heard	16
Hidden Head	17
Mental Wellbeing in Teachers	18
Psychological Safety in the Classroom	19
Advice Ayi	20
Save the Date	22
TeachBetter: Embedding Employability	23

Message from the Editor

Helen Wing
Venture Education

It's November and the evenings are already drawing in, so it is really heart-warming to see the TeachBetter community still shining a light on innovation and current research in education. Not only the pandemic but also the upheavals in education in general in China have understandably spread an atmosphere of uncertainty amongst teachers and students alike. So, it is especially apt that we have just finished a series on Classroom Wellbeing with a focus on how we, as teachers, can enhance the mental health of our schools.

Dr Lindey Cookson's webinar on attachment theory as it relates to developing a healthy mind is particularly poignant here in China where school children have not seen each other's faces now for 3 years. The effects of the loss of emotional and social developmental opportunities for the young, caused by the pandemic, have yet to be studied in depth but anecdotally we are seeing extreme shyness and risk aversion from kindergarten right up to the university student population. Dr Manzoorul Abedin's key message that we should 'listen to the children' if we are going to create happy schools at a structural and systemic level is a welcome reminder to heads and leadership teams that the children are the most important stakeholders in a school. SENIA's work on inclusion and Dr Ines Alves's crystal-clear grounding of the relevance of inclusivity to all children reaffirm to us that inclusivity is an essential feature of classroom wellbeing which demands a nuanced approach to our children as individuals and as members of the learning community. It is so heartening to see so much great work going on in this area! We are immensely grateful to all of our expert speakers, the wonderful panellists at SENIA-Beijing, as well as Dr Manzoorul Abedin, Dr

Lindey Cookson, and Dr Ines Alves for their insight, research and experience; they are all excellent advertisements for their universities.

We'd also like to thank the amazing members of the Teachers in China community, Xolisile Sithole and Adam Walker who have submitted some really insightful and thought-provoking Chalkface articles, and to this edition's fantastic Hidden Head (you know who you are). I thoroughly enjoyed reading each and every word.

We will be running the next TeachBetter series in February on the incredibly important topic of employability. Make sure you have registered well before then to pick up all the other Teachers in China benefits. So, until we meet again, very best wishes for 2023.





TeachBetter in Review

In October 2022, Venture hosted the fifth TeachBetter series: free online workshops for teachers in China

With over 600 hundred registrations, the response for this series's TeachBetter from the community was fantastic. We received great feedback for all of the webinars, led by:

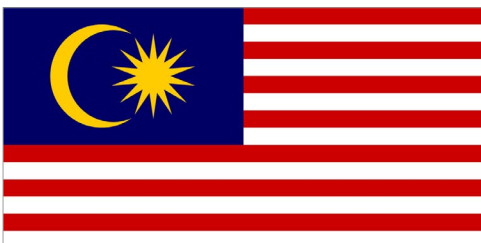
- Special Education Network & Inclusion Association (SENIA-Beijing)
- University of West London
- University of Sunderland
- University of Glasgow

The Teachers in China group has really taken off with a bang, and we are so happy to see the community continue to grow with educators from around China, and beyond.

Our members come from all over mainland China - see if you can find yourself:



Teachers in China is, as you can probably gather by the name, predominantly aimed towards teachers **in China**, but we do also have some overseas members who are just as interested in the ever-changing landscape of K12 education in China:





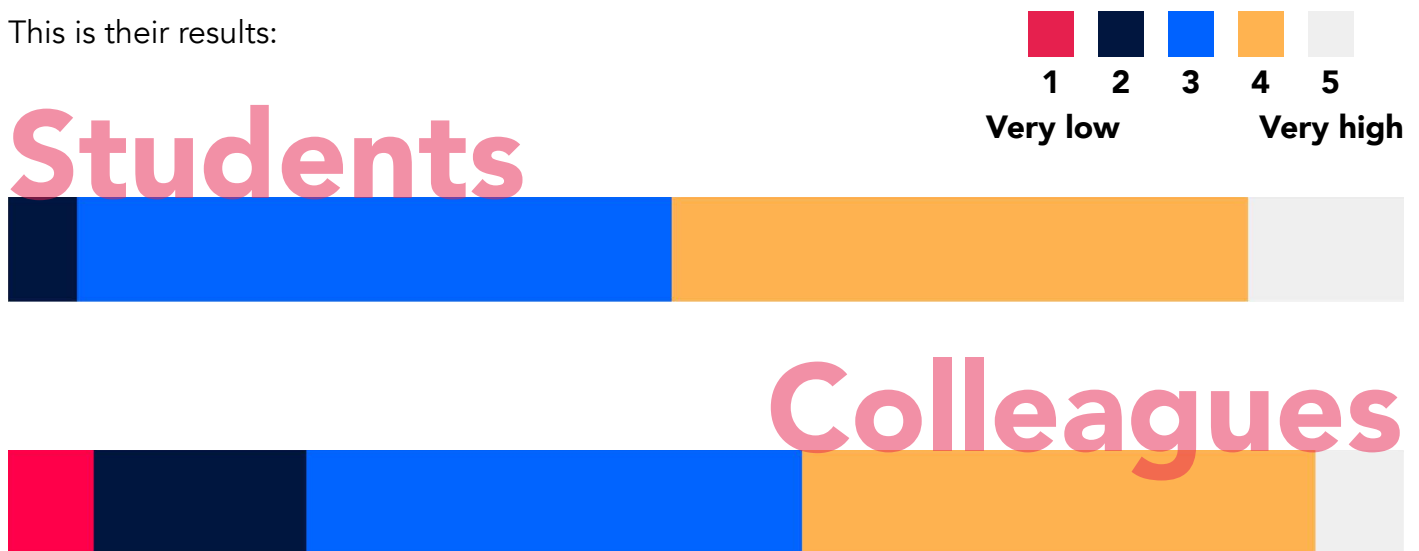
It's Data Time

What do you, our Teachers in China community, think about wellbeing in your schools?

At the end of the TeachBetter Classroom Wellbeing series, we surveyed 82 educators in China. As part of this, we asked them two questions:

1. On a scale of 1-5, how would you rate the mental wellbeing of the **students** at your school/organisation?
2. On a scale of 1-5, how would you rate the mental wellbeing of your **colleagues** at your school/organisation?

This is their results:



While **5% of educators** scored their students at either a 1 or 2, **more than 4 times** this amount scored their colleagues at this same 'very low' or 'low' amount.

When brainstorming theme ideas for this series in the Venture Education office, we knew that it had to be related to one of our core pillars: wellbeing. It's a topic that has been so heavily requested that we cover all the way back from our first ever TeachBetter series in October 2021 and is becoming more and more relevant as time moves on.

In the end, we settled on 'Classroom Wellbeing', because we wanted it to be all-encompassing and not just student-centric. We know that educators are having a hard time at the moment (we are educators ourselves!) and we really wanted to create a series which reflected that so that we could give some support and guidance to those who may be finding things difficult.

Seeing these results again cemented what we already knew - K12 education as a whole is really struggling, but most of all, it's the educators themselves who are struggling the most.

There isn't an easy fix for this... This newsletter isn't going to magically remove all of the distressing factors in educators' lives. But, we hope that we can at least give you some support, both in activities to run with your students and in guidance to better your own mental wellbeing, that hopefully if we run this same survey next year, the results will be more yellows and greys!

Speaking of Data...

You know all those hours of amazing free PD we've given you over the past year...? And you know how you love us and we love you? Help us out by completing this survey!

Dear teacher in China,

Please click or scan the code on your right and fill out this mega 'Teachers in China' survey. You will be giving us data and information which we will share right back with you, helping schools around China better understand educators.

We know that there are way too many surveys these days... So to help motivate you, we will also draw one teacher randomly from those who complete the full survey who will win a two-night stay in the incredibly hip Orchid Hotel in the hutongs of Beijing; redeemable any time in 2023!

It should only take about 15 minutes. Thank you.





Session 1 in a Nutshell:

Topic: Wellbeing in Schools in China
Speakers: Dominique Blue, Juliane Karlsson, Stephannie Tebow
Organisation: SENIA-Beijing

Organisation introduction:

Mission: The Special Education Network Inclusion Association (SENIA) is an association of educators, professionals, and parents whose mission is to advocate for and provide resources/supports for differently abled individuals.

Vision: To live in an inclusive world where every individual is supported, resources are accessible, potential is maximized, and action is inspired.

- SENIA have over 30 chapters in different countries and cities all over the world and their work supports educators, students and families in supporting students with learning differences.
- To find out more about their certifications, free webinars and upcoming SENIA Virtual Conference (2-4 December 2022), visit: <https://www.seniaconference.org>
- Or to be invited into the WeChat community, please email them at: beijingchapter@seniainternational.org



Session 2 in a Nutshell:

Topic: Happy Children, Happy School
Speakers: Dr Manzoorul Abdein
University: University of West London

4 Ideas/Quotations Worth Remembering

1. We must cultivate learning spaces which offer students justice in fixing the system to offer equal access to both tools and opportunities.
2. Bring learning into all areas of your school; not just your classrooms. Don't just learn it, live it.
3. Purely focusing on academic success is too narrow. Cultivating happiness and wellbeing among students is just as important as the accumulation of knowledge.
4. "They should listen to children, because sometimes the children are right."

4 Recommendations

1. Happy Schools Guide and Toolkit, UNESCO, 2021.
2. Positive Education: positive psychology and classroom interventions. Martin Seligman, Randal, Ernst, Jane Gillham and Mark Linkins. 2009. Oxford Review of Education, Vol. 35, Issue 3, pp. 293–311.
3. Core SEL Competencies. Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) 2019. [https:// casel.org/core-competencies/](https://casel.org/core-competencies/)
4. UNESCO (2021). "Happy Schools in Asia-Pacific, Activities for Learner Well-Being and Happiness", Bangkok, UNESCO.



Session 3 in a Nutshell:

Topic: Developing a Healthy Mind
Speaker: Dr Lindey Cookson
University: University of Sunderland

4 Ideas/Quotations Worth Remembering

1. Behaviour is shaped by unconscious thoughts and feelings, as well as conscious processes (internal things we can't 'see').
2. When a child has a secure base where they feel safe, exploration and learning can take place and they are more likely to achieve better outcomes in educational achievement and mental health.
3. When a child has an insecure attachment type, they are more likely to have low self-esteem, a poorer executive function skills and are more likely to display disruptive behaviours.
4. Siegel and Bryson (2011) developed a framework for supporting parents with attachment that focuses on the '4 S's of attachment, making sure the child feels Seen, Safe, Soothed and Secure.

4 Recommendations

1. Browne, K. (2009) The Risk of Harm to Young Children in Institutional Care, Save the Children.
2. Colley, D. And Cooper, P. (2017) Attachment and Emotional Development in the Classroom; Theory and Practice. London. Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
3. Nelson, C, A, Nathan, N. A., Zeanah C. H. (2014) Romania's Abandoned Children: Deprivation, Brain Development and the Struggle for Recovery, Harvard University Press.
4. Bulgaria's Abandoned Children



Session 4 in a Nutshell:

Topic: Inclusive Education
Speaker: Dr Ines Alves
University: University of Glasgow

4 Ideas/Quotations Worth Remembering

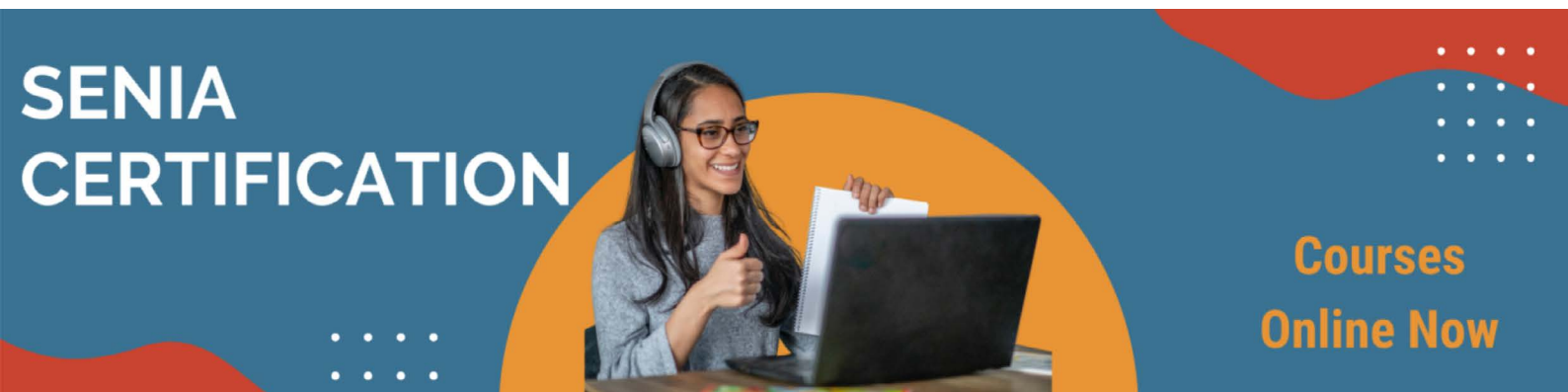
1. Any learner may require additional support at some stage and there are a range of issues that may create barriers to learning and participation.
2. Instead of providing something different or additional for children who experience difficulties in their learning, inclusive pedagogy seeks to extend what is ordinarily available to everybody.
3. Inclusive pedagogy rejects the notion that children have a fixed 'ability', but instead believes that every child's capacity to learn is changeable.
4. Inclusive teachers must use their heads, their hearts, and their hands. Heads, to understand how children learn and how to identify difficulties. Hearts, to believe in the students and their own capacities; all children are worth educating. Hands, to turn knowledge into action through school- and classroom-based projects.

4 Recommendations

1. Reaching out to all Learners: Resource Pack for Supporting Inclusive Education. IBE-UNESCO. <http://inprogressreflections.ibe-unesco.org/inclusive-education-resource-pack/>
2. Mitchell, D. (2017). Diversities in Education: Effective Ways to Reach All Learners. Abingdon: Routledge.
3. Enabling Education Network (EENET), 2017, An Inclusive Day. Building foundations for learner-centred, inclusive education
4. Rouse, M. (2008) 'Developing Inclusive Practice: A Role for Teachers and Teacher Education?', Education in the North, 16, pp. 6–13.

SENIA: beijingchapter@seniainternational.org

The SENIA Certification courses are perfect for those wishing to up-skill the beginning to intermediate level Learning Support teacher. It also benefits general education teachers with their efforts to support individuals with learning needs in a classroom setting. The courses are fantastic for teaching assistants and parents alike, looking to learn more about special education. Enjoy single courses or become a SENIA Certified Teacher by completing all six courses. Click the banner for more information!



University of West London: courses@uwl.ac.uk

Alongside BA courses in Early Years Education and Education Studies, University of West London (UWL) offers specialised MA courses in Mental Health and Well-being, and Language and Literacies. UWL's postgraduate offers also include research degrees, including PhD and EdD - the professional doctorate.

Click the banner for more information!



Postgraduate Offers in Education for Professionals

MA in Educational Inclusion

MA has two pathways: Mental Health and Wellbeing, and Language and Literacy - both focus on skills development for designing and implementing individual and whole-school strategies. You can take individual modules as standalone CPD.

Doctorate in Education (PhD/EdD)

EdD offers a flexible alternative to a PhD and is designed to help you study part-time while you work. You will analyse a key aspect of educational research and practice, theories and evidence, and apply your findings to move your professional area forward in the context of the inclusive classroom.

University of Sunderland: vikki.wynn@sunderland.ac.uk

It was fantastic to share our research and approach with fellow Early Years Professionals. It was wonderful to see such high levels of engagement and a shared enthusiasm for supporting the wellbeing of children during their Early Years journey with positive attachments. This can support everyone within a setting in all aspects of developing high quality provision.

Click the banner for more information!



**University of
Sunderland**

PGCE EARLY YEARS TEACHING

University of Glasgow: ines.alves@glasgow.ac.uk

Inclusion and equity are global priorities in education according to the United Nations. The MEd in Inclusive Education: Research, Policy and Practice at The University of Glasgow considers learner diversity and encourages practitioners to critically engage with questions such as: Which learners are disadvantaged or excluded in our education systems? How can we develop socially just practices, policies and research, that support the access, participation and success of all learners?

Click the banner for more information!



**University
of Glasgow**

MEd in Inclusive Education:
Research, Policy and Practice

**WORLD
CHANGING
GLASGOW**

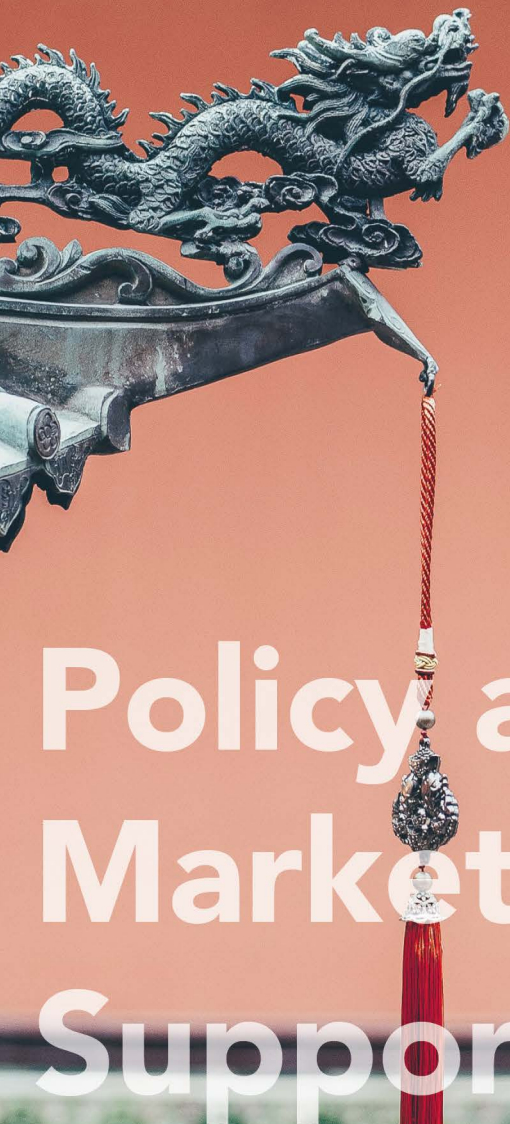
THE SUNDAY TIMES
GOOD
UNIVERSITY
GUIDE
2022
SCOTTISH
UNIVERSITY
OF THE YEAR

Venture Education Subscription

for schools

for universities

for organisations



Policy and Regulations Market Intelligence Support

Our affordable subscription service gives you the tools to better predict the future, better understand the market and better navigate K12 education in China.

Available for schools, universities and organisations.

Scan for more information
ventureeducation.org/subscription

Or contact Mary on:
mary@ventureeducation.org





Teacher Toolkit 4

Wellbeing in the Classroom



Anna Freud
National Centre for
Children and Families



**EARLY
INTERVENTION
FOUNDATION**

'EIF is a research charity, focused on promoting and enabling an evidence-based approach to early intervention across the developmental issues that can arise during a child's life, including their physical, cognitive, behavioural and social and emotional development.' www{EIF.org.uk

'At the Anna Freud Centre, neuroscientists and practitioners in mental health, social care and education work together with children and young people to transform mental health for children, young people and their families.' www.AnnaFreud.org

The Anna Freud National Centre for Children and Families and the Early Intervention Foundation (EIF) have produced a wonderful teacher resource devoted to classroom Wellbeing: 'Classroom Wellbeing Toolkit: Simple ways to support secondary students' mental health.' The toolkit responds to a set of teacher questions about these issues and give practical tips that can be used in the classroom.

It includes guidance on the following areas:

- Building supportive relationships with students and between peers
- Creating a feeling of belonging in the classroom
- Promoting good mental health
- Responding to stress, low mood and anxiety
- Preventing bullying, cyber-bullying and sexual harassment

We are including here the 'Strategies to Develop an Inclusive Classroom Environment' section of the Anna Freud and EIF 'Classroom Wellbeing Toolkit: Simple ways to support secondary students' mental health.' You can access the entire document for free through the following link:

<https://www.annafreud.org/media/17009/classroom-wellbeing-toolkit.pdf>



Strategies to develop an inclusive classroom environment

Strategies identified via a review of the common elements of evidence-based programmes, practice experience, and echoed by the wider research evidence include:

1. Role-model inclusive and respectful behaviour

- **Model respect** for all students by fostering open communication, acknowledging different lived experiences and ensuring the voices of all students are heard, valued and respected.
- **Use microaffirmations:** Small gestures of inclusion, caring or kindness – such as listening, providing comfort and support, being an ally, and explicitly valuing the contributions and presence of an individual – can increase a young person's sense of empowerment, positive emotions and connection with others.
- **Use the language your students use for themselves:** Take care to pronounce names correctly and to use an individual's chosen pronouns.
- **Respect individual differences** and acknowledge that membership of a particular group doesn't mean everyone from that group has the same values, beliefs, rituals and needs.

'It's unhelpful when teachers direct questions at certain people.' Student

2. Expand students' awareness and appreciation of diversity

Research suggests that discussing and celebrating cultural difference is more effective than de-emphasising those differences in fostering positive student attitudes toward diversity.

- **Identify areas where you can actively choose to reflect diverse backgrounds,** e.g., in your lessons or in the posters and books you put on display, which can increase students' sense of belonging.
- **Provide opportunities for students to listen** to people from a range of backgrounds and their perspectives, and think about representation during career days and field trips.
- **Teach young people about multicultural role models:** Research suggests that students prefer less well-known or early-career role models over very famous professionals, and role models do not need to share students' ethnic origin or gender to be rated highly.

'I think EDI [equality, diversity and inclusion] can cause mental health issues quite severely. Just because it's a whole fitting-in thing: a sense of belonging, and questioning. It causes a lot of issues.' Student



3. Pay attention to microaggressions

Microaggressions are comments or actions that unconsciously or unintentionally express or reveal a prejudiced attitude toward a member of a marginalised group, such as a minority ethnic group. These small, common occurrences include insults and slights, or stereotyping, undermining, devaluing, overlooking or excluding someone. Over time, microaggressions can isolate and alienate those on the receiving end, and affect their cognitive, behavioural and emotional wellbeing. Several studies have found that being subjected to microaggressions is associated with higher prevalence of depression, and increased stress levels, anxiety and suicidal thoughts.

Teachers can sometimes inadvertently engage in microaggressions themselves, for example, by mispronouncing students' names even after being put right, scheduling assessments on major holidays for religions other than Christianity, or asking a student to speak for or represent their entire ethnic group.

To tackle microaggression in the context of your own classroom, you might:

- **Consider ways in which microaggressions might manifest** and the impact they can have on individuals involved.
- **Engage in an open discussion with students about classroom norms**, including why they are important and to ensure that the impact of microaggressions is understood.
- **Pick up on microaggressions when they happen**, even if they seem minor or students try to pass them off as banter. If a student says they have experienced a microaggression, listen to and validate their feelings about it, rather than e.g. 'I'm sure they didn't mean anything by it'. Return to class or school norms, and support students to reflect critically on the situation. Ensure that those who have been targeted are supported. Follow up on the situation as needed.

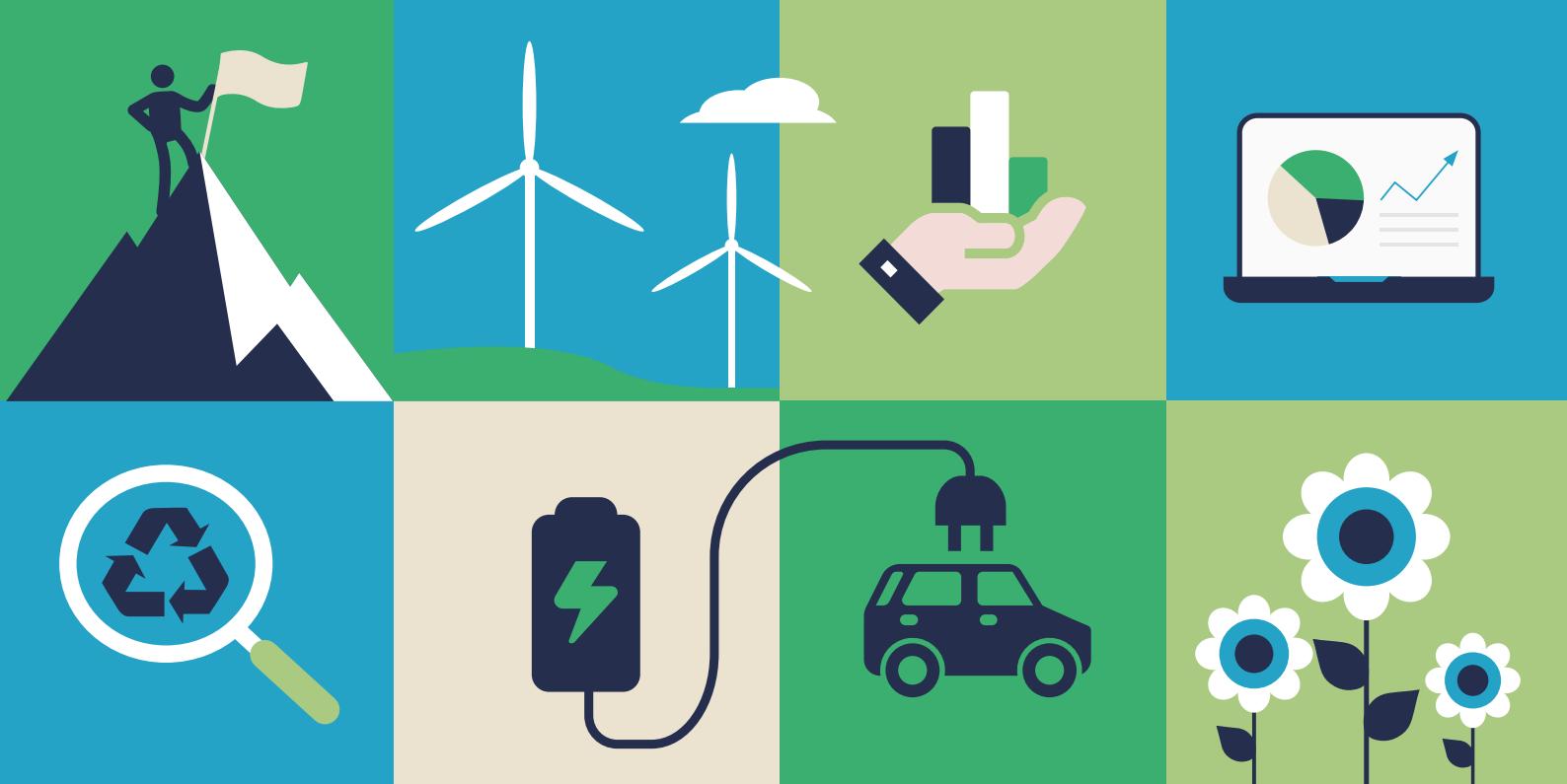
'I think just being aware can definitely encourage a safe environment within the classroom, promoting good mental health.' Student

'It's unhelpful when teachers pretend that they don't hear rude or not inclusive comments.' Student



*To access the entire document,
please click the image:*





Lead the Future of Sustainability

Sustainable Business Leadership

MSc / Postgraduate Certificate

Online

We are one of the **top 100 universities in the world** and **ranked in the top 15 in the UK** (QS World University Rankings 2023) with a global reputation for excellence in research and teaching. The School of Earth and Environment is ranked in the **global Top 25 for Earth and Marine Sciences** and **Top 40 for Environmental Studies** (QS World University Rankings by subject 2022)

The research expertise in the **School of Earth and Environment** and **Leeds University Business School** feeds directly into the online Sustainable Business Leadership course. **The course content will give you exposure to the issues and concepts highly relevant to a range of organisations and sectors.**

- Our 2023 intake is now open. Scan the QR code to begin talking with an enrolment advisor.

- Two years' online study to achieve master's degree

- Flexibility to preserve your work-life balance while earning your degree

- A global network of like-minded professionals to enhance your career profile

- Student fees for the programme will be billed on a modular basis:

From September 2022 onwards, the fee is composed of nine taught modules (15 credits each, £1,650 per module) and project module fee (45 credits, £2,650).

Our 2023 intake is now open. Scan the QR code below to begin talking with an enrolment advisor.



Tel: 400 9696 615 / +86 178 2100 2622

Website: www.leeds.ac.uk Email: a.barnes@leeds.ac.uk



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

King's College London

With Excellence in Mind - **Online Psychology and Neuroscience of Mental Health Course**

Exploring the Complex Mind -
Online Applied Neuroscience Course

- Our 2023 intake is now open. Scan the QR code to begin talking with an enrolment advisor.
- Two years' online study to achieve master's degree
- Flexibility to preserve your work-life balance while earning your degree
- A global network of like-minded professionals to enhance your career profile
- Student fees for the programme will be billed on a modular basis:
From September 2022 onwards, modules will be charged at £1,575 per module.



Top 10 UK universities in the world
(Times Higher Education World University Rankings, 2022)

2nd in the world for Psychology and Psychiatry
(US News, Best Global Universities)

At the forefront of global mental health research:
King's produces more highly cited outputs (**top 1%** of citations)
on mental health than any other institution

Our 2023 intake is now open.
Scan the QR code below to begin
talking with an enrolment advisor.





From the Chalkface

Adam Walker considers some key focuses of Montessori education and how they can be applied to all educators.

'Children should be seen and not heard.'

This is a saying many of us likely grew up with and hopefully a phrase that all educators are strongly opposed to. But how often do we really listen to early years students? Do we, as adults, think we can learn anything from them? Do we realise that children are experts in their own experiences?

Working in a Montessori kindergarten, these are reflective questions I routinely ask myself as they are profoundly linked to student wellbeing. However, I would like to pose perhaps a mildly different understanding of student wellbeing, as often we think about this concept in the present with questions such as: Are my students happy? Do I allow for creativity and play? Is there adequate time for students to socialise? Do students engage with me independently?

Whilst these are all important questions directed at ensuring wellbeing at school, is it possible to nurture characteristics that ensure long-term wellbeing in life? Lillard and McHugh (2019) argue that there are three focuses of Montessori education, that are widely applicable to all systems of education, that do just that. These focuses are on self-determination, meaningful activity and social relationships.

Self-determination is best exercised by following two simple principles; firstly, the 'self': that children are free to do whatever work they chose, free to experience that work in any way that is appropriate and, importantly, free not to do work if they do not want to. This leads to the second aspect: how to make children want to work. Of course, we must know our students and their individual interests and then

create work that is neither too easy nor too hard. Vitally, we must never underestimate our students, refrain from doing the work for them and acknowledge that the reward is in completing the work itself as opposed to an external motivator.

Meaningful work is intrinsically linked to the 'why?' of education. We have all had a student who cannot learn English because its only use is confined to the classroom and therefore not sufficiently meaningful to them. So, we must relate the student's work to real life experiences and simulate those experiences within our works and lessons.

Social Relationships. In my experience most children are inherently social. It is estimated that an average 4-year-old asks 200-300 questions per day. Annoying? Yes, at times. But our key role is to facilitate this sense of discovery and interaction with others. I have observed schools with policies such as: no talking while eating lunch, no free play time (teacher led exercise instead) and no talking while working or no working together. Ask yourself what such rules would do to your own wellbeing.

Lastly, I would like to leave you with an admittedly overused quote but one that if you keep it in mind, you needn't read anything else regarding student wellbeing: 'Everybody is a genius. But if you judge a fish by its ability to climb a tree, it will live its whole life believing that it is stupid.' - Albert Einstein.

Adam Walker
Early Years Educator
and Consultant





The Hidden Head

What are Heads really thinking when they walk around the school?

Thoughts on Classroom Wellbeing: *Should teacher wellbeing be a higher priority than student wellbeing?*

The wellbeing of one, teacher or student, should not be considered more important than the other. The classroom community is a highly interdependent group in which each individual is equally important and each levies significant influence on the group dynamic: there cannot be one without the other. Both teacher and student come to school with a need to; perform, collaborate, be evaluated, maintain focus and socialise. Each then leaves school with work yet to be completed, family expectations to meet and external influences to moderate. Both face tremendous responsibility, deadlines, stressors and a lack of sleep. It is important to keep this in mind to find wellbeing.

It is true that, the quality of teaching and capacity to meet a duty of care, is dependent on teacher wellbeing. This point is not lost on school leadership. In the current climate, leaders have an overt awareness of teacher wellbeing. How then should we address teacher wellbeing? It is incumbent on school leaders to assure a safe, clean, adequately resourced school. Avenues for effective communication, acknowledgement and professional growth should be provided: all quite obvious. However, wellbeing is most dependent on the element of balance. Leadership should be intentional to avoid conflicting deadlines in academic scheduling, assuring there is adequate staff (both instructional and support) to meet the needs of the schools programs, and to offer adequate prep-time and space for teachers to collaborate.

However, the key to sustainable balance and wellbeing is the individual access to; resilience, positive perspective, gratitude, impulse control, various forms of acceptance, flexibility, physical health, strong relationships and a commitment to personal excellence without arrogance. Without ready access to these traits, all external efforts to build wellbeing renders only moments of feeling better, often followed by disappointment. Interestingly, these are all a matter of personal choice. These choices constitute one's ability to embrace leading a classroom community as privilege, rather than a burden. Wellbeing is not an entitlement supplied by the other, it is a personal commitment to self-care, self-regulation and wise choices. The teacher's model of wellbeing is that which the students will mirror and as such does put the teacher's wellbeing as a priority.





Mental Wellbeing in Teachers

Dr. Paul Rochon shares his research and expertise into the study of mental health in teachers, and suggestions of next steps.

Already before COVID-19, the National Mental Health Education Project in Primary and Secondary Schools tested 2292 teachers and found that the incidence of mental disorders was as high as 50%, and 69% of the teachers had a severe inferiority complex.

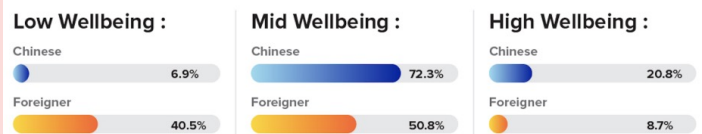
Obsessive compulsive disorder, interpersonal sensitivity, depression and paranoia tend to be higher than the general population, and it was shown that:

- 31.51% of teachers have mild mental disorder,
- 21% have mental illness,
- 68% of teachers feel stressed,
- 38% of teachers lose sleep quality,
- 57% of teachers still work an hour before going to bed.

Strong psychological pressures led to individual teachers tired of work or even resigning, and even embarking on the road of suicide.

A few months ago, when Shanghai and Beijing were dealing with COVID-19 lockdowns, we asked 280 employees if they'd be willing to take part in a survey conducted by Engineering Wellbeing.

- 80% of Chinese and 90% of foreigner are not feeling as good as they should be.
- 40% of foreigner are feeling very bad about the situation.



27.7% Of the Foreigners could be considered to have Clinical depression

*Clinical depression is the more-severe form of depression, it requires medical treatment as soon as possible.

Mental wellbeing was the most impacted dimension of wellbeing in educators' lives, with almost 30% of clinical depression among foreigners, but the biggest challenge is to detect it before it becomes chronic.

We can classify **5 types of psychological problems** usually developed by teachers:

Maladaptive psychological problems

Maladaptive disorders are emotionally manifested as psychological imbalance and emotional instability; behaviorally manifested as ability inhibition, withdrawal of action; physiological functions manifested as dizziness, brain swelling, palpitations, fatigue, pain, insomnia.

Obsessive-compulsive problems

Mainly manifested as obsessions, compulsive impulses or compulsive actions, such as always feeling that you have made a wrong word or done a wrong question, always wondering, forgetting to bring a key or forgetting to close a window.

Depressive psychological problems

It is manifested as persistent low mood, anxiety, depression, energy decline, loss of interest, lack of self-confidence, pessimism, and disappointment. Teachers tend to underestimate themselves, feel guilty and blame themselves; have no interest in anything, feel that life has no meaning; have a strong sense of hopelessness and helplessness.

Anxiety-type psychological problems

This is a state of anxiety that has no clear object and cannot be escaped, manifested as constant tension and restlessness. Disturbed in life and work, memory decline, slow thinking; nervous and irritable in communication; panicked when encountering an accident, easy to think bad thoughts.

Fear-type psychological problems

Appears to be afraid of certain things, situations, or interpersonal relationships and avoids facing them, shy, embarrassed, clumsy, blunt, afraid to speak in public; not good at dealing with complex interpersonal relationships, unable to communicate with students, colleagues, and leaders, with constant disputes and conflicts, and it is easy to form a negative mentality such as loneliness, helplessness, and low self-esteem.

The pandemic has brought unprecedented challenges that are marked in our body and mind. Today we have covered the Mental aspect, but the Wellbeing is a 3 dimensions concept (Physical, Mental, Social) that are integrated.

We recommend schools to provide workshops and strategy plans beyond the classic counselling services. The stress, from our body, will often appear before our mental health goes down, so don't wait to consult a specialist at the first sign.



From the Chalkface

Xolisile Sithole explores Amy Edmondson's term 'Psychological Safety' and how we could use it in the classroom.

Psychological Safety in the Classroom

This month's TeachBetter Series focused on 'Classroom Wellbeing'. The webinars served as a great reminder for practitioners to focus not only on academic objectives but to instill a sense of mental health security amongst students.

This reminded me of Amy Edmondson's term "Psychological Safety" which is normally associated with the corporate world - how all bosses should prioritize it for the wellbeing of their employees. She defines it as "a shared belief that one will not be punished or humiliated for speaking up, sharing their ideas, mistakes...". She expands on this idea in her book but as a teacher I am interested in seeing how this would play out in a kindergarten setting.

How can we, as teachers, cultivate a shared belief in our classrooms- keeping in mind that most kindergarteners do not have the language to express themselves effectively?

As most, if not all teachers would attest, role modelling is one of the most trusted forms of communication with young students. We can use this to our advantage by making mistakes in front of our students and then focusing on guiding them on how to they can support someone through a

mistake, especially one made in front of everyone. Open-ended questions are crucial during the 'guiding session' where no student is ridiculed for their response - even the silly ones!

We can ensure they see our negative emotion being expressed (being psychologically safe does not mean you do not express negative emotions but that you are able to navigate them). We cannot shy away from showing embarrassment or perhaps even shame - both of which students may experience - when the incident occurs. The initial emotion felt after the event is not the final destination and should be used as a starting point.

Lastly, we must not underestimate positive reinforcement, thanking each student with specifics of why you are grateful, for example, 'Thank you, JP, for saying that it's okay to make a mistake sometimes.' or 'Thank you, PJ, for saying that my idea is okay but maybe we can use it for another activity. Thank you for not laughing at me and supporting me, this makes me feel encouraged to think of more ideas or to pay more attention.'

As we implement lessons from the webinars we can also be inspired by Edmondson and work not only to have physically safe and academically successful students but also students who thrive because they feel psychologically safe.

Xolisile Sithole
EYFS Homeroom Teacher
Malvern College Chengdu





Advice Ayi

In this section, we attempt to answer some of the PD-related questions of the TeachBetter community

We received two questions that at first blush look unconnected:

- What resources do you recommend for increasing parental understanding and engagement with wellbeing initiatives?
- A number of my (high school) students express that the family pressure/workload/homework expectations are too much. This is most noticeable at 6th form. The default response is "I can't" or "I give up". How can I help them build resilience?

However, these questions are intimately linked. As schools become more and more aware of the need to promote student wellbeing, they are also becoming increasingly aware that 'it takes a village.' Student wellbeing promotes resilience in students and has an effect on their learning outcome both in academic terms and in psychological terms that will influence their ability to thrive going forward into adulthood.

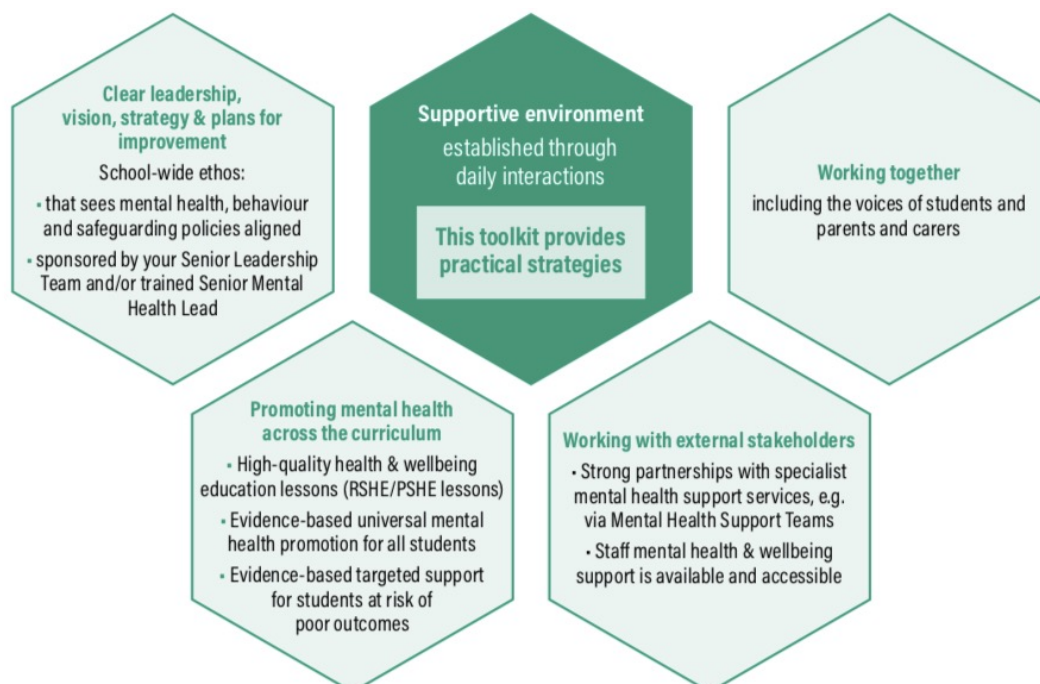
We can take it as read that a child wants to please their parents but we cannot and should not assume that the parent knows what is going on in school or what measures the school uses to promote wellbeing or the connections between mental health and achievement.

For the parents it may be a good idea to devote a parent evening or assembly to explaining the whole school approach to wellbeing so that they can see the crucial role they have to play in their own child's development and so that PHSE related activities are not considered less important than gaining good marks in Chemistry. This will only happen if the

parent body understands that a growth mindset and resilience understanding have a hugely positive impact on the ability of their child to cope with and do well in their studies. It is after all not surprising that parents often rely on marks and exam results to judge their child's progress as society and schools have in the past relied heavily on what we call 'measurable' outcomes. These days we are at last reverting to the old age truism that the most important gains in education cannot actually be measured – a love of learning, a yearning to create the development of a happy and socially confident young person who has the will and the skills to make a positive contribution to the world.

So, if possible, the schools should seriously consider the type of outreach that welcomes parents in as stakeholders to the whole school approach to wellbeing.

The structure may look like this one produced by the Anna Freud Centre for Children and Families:



Even in this diagram the 'Working together' hexagon is quite vague but we suggest that any school can build on it by:

- Making sure the parents understand the role of PHSE
- Making sure the parents understand the role of the School Counsellor
- Giving space and time in school council meetings for students to share their views on wellbeing
- Having students devise the anti-bullying code for the school
- Providing students and staff with a timetable of events to do with wellbeing as well as a picture of practices embedded in the school day that promote wellbeing and giving students access to adults who can support them when they encounter psychological as well as academic challenges
- Introducing communications with parents that report on what the students say anonymously about parental pressure and providing discussion opportunities for the parents so that when their child speaks, the parents can actually hear

In sum all of these suggestions are designed to take the shame out of mental health as an issue and portraying it in a wholly positive light. Luckily, the new education reforms in China advocate for healthy diet, outdoor exercise and a lessening of extra homework for students. It would be great if the whole school community could embrace the idea that a happy child creates a successful adult!

For the students, embedding resilience building practice into the pedagogy is essential so that students develop the coping strategies that they will be able to use throughout their lives. Stress is not an altogether bad thing, we need it to survive. But impossible study and time demands can cause damaging levels of stress and catastrophising attitudes that lead to burn out and a refusal to even try. Students are not wrong to react this way. Teachers need to ask themselves and the students what causes the worst stresses and attempt to alleviate the demands made on their students by helping them with short and longer-term goal setting. Being overwhelmed is a terrible feeling and it ushers in a totalising feeling of helplessness. There are lots of ways of helping students develop a sense of autonomy and ownership of their studies, not least as sense of where it all leading (hence the indubitable importance of vivacious and can-do careers staff).

Here we list a few ideas that are useful to bear in mind for both teachers and parents when trying to build resilience in young people:

1 Set personal goals and challenges - encourage students to plan goals and challenges which help to boost confidence.

2 Invest in self-esteem and encourage students to value who they are. Give lots of encouragement and praise and encourage self-reflection so that students to get to know who they are and what values they hold. Help them list all the things they are good at including being kind, helpful and loving and show them why these attributes are so essential in life. Thinking about their achievements no matter how big or small is great for their confidence.

3 Learn to problem solve - Teach problem-solving skills as that is key to building resilience. Help students understand also that it is OK to stop doing an activity

that no longer serves them ie. it is OK to give up a subject or stop being in a team!

4 See the bigger picture - Encourage the student to see the bigger picture when faced with adversity. Share your experiences with them so they can see you understand what they are going through. Let them know that everything has a process and sometimes we have to go through these things to come out the other end stronger.

5 Encourage students to be their own best counsel and to embrace change when necessary - Help students understand that it is OK to put themselves first when they need to and to understand that being able to make changes in life is a strength that they will always need to build.

6 Encourage a strong offline social network - Help students to build a support network of friends and loved ones who love them for who they are.

7 Mind, body and soul - It is important for students to eat healthily and be active. Getting enough sleep and learning positive mindfulness techniques are important barriers and defence structures for stress, trauma and adversity. It is important to teach mindfulness techniques in school.

8 Listen well when students are in Emotional Overload. Students who learn to handle their emotions tend to have better physical and emotional health, do better at school and get on better with friends. Listening gives a student a chance to express their feelings and gradually come back into a balanced state where they can start to think through a problem or let go of the feelings and move on. Make sure the student knows how to seek help and support if they need to.



Save the **Date**

Here are 7 events or courses for teachers taking place in the coming months. Click an event to find out more!

15 & 17
NOV

Connected and Curious:
teaching for inclusion and
engagement

eventbrite

16
NOV

Transformative Education
Seminar 3: Belonging and
Inclusion



University
of Exeter

24
NOV

Embrace stress before the
computer-based test



Pearson

24
NOV

Practical tips to promote
intercultural learning in your
classroom



2
DEC

Helping our Teens Manage their
Emotions



macmillan
education

2
DEC

Understanding Adverse
Childhood Experiences



FEB
7, 9
14, 16

TeachBetter:
Embedding Employability

TeachBetter
Embedding Employability

**Do you run any courses, webinars or
other events for teachers in China?**

If you would like your event to be featured
in next term's newsletter, contact
mary@ventureeducation.org



TeachBetter

Embedding Employability

7 Feb

9 Feb

14 Feb

16 Feb

Exclusive to Venture Education's
Teachers in China group

**Register to join
the group free!**

NB: if you are already part of the
WeChat group 'Teachers in China (TIC)'
you do not need to register again



5-6pm China Time
mary@ventureeducation.org