Careers Practitioners Seminar

Session 2 - Supporting student well-being during and post pandemic

PRESENTED BY: Dr Stella Laletas
Educational & Developmental Psychologist | Lecturer (Inclusive Education, Psychology, Counselling)

DATE: June 17, 2021
My background

- **Pre-Monash:**
  - Employed by the Department of Education (DET) Victoria for 20 plus years
    - Classroom secondary teacher
    - Program for Students with Disabilities Co-Ordinator
    - School Leader in Student Wellbeing

- **Monash University**
  - Lecturer in Psychology, Counselling and Inclusive Teacher Education
  - Research interests lie in understanding the experiences of vulnerable student population and exploring how these needs can best be supported. This research is underpinned by my commitment to promoting social and emotional well-being in education.

- **Endorsed Educational & Developmental Psychologist**
  - Clinical Practice-Assessment, Intervention and Counselling Children & Adolescents
Ask questions - We are here to support you and your learning journey.

Rename yourself to match your full name – Do so by clicking on the Participant button, hovering over your name in the Participant section, and clicking “Rename”.

Mute your microphone when listening – This is less distracting for the group and helps to keep background noise levels down.

Raise your hand or wave to get our attention – To ask a question or make a comment, feel free to wave at the lecturer or use the “Raise hand” button.

Use the chat function – You can send a message to everyone or privately.

Actively engage in the various activities - Everyone’s input is valued and encouraged. Please engage as fully as you can in the break out activities. When in your groups, you can call on a presenter by clicking the “Ask for help” button.

Video on – This will facilitate better connections, communication and learning.
How can we support students’ social and emotional learning during and post the COVID-19 pandemic?

Overview

• **Section One:** What are the challenges faced by our students during and post the COVID-19 pandemic?
• **Section Two:** Frameworks that help us understand students needs
• **Section Three:** How can ‘we’ (teachers and educational support staff) help?
Section One: What are the challenges faced by our students during and post the COVID-19 pandemic?

What does the research say...

- **International Research**
  - School closures due to COVID-19 have left more than a billion students out of school (Shek, 2020)
  - Adolescents, worldwide, have been severely affected by the pandemic and its related restrictions such as decreased physical activity, sleep problems, eating disorders and domestic abuse were other complaints, and expressed negative views about distance education (Lestari & Gunawan, 2020)
  - Many studies reported a global worsening of social and emotional wellbeing of students during the pandemic. Also report low motivation and low student engagement (Alkhamees et al., 2020; Di Pietro et al., 2020; Hasan & Bao, 2020; Lestari & Gunawan, 2020)

- **Current research projects based on experiences of Australian schools...**
  - Laletas, S., Sharma, U., Grove, C & May. F. (In progress). What role did school leaders play in navigating access to learning for all secondary students during the COVID-19 pandemic?
Monash Research Team - Our preliminary findings
What did we learn?

• **Students report**
  • Accessible communication with their teachers
  • Provide opportunities for students to work together and connect in small groups
  • Create opportunities to connect socially with peers and see a different side to their teachers
  • Offer consultation times for students to check in and ask questions

• **Teachers report**
  • Collaboration, teaching teams and working groups
  • Support for leading teachers by principal class while encouraging autonomy
  • Adaptability and flexibility is important in response to challenges
  • Seeking better understanding of students learning and wellbeing (& mental health) from Education Support Staff (ESS) - e.g. school counsellors, school psychologist, specialist professionals (speech pathologists, occupational therapist etc...)

• **Education Support Staff** ... I will cover in Section 3
How remote learning during COVID-19 has changed education

What has the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted about education systems around the world?

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OSAuyLIJStw
Section Two: Theoretical frameworks that help us understand students needs

• Bronfenbrenner Ecological Systems Theory

Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs

- Self-actualization: Inner fulfillment
- Esteem: Self-worth, accomplishment, confidence
- Social: Family, friendship, intimacy, belonging
- Security: Safety, employment, assets
- Physiological: Food, water, shelter, warmth
Factors that influence student learning and wellbeing

- Internal factors
- Temperament, Attachment & Personality
- Cognitive abilities
- Social and emotional development
- Environmental Factors
- Family
- Culture
- Friends/relationships with peers
- School
- Life events - COVID-19 pandemic
Risk factors

There are a range of factors that may contribute to a child or young person becoming disengaged, or at risk of disengaging from school. These include:

**Family and community factors** such as poverty, parental unemployment and/or low educational attainment, homelessness, transience or living in out-of-home care, Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander status, refugee background, family breakdown/relationship issues and domestic violence.

**Personal factors** such as physical or mental health issues, disability, behavioural issues, offending behaviour and/or contact with police or justice system, substance misuse or dependency, pregnancy or parenting, caring responsibilities, and learning difficulties.

**School-related factors** such as negative relationships with teachers or peers, unsupportive school culture, limited subject options and lack of student participation in decision making.

Young people may often experience multiple risk factors, which may be interdependent. For example, family breakdown may be a factor in substance misuse, which may itself contribute to other problems such as offending behaviour.

The impact of risk factors on engagement, health and wellbeing will vary between individuals, depending on their levels of resilience and protective factors such as support from a trusted adult. While the presence or one or more risk factor does not inevitably mean a child or young person will become disengaged, it is important that schools have an awareness of these factors to be able to identify and address issues as early as possible.

COVID-19 pandemic has amplified the risks factors
Education Support Staff (Student wellbeing team; career counsellors, specialist teachers etc...)  
- Networking with colleagues to debrief and share ideas and resources  
- Regular team meetings to identify and address individual needs of students ‘at risk’  
- Working in partnership with students and parents to understand and support students individual needs  
- Collaborative, solution focused approaches (identifying and setting individual goals, help students plan for action) and strength based strategies to support student wellbeing and learning

Strength based approaches build on the student’s (client’s) strengths. Specifically seeing them as resourceful and resilient when they are in adverse situations such as the pandemic.

(Strengths-Based Models in Social Work; McCashen, Wayne (2005))
Section Three-How can we help?

A Comparison Between Deficit & Strength-Based Thinking

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**Strength-Based Thinking** is a common sense idea which discovers the greatest qualities of what we do by combining:

- Personal Strengths
- Positive Experiences
- Individual Initiative
- Personal Responsibility
- Independence
- Capacity to Act

Source: https://comprehensibleantiquity.com/2020/03/01/deficit-thinking-why-educators-for-the-21st-century-must-confront-the-deficit-model/
Know the student – Identify risk and protective factors and help teachers understand individual needs of students due to their circumstances.
Support positive mental health and wellbeing through working with individuals and groups (students, teachers, parents).

- Approaches and strategies that help:
  - humanistic counselling skills influence by Carl Rogers (student cented)
    - Listening.
    - Empathy.
    - Genuiness.
    - Unconditional positive regard.
    - Open Questions -- A questioning process to assist the individual client in clarifying or exploring thoughts.
  - micro-skills help build rapport and trusting relationships, these skills include
    - Attending.
    - Silence.
    - Reflecting and Paraphrasing.
    - Clarifying and the Use of Questions.
    - Focusing.
How can we help?

Provide group sessions and programs focused on
1. promoting social and emotional learning
2. building academic resilience
We can help students build social and emotional skills by explicitly teaching these key competencies:

- **Emotional awareness**
- **Self-regulation management** - Teaching strategies related to:
  - controlling impulses and delaying gratification;
  - handling stress by learning the value of exercise, mindfulness and relaxation methods;
  - manage feelings by monitoring ‘self-talk’ to catch negative messages such as internal put-downs, and realising what is behind a feeling, for example, the hurt that underlies anger;
  - practice positive ‘self-talk’, using positive internal dialogue as a way to cope with a topic or challenge pro-social behaviour;
  - using steps for problem-solving and decision-making that involves impulse control, goal-setting, ide and anticipating consequences; and
  - building resilience through persistence and self-motivation
- **Building resilience** - The process of adapting well to change and/or adversity

Teachable moments
How can we help?

• By understanding how resilience can be nurtured
• Myths about resilience:
  • Being resilient doesn’t mean that a person doesn’t experience difficulty or distress
  • Feeling disappointment and sadness is normal part of living
  • Resilience is not a trait that people either have or have not

Brain science of resilience indicates that ‘we’ can make a difference
**Academic resilience** is the students ability to deal effectively with academic setback, stress, and study pressure.

Resilience = the interaction of individual characteristics/personality and the environment

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Academic Resilience (cont’d)
How can we help?

• Provide opportunities to learn through information & resources such as Apps and Government endorsed websites
  • REACHOUT for schools https://schools.au.reachout.com/
  • Kidshelpline resources for schools https://kidshelpline.com.au/schools/resources
  • Raising Children’s Network https://raisingchildren.net.au/teens
  • BeYou (Beyond Blue Network) https://beyou.edu.au/
  • Positive Self-talk- https://positivepsychology.com/positive-self-talk/
Teacher Self-care

• Connect with your networks
• Mentor and supervision
• Use meditation and mindfulness strategies
• Consider measurable outcomes
• Be kind to yourself

e.g. Mindfulness can help:
• Pay attention. It’s hard to slow down and notice things in a busy world.
• Live in the moment. Try to intentionally bring an open, accepting and discerning attention to everything you do.
• Accept yourself. Treat yourself the way you would treat a good friend.
• Focus on your breathing.

Thank you!

Questions

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