In Focus webinar:
Cultivating inclusive practices for mentally healthy school communities

Be You In Focus webinar handout

Cultivating inclusive practices to enhance mentally healthy school communities
November 2022

This resource contains:

- A quick summary of key concepts
- Links to resources
- Attendee Questions and Answer panel responses
- In Practice reflective questions.

Quick summary of key concepts and messages

- Inclusion is more than shared values, policy, and staff education, it's about coming together to actively celebrate diversity within your school community.
- Hindsight bias: our tendency to look back at a time or situation that we could not predict at the time and think the outcome was easily predictable. Also called the 'knew-it-all-along' effect.
- Plan for inclusion; revisit and review what builds connection for young people in your community (include students in this discussion).
- Schools can enhance protective factors and belonging.
- Young people who feel unsafe or feel excluded often disengage in education.
- Empower educators to ask questions and engage in inclusive practices.
- The importance of language to support the wellbeing of non-binary and trans students.
- Curiosity is caring; it's okay to make mistakes – acknowledge, apologise, and continue to develop relationship/support.
- A sense of comfort with the uncomfortable is advised where educators feel empowered to engage with young people exploring their identity and or experiencing early signs of mental distress.

Links to resources

Please find below a selection of resources either shared during the webinar or used in preparation for the webinar.

Be You Professional Learning:

- [Early Support domain](#) (Notice, Enquire and Provide modules)
- [Mentally Healthy Communities domain](#) (Understand, Connect & Include modules)

Be You Tools and Information

- [Mental Health Continuum](#)
- [BETLS Observation Tool](#)

BETLS is an acronym for **b**ehaviour, **e**motions, **t**houghts, **l**earning and **s**ocial relationships.

- Action Planning for Wellbeing and Inclusive Communities
- Mental Health Services and Support

Fact Sheets

- Be You Communication Skills for Educators
- Be You Before Recommending Additional Support
- Be You Recommending Additional Support

Other websites

Healthy Relationships and Sexual Health Videos shared by Kirstine

- Being Me | True Relationships and Reproductive Health (November 2021)
- Busting myths on healthy relationships and sexual health for multicultural young people – full | True Relationships and Reproductive Health (March 2022)

LGBTQIA+ community links

- Switchboard
- PFLAG
- Minus 18
- Q life
- LGBTQIA+ Health Australia
- Safe Space Resources | True Relationships and Reproductive Health

Firs Nations community links

- Reconciliation Australia
- WellMob
- 13YARN
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Identity, Sexuality and Gender Identity | True Relationships and Reproductive Health
- Thirrili

Refugee and migrant community links

- Australian Migrant Resource Centre
- Refugee Council of Australia

First Nations videos

Ask Away - Identity (Healthy Communities Tasmania June 2021)
Ask Away - Stereotypes (Healthy Communities Tasmania June 2021)
Ask Away - Looking After Your Health (Healthy Communities Tasmania June 2021)
Ask Away - Truth and History (Healthy Communities Tasmania June 2021)

References

- [National Report: Writing Themselves in 4 | The health and wellbeing of LGBTQA+ young people in Australia2021 (Hill et al 2021, La Trobe University)](#)
- [Rainbow Bridges: Improving mental health services for the LGBTQIA+ and CALD intersection (headspace.org.au)](#)
- [National Mental Health and Wellbeing Survey (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2021)](#)
- [Closing the Gap Report 2020 | School Attendance](#) (Ongoing Commonwealth Government Initiative)
- [Hindsight 40 years on: An interview with Baruch Fischhoff (Olivier Klein, Faculté des Sciences Psychologiques et de l'Education, Université Libre de Bruxelles, Avenue Franklin Roosevelt 50, 1050 Brussels, Belgium).](#)

Attendee questions and panel answer responses

1. Some of our staff are very resistant to change? Could you share some strategies we could employ?

- take all staff on the journey, provide forums and opportunities for information sharing
- set strategic priorities around inclusion with the whole staff, help them to understand the diverseness of the community and students likely to need support
- be firm in your leadership of the direction the school is taking, reinforce key messages important to your community, for example, "Not tolerance - Not acceptance…. but celebration!"
- share school data (enrolment, engagement, wellbeing, and student feedback)
- share the willingness of family services to suggest your school is a safe place for young people exploring their identity
- provide staff with support and encourage them to access employee assistance program or GP if needed
- acknowledge staff respond to change in different ways, however if staff are resistant to providing a safe school community, it may be necessary to call this out and take a formal performance pathway.

2. How do we promote inclusion in faith-based schools?

- diverse communities exist in all education sectors and young people deserve the same access to support when they should require it
- there are lots of faith-based messages that align beautifully to assist in creating inclusion for all, for example, non-denominational community spirit (church and charity) caring for self and caring others - align these messages with the culture of the school to support staff and students
- have multiple options for staff and students to access support, additional to the school chaplaincy service
- ensure the school board set the priority of a safe school community
- leverage school and church groups to bring community together

- ensure diverse representation on school boards.

3. How do we manage conversations with students unsure about gender identity at a young age (ages 10-12)?

- build rapport with the young person, curiosity is caring, and they may need to talk things through often, open conversations about feelings, emotions and attitudes can really help
- protectively interrupt the young person if they raise things at an inappropriate place of time, ensure you get back to them
- don't assume something is wrong because they would like to talk about their identity
- use correct terminology, answer in a simple and honest way
- liaise with people supporting the child to ensure they are on the same page, engage with the family/carers and talk through the importance of role models and open communication
- conversations start early; encourage the young person to talk and ask questions
- refer family/carers to appropriate counselling, specialist, or medical service
- an educator is a protective factor for a young person and they can provide children with information and skills that can help prevent sexual abuse.

See resource: Communicating about sexuality with children safely

4. What if the diversity is from the teacher? How can you feel included and understood amongst the staff?

- ensure respect for each other and equality is incorporated into the school values for both staff and students
- have an inclusive recruitment strategy for your school community as you would in any organisation
- having representation of LGBTQA+ within the teacher community who may be willing to demonstrate leadership of programs
- visibility of wellbeing for all, and visibility of diversity between students and staff can empower inclusivity within the community too.

5. How do we implement change in schools that are resistant to change?

- really important to meet people where they're at, and to engage them in the process of change, so that they feel like they've been part of that process
- Individuals have different starting points, take the staff and parent/carers community through the steps of change, by providing education and information as needed

- actively engage staff in trying to help be part of a positive solution in creating an inclusive culture
- for community to call out conscious or unconscious bias, provide examples of inclusive practice for staff and students to feel safe to be who they truly are
- for school leaders to take action to create change for the modern and evolving communities they are supporting today and tomorrow, by creating Action Plans, for wellbeing, inclusion and/or reconciliation, in collaboration with representatives from across the community such as the broader staff, Wellbeing Team, student leaders etc. Be You has a number of resources to support Educator Wellbeing, including the Educator Wellbeing Plan.

6. How do teachers model inclusive practice?

- school leaders to be present at staff training and approachable for any questions they may have at any time
- exemplary school leaders participating in school celebrations
- staff actively supporting inclusive practices
- grappling with inclusive practices is imperfect; the willingness of educators to give it ago knowing they will make mistakes, e.g., misgendering happens apologise and move on
- model inclusive practices like the correct use of pronouns so that people can see you are genuine about it, modelling it and doing it every single day, and every single interaction with everybody, from staff to students

7. What types of activities or methods have created an inclusive classroom?

- visibility of posters with inclusive branding and logos from support groups and community services
- ensuring the school values are visible and consider the rights of all individuals to access a safe school and quality education
- that educators are clear on their roles in representing the school values through words and actions
- students are supported by educators if their behaviour and actions are not inclusive to others, consider the role of restorative practices and ways to build empathy in understanding the perspective of the other person
- a culture of help-seeking is normalised and having resources available in classrooms for students to access
- we think about classrooms and learn in spaces in a less traditional way, consider indoor and outdoor learning spaces and connection to land and country
- provide a social and emotional learning framework for students that empowers young people to understand and explore their identity in a safe way and seek support if they are questioning
- empower educators to teach students skills for resilience and have the skills to notice, inquire sensitively and provide support

- ensure diverse groupings of students and multi-ability activities enable students to interact and socialise, learn about each other's individuality, and form respectful bonds (avoid clicks and dominant groups in the classroom)
- ensure communication platforms are utilised appropriately during class-time (consider usernames etc.)

8. How can parents reflect what young people are learning at school around diversity and inclusion?

There are things that parents/carers can do if they are wanting to sign post to their young person that they are open to LGBTQIA+ people and supportive of diversity:

- establishing opportunities for open communication from an early age (by the time that child becomes aware of their diverse gender or sexuality they will already be aware that their parents or carers are going to be open and receptive to that)
- provide reassure that disclosing identity to family, and parents and carers can be the hardest thing that a young gender/sexually diverse ever needs to do
- consider how they respond if there's an LGBTQIA+ person on the TV or if there's a homophobic or transphobic joke or comment made. Showing that you don't agree and are supportive and inclusive of LGBTQIA+ people
- explore resources such as those listed in the resource section (pages 2-3)
- ask the school for information and support.

9. How do we contact our Be You Consultant?

If you are a participating, Be You school or service and you would like to get in contact with your, Be You Consultant, visit **beyou.edu.au**

Log in to your account, then click on 'My Learning Community'. Click on 'Supports' and you will find your Be You Consultant listed there if you are an Action Team leader. If you are not a participating school, then please complete **this web form** and we will get back to you. The following subject line should be selected: Find out more about Be You for Schools.

Reflective questions to utilise in Action Team meetings and/or other relevant school meetings

Questions to consider for individual wellbeing support

- Is wellbeing visible in your school and do educators, students and parents know how to access support?
- How is help seeking normalized in your school community?
- How do LGBTQIA+ or First Nation students know they are safe in your community?
- What supports are in place for at risk groups within your school community?

- How do educators safely enquire when supporting young people in your community?

Questions to consider whole school culture

- Does your school's Student Engagement Framework seek to engage a diverse community?
- Does the current Uniform Policy allow for diversity and inclusion and the expression of student individuality?
- What's in the school calendar to celebrate diversity? (e.g. Cultural Diversity Week, IDAHOBIT Day, Mardi Gras, International Day of World Indigenous Peoples)
- What opportunities exist for community services to visit your school and highlight events and activities?

Questions to develop student agency

- What peer leadership programs or groups support student diversity in your school? (Consider lunch and after school connections.)
- Are students identifying as LGBTQIA+ or First Nations provided with opportunities to contribute to the planning of school events or opportunities to become peer leaders?

Questions to empower school leaders to create inclusion

- What is student wellbeing data informing you about your community?
- Do you have an Action Team to drive inclusive practices within your school?
- What are the actions and words that create inclusive practice and culture in your school?
- How does school leadership encourage staff diversity and inclusion at your school? (Consider recruitment, induction and policy.)

Mental Health Services and Support

Beyond Blue

24/7 mental health support service

1300 22 4636
beyondblue.org.au

headspace

Online support and counselling to young people aged 12 to 25

1800 650 890 (9am-1am daily)
For webchat, visit: headspace.org.au/eheadspace

Kids Helpline

24/7 crisis support and suicide prevention services for children and young people aged 5 to 25

1800 55 1800
kidshelpline.com.au

1800RESPECT

24/7 support for people impacted by sexual assault, domestic violence and abuse

1800 737 732
1800respect.org.au

Lifeline

24/7 crisis support and suicide prevention services

13 11 14
lifeline.org.au

Suicide Call Back

24/7 crisis support and counselling service for people affected by suicide

1300 659 467
suicidecallbackservice.org.au

Mensline

24/7 counselling service for men

1300 78 99 78
mensline.org.au

QLife

LGBTI peer support and referral

1800 184 527 (6pm-10pm daily)
qlife.org.au (online chat 3pm-12am daily)

If you are concerned about someone at risk of immediate harm, call 000 or go to your nearest hospital emergency department.

You can view and download this poster on the Be You website.