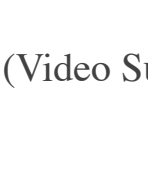




# Is EVERY Student Flourishing? A New Way To Maximise Student Self-Efficacy

Published on July 30, 2020



Dr Pete Stebbins  
High Performance Schools

with Alistair Kerr

(Video Summary is [HERE](#))

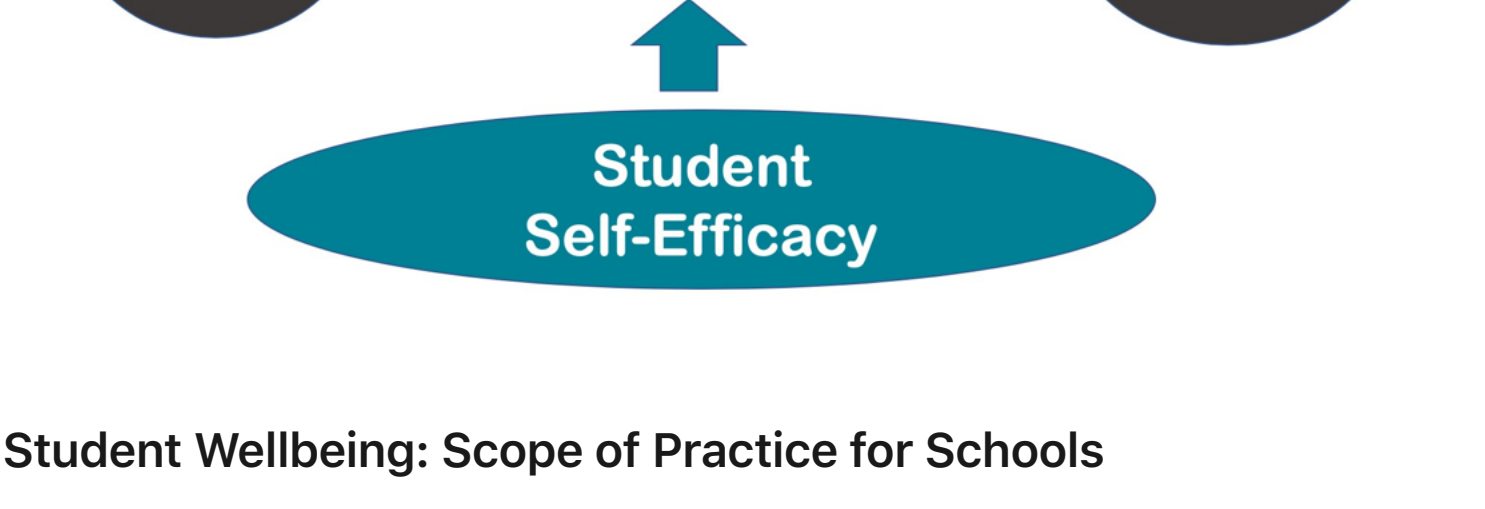
## 'Is EVERY student really flourishing in our school...?'

A recent conversation with a very dedicated school Principal:

*"I'm just not convinced our current approach to support student wellbeing is enabling EVERY student in our school to flourish... I mean, don't get me wrong, our staff are incredibly caring and dedicated, our wellbeing programs are best practice and the students give us very positive feedback. Our approach to case management and support is also well regarded by other schools in our region. I just feel uneasy that we may be missing something... that some students may still be falling through the gaps... that the great programs we offer students may not actually be turning into new and improved patterns of behaviour and wellbeing."*

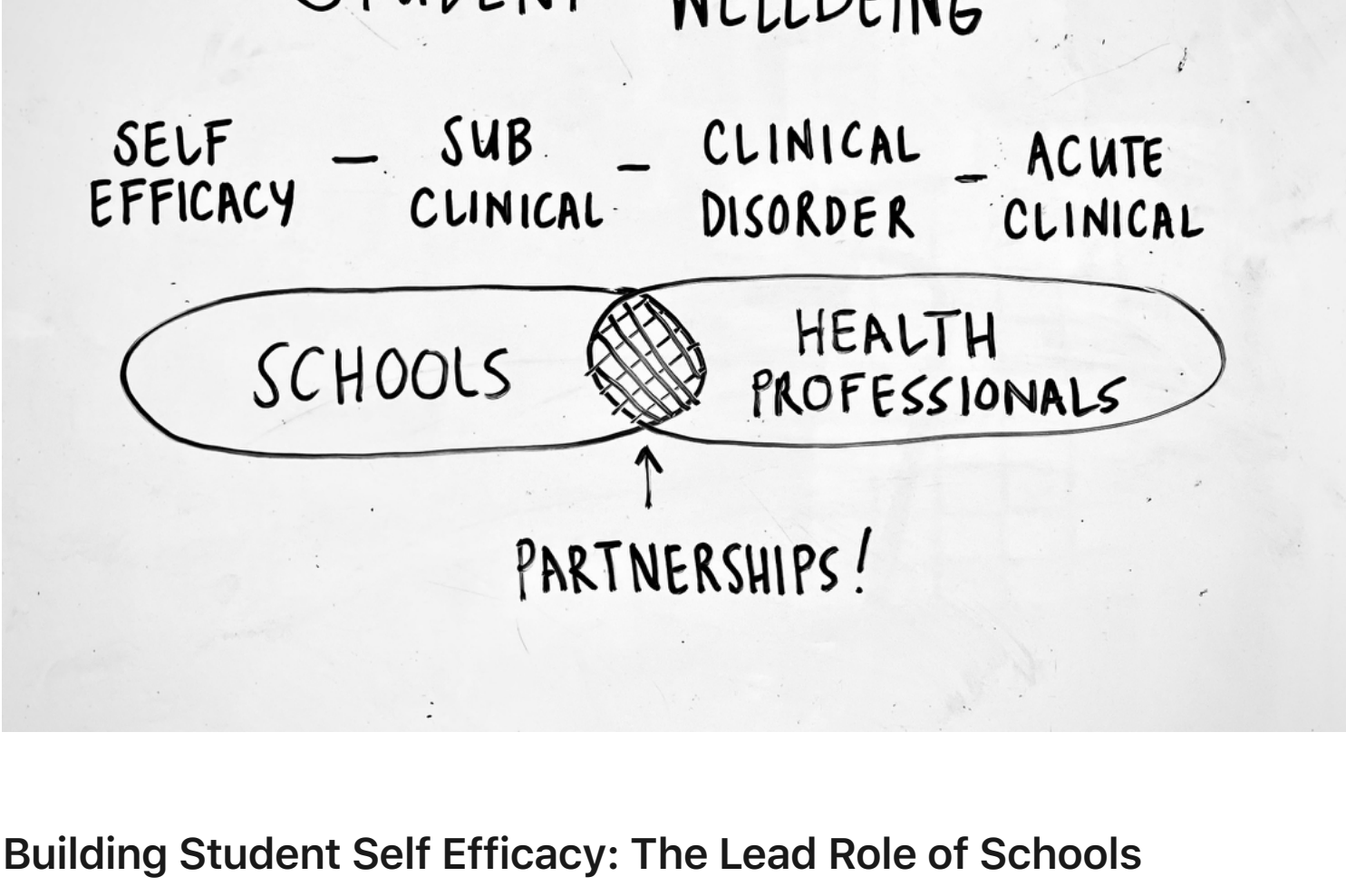
## Student's Flourishing: What Does That Mean?

Ensuring every student can flourish is a critical component of becoming a 'High Performance School' (defined as a place where all staff and students can flourish). Whilst the bulk of our work over recent years has been focused on ensuring staff are flourishing through building High Performance Teams and increasing Collective Teacher Efficacy (and thus indirectly maximising student success), we have been receiving a lot of requests in these turbulent times about what else can be done to ensure all students are flourishing. When we focus in on 'students flourishing' we usually think about the very important topic of student wellbeing. Student wellbeing encompasses a range of factors including physical health, mental health and self-efficacy in learning.



## Student Wellbeing: Scope of Practice for Schools

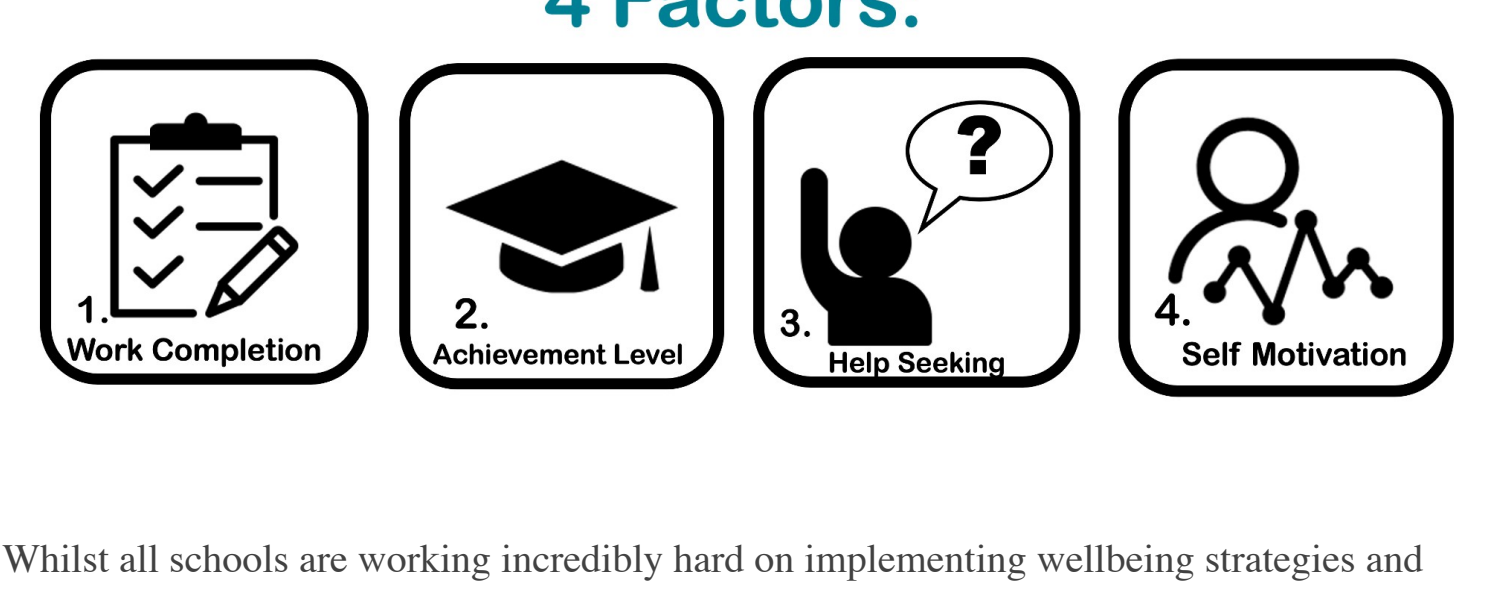
When it comes to the mental health of students, student wellbeing is best understood on a continuum with Self-Efficacy on one end of the spectrum and Acute Clinical Disorders on the other end (see below). I firmly believe that schools should take the lead role in building student self-efficacy and resilience. However when more serious mental health problems emerge schools should play a support role collaborating in partnerships with specialist health professionals.



## Building Student Self-Efficacy: The Lead Role of Schools

Student self-efficacy refers to a student's self-belief about their ability to learn new information and complete their schoolwork. Bandura (2006) highlights several important factors to assess when measuring student self-efficacy. When considering student self-efficacy within the school context specifically, there are four factors of particular importance:

- Self-Regulated Learning (Work Completion)** – for students to have confidence in their ability to complete required schoolwork within scheduled timeframes;
- Academic Achievement (Level of Achievement)** – for students to have confidence in their own ability to learn and improve their level of achievement in academic subjects;
- Enlisting Social Resources (Help Seeking)** – for students to have confidence in their ability to enlist the help of teachers and advisors to assist them with challenges or difficulties; and
- Self-Regulatory Efficacy (Self Motivation)** – for student to have confidence in their own ability/self-discipline to manage their mood and emotions to maximise their learning and achievement.



Whilst all schools are working incredibly hard on implementing wellbeing strategies and programs to maximise the self-efficacy of their students, the quote from the Principal at the start of this article suggests there are still some gaps in the process and opportunities to improve. In this article we want to review the biggest challenges we have encountered thus far and then share a new way to maximise student self-efficacy.

## Current Challenges in Effectively Supporting Student Self-Efficacy

### Challenge 1: After The Horse Has Bolted...

Many schools use academic results as an indicator of student self-efficacy and plan interventions for the term ahead based on results from the previous term. Relying on historical results (lag data) to plan future initiatives is a sub-optimal strategy (and sometimes completely ineffective) as 'the horse has already bolted' and what students may need right now from a wellbeing perspective may be different from what they needed in the previous term.

The current pandemic situation has made this problem so much worse. Consider the following statement from a Principal: *"I'm really concerned about how our students are going right now. We've got more than half our school in remote learning whilst the others are here at school but in an entirely different learning cycle. We need to find a better way to understand and support their wellbeing and learning needs. We can't simply wait for the end of the assessment cycle to find out – by then it will be too late."*

To overcome this challenge, we need a program that measures and reports self-efficacy on a much more frequent basis providing a 'lead' indicator to maximise student learning ahead of academic results.

### Challenge 2: Overload & The Firehose Effect...

Student Wellbeing Programs are often rich in content which explores a wide range of wellbeing topics. If the goal of the program is to increase a student's 'knowledge' of wellbeing then 'content heavy' programs make sense. If the goal is to increase a student's 'experience' of wellbeing then content heavy wellbeing programs can have the opposite effect (known as the 'firehose effect') – overwhelming students with information and inadvertently increasing their stress levels. Here's another recent comment we've heard from a Principal: *"I'm worried we are overcrowding the wellbeing agenda in lesson plans and overloading students with so much wellbeing content that any stressed out student won't be able to benefit due to sheer overload."*

To overcome this challenge we need a program which enables us to 'triage' – streamlining content to match student needs.

### Challenge 3: The Loudest Voice (Survivor Bias) & The Social Desirability Effect

The third challenge we've seen is the loudest voice (survivor bias) and the social desirability effect. This is where teachers rely on the verbal feedback from students to customise their wellbeing strategies to best meet needs. Whilst this makes sense and is a really positive step, we still have 'gaps' in the feedback from people who don't comment at all (survivor bias) and/or tell us what they think we want to hear as opposed to how they really feel (social desirability bias).

When it comes to improving student wellbeing we need to look beyond what is actually being said and also remember it is often those who don't provide feedback at all that may have greater needs and concerns. Consider the following Principal quote: *"I'm also worried that what we are doing, albeit driven by student feedback – is only representative of the loudest voices – assuming that what they say is actually reflective of how they feel... how do we make sure they are telling us what they really need as well as better understand the support needs of the silent kids?"*

To overcome this challenge, we need a program that is able to gather feedback from the 'silent' participants in the classrooms and increases the likelihood of 'authentic' responses from everyone.

## A New Approach: The Student Pulse Program

In order to maximise student self-efficacy for EVERY student we need to address the three big challenges outlined above: (1) measure self-efficacy on a much more frequent basis and respond to needs in real time; (2) avoid the firehose effect by streamlining wellbeing content to match student needs; and (3) reduce the risk of avoidance and bias to gain genuine feedback from all students. We designed and implemented the [Student Pulse Program](#) as a frontline support strategy to maximise student self-efficacy for every student – ensuring it was effective in both remote learning and classroom settings. A quick summary of the key elements is below:

### 1. Weekly Student Pulse Survey System

Using a weekly Pulse Survey, students self-assess across 4 simple questions measuring the four factors of student self-efficacy. Completing the weekly Pulse Survey serves 3 purposes: (1) increasing self-awareness about each of the four factors of student self-efficacy; (2) creating a continuous data set that can be tracked over time as well as highlighting priority areas for support; and (3) a priming activity before engaging in deeper reflection and goal setting during wellbeing lessons. This strategy effectively addresses Challenge 1 (After the Horse has Bolted) and Challenge 3 (The Loudest Voice).

### 2. Scorecards & Dashboards To Identify Priority Areas

An important component of the Student Pulse Program is the use of scorecards and dashboards to identify priority areas and streamline interventions at a class/year level and whole of school level. There are a range of reporting and analytic tools that can maximise the usefulness of Student Pulse data. Monthly class level scorecards have proven to be really useful for students to understand and identify class trends and shape their own collective learning and wellbeing conversations. Executive summary dashboards have also been really useful for teaching staff and school leaders to examine 'hot spot' issues versus 'whole of school' trends. Using these reporting tools to streamline content delivery for student wellbeing strategies addresses Challenge 2 (The Firehose Effect).

### 3. Wellbeing Lessons Plans & Reflection Tools

The final critical element of the Student Pulse Program is the use of weekly wellbeing lesson plans and reflection tools that are customised to focus on priority areas. During the pilot phase of the research, two separate wellbeing lesson plans and reflective tools were developed to suit age appropriate contexts (upper primary/jun secondary and middle/snr secondary). These processes and tools are designed to maximise psychological safety and engagement which increases the likelihood of genuine engagement amongst students less inclined to participate authentically - thus overcoming Challenge 3 (Survivor Bias and Social Desirability Effect).

### 4. Bringing It All Together: EVERY Student Flourishing

Ensuring every student can flourish is a critical component of becoming a 'High Performance School'. The term 'Student's Flourishing' refers to student wellbeing in the context of learning – of which the most critical factor is 'student self-efficacy'. Schools rightly must take the lead role in maximising student self-efficacy and there are a range of wellbeing initiatives and programs designed to do this. However, we've also discovered that there are three major challenges many schools face in making sure 'every' student can flourish. We can overcome these challenges using the [Student Pulse Program](#) which (1) increases self-awareness about each of the four factors of student self-efficacy; (2) creates a continuous data set that can be tracked over time as well as highlighting priority areas for support; and (3) is a priming activity before engaging in deeper reflection and goal setting during wellbeing lessons.

Importantly we can use the [Student Pulse Program](#) effectively for students who are learning remotely or in classroom settings – an increasingly important consideration in both the current state of play and in the future of education. Maximising student self-efficacy is absolutely vital not just to ensure academic success but to give students confidence in their own abilities to complete their work, deepen their learning, actively seek help, collaborate and maintain their motivation. These are the essential skills not just for students, but also for adults as life-long learners and the tools they will need as the leaders of tomorrow to build a better world for us all!

## Outcome Data

Data obtained during the initial pilot programs showed improvements in levels of student self-efficacy over time. Some of the data from our pilot programs in secondary colleges is shown in the Table below. As you can see the program is driving improvements in student self-efficacy as evidenced by some very positive trends across all four factors and the global score of student self-efficacy.

Time 1						Time 2					
	Completion	Achievement	Help Seeking	Self-Motivation	SE		Completion	Achievement	Help Seeking	Self-Motivation	SE
Year 12	22.57	29.17	24.17	28.83	26.68	Year 12	48.06	55.76	57.76	63.34	54.48
Year 11	22.88	29.88	24.88	29.22	26.98	Year 11	43.61	51.61	54.61	59.61	51.86
Year 10	22.50	29.50	24.50	29.00	26.75	Year 10	44.50	52.50	55.50	60.50	53.25
Year 9	22.50	29.50	24.50	29.00	26.75	Year 9	44.50	52.50	55.50	60.50	53.25
Year 8	22.50	29.50	24.50	29.00	26.75	Year 8	44.50	52.50	55.50	60.50	53.25
Year 7	22.50	29.50	24.50	29.00	26.75	Year 7	44.50	52.50	55.50	60.50	53.25
Total	18.44	24.44	24.44	28.44	26.44	TOTAL	72.67	80.67	82.67	88.67	78.67
	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%		100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Response rates were also very high – especially in schools where lesson time was set aside for students to complete their Pulse Survey.

Beyond the quantitative metrics, qualitative feedback from students about wellbeing lessons and debriefing class level scorecards was very also positive.

A review of data from reflection tools showed students were reflecting (see goal setting) effectively (see example).

### Weekly Student Reflection Tool

Name: **EXAMPLE STUDENT** Date: **DD/MM/YY**

*Students reflect on their current state and progress over the past week and set goals for the week ahead.*

**1. Completing My Schoolwork**

My Success

My Challenge

My Goal For The Week

1. Completing my first draft of English journal article

Understanding formulae re-arrangement in Maths B.

Complete the Religion homework assignment

**2. Improving My Grading**

My Success

My Challenge

My Goal For The Week

2. Talking to my teachers when I didn't understand

Not completing early personal activities for class of home games in Maths B. test

Read all the Business and Science study notes before the test.

**3. Getting Help & Support**

My Success

My Challenge

My Goal For The Week

3. Asking my friend Jane for help understanding a Religion homework question

Not asking teachers questions during lessons when I don't understand

Have the courage to ask the teacher questions during lessons if I don't understand

**4. Staying Motivated**

My Success

My Challenge

My Goal For The Week

4. Getting all my homework done by Friday to have a homework over weekend and could celebrate my birthday!

Avoiding some of the lesson testing and study tasks in English and Business

Attempt all the work I need to do in English before shopping or changing hair!

## Bringing It All Together: EVERY Student Flourishing

Ensuring every student can flourish is a critical component of becoming a 'High Performance School'. The term 'Student's Flourishing' refers to student wellbeing in the context of learning – of which the most critical factor is 'student self-efficacy'. Schools rightly must take the lead role in maximising student self-efficacy and there are a range of wellbeing initiatives and programs designed to do this. However, we've also discovered that there are three major challenges many schools face in making sure 'every' student can flourish. We can overcome these challenges using the [Student Pulse Program](#) which (1) increases self-awareness about each of the four factors of student self-efficacy; (2) creates a continuous data set that can be tracked over time as well as highlighting priority areas for support; and (3) is a priming activity before engaging in deeper reflection and goal setting during wellbeing lessons.

Importantly we can use the [Student Pulse Program](#) effectively for students who are learning remotely or in classroom settings – an increasingly important consideration in both the current state of play and in the future of education. Maximising student self-efficacy is absolutely vital not just to ensure academic success but to give students confidence in their own abilities to complete their work, deepen their learning, actively seek help, collaborate and maintain their motivation. These are the essential skills not just for students, but also for adults as life-long learners and the tools they will need as the leaders of tomorrow to build a better world for us all!

Dr Pete Stebbins PhD

Dr Pete Stebbins, PhD, is a workplace psychologist, executive coach & author of the recently released book: *"The Five Disciplines of Extraordinary School Leaders"*. Pete has many years of research and professional practice behind him working extensively in education and health. Pete is the director of the *High Performance Schools Program* working with a large number of schools to maximise staff and student outcomes.

Published By

Dr Pete Stebbins  
High Performance Schools, Ltd.