



Wellbeing for All

AISA's Child Protection & Wellbeing Programme Strategy





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ABOUT AISA

The Association of International Schools in Africa (AISA), established in 1969, is a non-profit education association supporting the professional learning and school improvement strategies of international schools on the continent of Africa. Based in Nairobi, Kenya, AISA offers a professional learning programme specifically designed to meet the unique needs of our diverse member school community. AISA also offers a number of supplementary programmes, scholarships and facilitates collaboration among member schools to advance school effectiveness and improve student learning.



1. Introduction

Today's students face a future of environmental degradation, global warming, civil unrest, health pandemics, population pressures, terrorism, growing inequality, a rapidly changing employment market, racial tensions and many other social issues, all of which are taking a toll on the mental health of young people today. Schools are now tasked with an increasingly vital role in assisting students to develop cognitive, social and emotional skills to face this rapidly changing global landscape. It is critical that AISA responds by supporting member schools to develop the skills and dispositions needed to create schools where students develop internal resilience to prevent mental illness and competencies that will enable them to flourish.

The AISA Landscape

AISA has been a leading advocate in the international school's sector on the urgent and vital need to ensure that all our schools offer a safe and protective environment for students.

Whilst huge steps forward have been made in recent years, further supports are needed to improve the protective environment for children in AISA member schools¹:

- * Nearly 40% of AISA member schools do not have a Child Protection team. Furthermore, those that do require ongoing training, guidance and support to ensure they function effectively and achieve their mandate.
- * 70% of schools are yet to develop an external multi-disciplinary team. This represents a significant risk factor to schools, particularly when needing to respond to allegations of abuse and neglect.
- * AISA school counsellors report feeling overwhelmed by the large number of competing demands, including managing and dealing with difficult and complex situations involving child protection and general children in crisis situations.

Problem Statement

The rise of young people experiencing mental health issues has been well documented. Ask any teacher or school counsellor and they will attest to the growing number of students struggling with body image issues and emotional regulation issues such as depression and anxiety².

The World Health Organisation (WHO) estimates that worldwide, 10-20% of children and adolescents experience mental disorders, with half of all mental health illnesses beginning by the age of 14. If untreated, these conditions severely influence children's development, their educational attainment and potential to live fulfilling and productive lives (WHO, 2018). Estimates from the American Academy of Paediatrics are even more alarming. They report that as many as one in every five teenagers experience depression at some point during adolescence, which often goes undiagnosed and untreated.

International students in AISA member schools face a unique set of stressors that can negatively impact mental health. Though living and attending school in a foreign country can be a positive, life-defining experience, the challenges of multiple transitions, living cross-culturally, separation from extended family and other support structures, witnessing

¹ AISA Baseline Survey, 2017

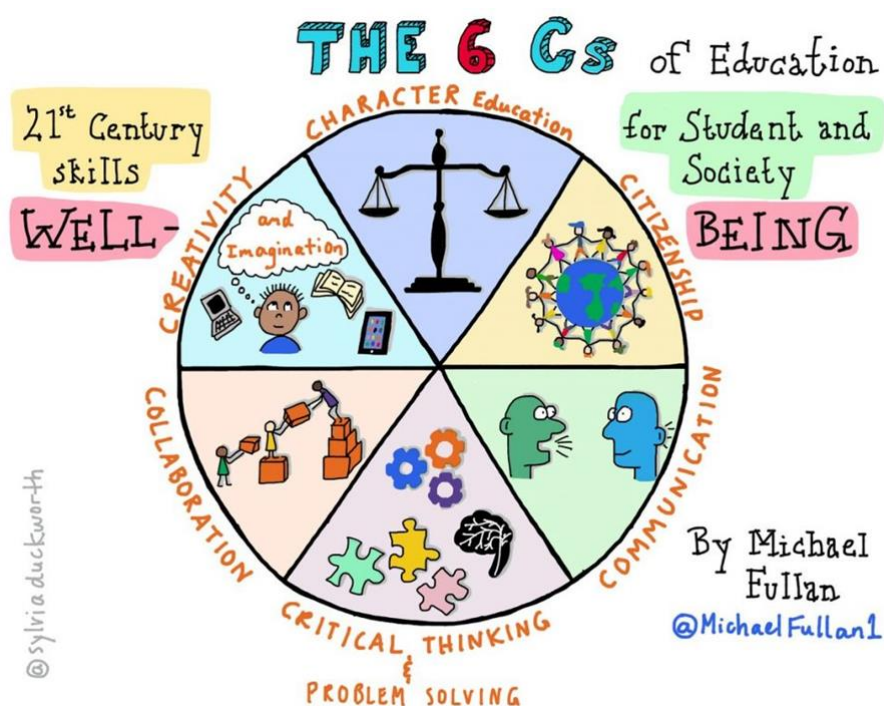
² AISA Counsellor's Survey. 2018

extreme poverty, living with increased security and disease risks, can impact negatively on the mental health and well-being of both students and teachers in the AISA community.

Given the rising levels of mental health issues, it is critical that schools equip young people with the skills to build resilience and foster hope in order to prevent mental illness.

2. Whole-School Approach to Child Protection & Wellbeing

Students thrive at school when they feel safe, happy and confident.




Expanding the Agenda – Wellbeing & Education

What is the fundamental mission of an international school in the 21st century?

All schools, international or otherwise, must adapt to a broadening education agenda which expands schools' responsibilities to encompass not only academic performance, but students' social and emotional skills such as understanding and managing emotions, feeling empathy and responding compassionately to others, establishing positive relationships, working well with people from diverse backgrounds, navigating conflict, goal setting, civic engagement and making responsible decisions³. In essence, schools have a role to play not only in the cognitive development of students, but in fostering social and emotional competence (SEC).

³ Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL)



Research suggests that the development of positive social and emotional skills is fundamental to children’s mental health and well-being. Social and emotional skills are also important for children’s learning. Recent evidence suggests that children who participate in social and emotional learning (SEL) programmes demonstrate increased academic outcomes in addition to significantly improved social and emotional skills, attitudes and behaviour.⁴ Thus, “teaching for well-being is a key aspect of 21st century education” (Waters, 2011).

WHAT IS SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING?

Social and emotional learning (SEL) is the umbrella term used to describe school-based curriculum that develops social and emotional skills through programmes such as character education, bullying and substance abuse prevention, life-skills and strengths-based programmes.

In recent years Seligman’s work in positive psychology, the goal of which is to, “increase the amount of flourishing in your own life and on the planet” (2011), has spawned positive education which is greatly influencing SEL approaches in schools. Seligman’s PERMA model specifies five elements that contribute to this state of optimal well-being:

1. positive emotion,
2. engagement,
3. relationships,
4. meaning and
5. accomplishment

Positive education programmes foster these elements with the aim of promoting positive emotions, resilience and positive character strengths. In this way, positive psychology interventions distinguish themselves from SEL initiatives such as antibullying or depression reduction programs that seek to remove or reduce negative factors by instead focusing on building positive factors to enhance well-being.


Yet schools face competing demands and limited resources. Given such constraints, schools must prioritise and effectively implement evidence-based approaches that are likely to produce the maximum benefit. There is a growing body of research that suggests that universal school-based efforts to promote students SEC provide the most effective approach to enhancing children’s success in school and life.

Implementation Considerations: A Whole School Approach

In most cases, short-term SEL interventions produce short-lived results.⁵ Conversely, multi-year, multi-component programs are more likely to foster enduring benefits. When classroom curriculum is combined with a school culture that provides reinforcement from peers, family members, school personnel and the like, there is an increased likelihood that students will adopt positive social and health practices.

⁴ Durlak et al. 2011. The Impact of Enhancing Student’s Social and Emotional Learning: A Meta-Analysis of School-Based Interventions.

⁵ Greenberg et al. 2003. Enhancing School-Based Prevention and Youth Development Through Coordinated Social, Emotional, and Academic Learning



This means adopting a whole-school approach to child protection and well-being where their aims become an integral part of the DNA of the school, are reflected in school policies, organisational structure, the teaching and learning environment, the curriculum; essentially every aspect of school culture is focused on creating the conditions that promote students and staff to flourish.

Wellbeing for All – Teachers Matter

The expanded agenda of fostering social and emotional skills in students largely falls to teachers, who in addition to being subject matter experts, are now also called upon to implement positive psychology interventions (PPIs) or SEL activities within their classrooms. Teachers own social and emotional competence (SEC) and well-being are shown to have a direct relationship with classroom factors such as; teacher-student relationships, classroom management, SEL implementation and classroom climate. Teachers with higher levels of SEC and well-being are more likely to cultivate a classroom climate that is safe, supportive and contributes to the development of SEC. Jennings and Greenberg's (2009) prosocial classroom model suggests that SEC teachers will demonstrate skills and attitudes such as high self-awareness, social awareness, responsible decision making, self-management and relationship management (Jennings et al., 2013). This in turn will foster the conditions upon which students are more likely to flourish.

3. Expanding Our Agenda

AISA has established itself as a leader in promoting best practice child protection policy and programming in international schools in Africa and beyond. AISA is now proposing that it's Child Protection Programme be expanded to encompass well-being, for if children are to flourish, they need to feel safe, happy and confident, i.e. they need to experience high levels of well-being.

The goal of AISA's Child Protection and Well-being Programme:

To promote and foster the implementation of evidenced-informed child protection and well-being strategies in member schools that ensure that teachers, students and their school communities feel safe, supported and able to flourish.

AISA's Child Protection and Wellbeing Programme Framework

C

C

Foster a **collaborative** network amongst international experts and the AISA community to strengthen child protection and well-being programming.

A

A

Advocate for evidence-informed, best practice child protection and well-being programming in AISA member schools.

R


R

Develop **research**-based practice for child protection and well-being programming the AISA region.

E

E

Equip educators in AISA schools with the knowledge, skills and dispositions to implement best practice child protection and well-being programming.



The AISA Child Protection and Well-being Programme will consist of four strategic priorities:

1. COLLABORATE

‘Making the Connection’ remains one of the core functions of AISA and this is a critical component of the AISA Child Protection and Well-being Programme. AISA has formed significant partnerships with several leading child protection and well-being experts (see Section 5) which we are able to leverage to serve as advisors for our own programme as well as provide inputs for AISA and our member schools. AISA events and the various Community of Practice (CoP) Groups are tools to connect and foster a shared vision and community amongst AISA educators. AISA will also facilitate schools providing in-kind services to each other; training, advising and sharing resources from within the AISA community.

2. ADVOCATE

AISA will focus its advocacy on two key audiences; the broader international school community and the AISA member school community. For the former, AISA will continue to be a leading advocate for the urgent need to adopt best practice standards in child protection in international schools. We can speak authoritatively on the work and progress made in our region and will continue to produce and offer AISA resources to the broader international school community.


AISA will also continue to advocate and raise awareness amongst member schools on best practice child protection and well-being programming.

3. RESEARCH

AISA member schools operate in a unique context. What works in other parts of the world may not necessarily translate to our region. Furthermore, AISA member schools differ markedly amongst themselves, with hugely varying student numbers, access to resources, financial capacities and strategic priorities. AISA will take a leading role in working with member schools to identify promising strategies that are appropriate for our region. We will do this by:

- * **Well-being Research:** AISA will partner with Cardiff University and the University of Queensland to develop a research instrument that will seek to measure the well-being of AISA member school teachers and administrators. This will enable AISA to gather baseline data on well-being in the AISA region and compare changes over the coming years.
- * **Child Protection Research:** AISA has also undertaken baseline research on child protection programming in our member schools⁶. AISA will continue to undertake this research to measure the impact of our child protection programming.
- * **Online Consultation Group – Research:** AISA has pioneered Online Consultation Groups for AISA school counsellors to access clinical supervision. AISA will undertake research with the pilot group to better understand the efficacy of this program in shaping their knowledge, skills and attitudes/confidence. This research will help inform the

⁶ AISA Programme Baseline Report, November 2017



development of this programme both in the ASIA region and internationally as other Regional Associations consider its application for their context.

- * **Evidence informed strategies - Research Schools:** AISA partner with schools that are passionate about implementing a whole-school approach to well-being. AISA will work with these schools to identify and support strategies to equip and train staff to adopt an integrated approach to well-being. Learning's from these schools will then be used to guide other member schools on evidence-informed strategies that would be appropriate for our region. These schools would then act as leaders or incubators, training and sharing their experience with other AISA member schools, thereby ameliorating good practice throughout the region.

4. EQUIP

- * **Professional Learning:** AISA will provide numerous opportunities for schools to access high quality multi-modal and differentiated professional development that is sensitive to the needs and contextual considerations of their school. AISA Conference Deep Dives, PLI's and where requested, individual school training on well-being and child protection will be regular features of our annual learning programme. Webinar's on these topics will also be added to ensure that learning is accessible to all schools in our region.
- * **Resources:** AISA will also continue to develop resources on child protection to ensure that current best practice and trends are reflected in our Handbook's. The Child Protection Handbook will be re-developed and AISA will continue to provide input into the development of Parent's as Partners, a parent/community outreach curriculum.

AISA will also develop a Well-being Handbook – a how to guide for schools in the AISA region. The development of the handbook will be informed by the piloting of well-being strategies in the incubator schools, with reflections and case studies that will make it a practical and user friendly.

AISA will also curate well-being resources on the Knowledge Bank that also links to the Child Protection Education Portal housed by ICMEC.

Key Constituent's

Creating a protective school environment and classrooms that foster the development of social and emotional competencies in students involves a whole-school approach. All school staff need to be committed to modelling and supporting a school culture that is focused on creating the conditions for everyone to flourish.


AISA's Child Protection and Well-being Programme will therefore develop initiatives for the following key constituents:

SCHOOL HEADS & BOARD MEMBERS

Support provided by school leadership for *any* educational in innovation or initiative is a crucial factor in determining whether it 'takes hold'.

“Leadership acts as a catalyst without which other good things are unlikely to happen” (Leithwood, 2008).

School leadership support can influence SEL implementation in many ways, for example in setting priorities, a clear vision, securing funding, resources, staff straining and timetable allocation, to name just a few. AISA will raise awareness, provide resources, facilitate trainings and invite expert voices to engage with school leaders on child protection and well-being in international schools.

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- * **Professional Learning** – face to face child protection professional learning will be provided in the form of a pre-conference at the AISA Conference on a biennial basis. School Heads and Board Members will be a target audience for these learning experiences as they play a leading role in ensuring that child protection remains a strategic priority for member schools.

Well-being Deep Dives (covering a range of topics) for school leaders and the input of expert voices will also be a regular feature of the AISA conference programme.

- * **AISA Traumatic Incident Management Support Programme** – AISA will provide support to school's facing a traumatic incident. Support will be needs based and in response to a request from the Head of School.

TEACHERS

Classroom teachers and other school staff are increasingly called upon to conduct SEL programs, particularly in middle and high school. Research suggests that positive student outcomes can be achieved when teachers implement SEL or PPI, however, even when utilising evidenced based approaches, teachers must be able to implement the programs effectively in order to achieve positive results.

Research has shown that teacher implementation factors that impact outcomes include⁷:

- * Teacher perceptions of need and understanding of potential benefits of the programme,
- * Teacher self-efficacy, ie. the extent to which teachers feel they can undertake the programme effectively and with a degree of autonomy
- * Teacher skill, ie. their ability to implement the initiative with proficiency

AISA's programming and initiatives will be responsive to these factors.

AISA initiatives:

- * **Well-being Practice Group** – AISA will develop Online Practice Group(s) for any teacher that wants to engage and connect with other AISA teachers on well-being.
- * **Professional Learning:** Well-being Deep Dives will become a feature of all AISA Conferences so that teachers can understand the value of SEL which will address perception issues, and learn effective evidence-informed strategies that will address skill development
- * **Supporting Contemplative Practices in Schools:** Enhancing teacher well-being is important as teachers with higher social and emotional competence will be more likely to implement SEL effectively. Teachers with higher levels of well-being are also more likely to feel a sense of commitment to the school and community. Contemplative practices (such as mindfulness, yoga and self-reflection) have been shown to improve teacher well-being.

⁷ Durlak and Du Pre. 2008. Implementation matters: A review of research on the influence of implementation on program outcomes and the factors affecting implementation.



COUNSELLORS

School counsellors play a leading role in supporting school well-being and child protection programming. Counsellors often take a leading role in the leadership and implementation of the school child protection programme. They also deliver SEL curriculum, counsel students experiencing difficulties, advise teachers on student support strategies, meet with parents and provide support to teachers struggling with emotional issues. This represents a significant challenge, even for the most experienced school counsellor, particularly if they are the only counsellor in a school and or they are in a country with very limited access to other mental health care services.

Key AISA initiatives:

- ✦ **AISA Counsellor's Community of Practice (CoP)** – online community group of AISA school counsellors
- ✦ **AISA Online Consultation Groups** – in partnership with the Truman Group, clinical supervision is provided to AISA school counsellors.
- ✦ **Annual AISA Counsellors Professional Learning Institute** – this is a key annual event with a dual focus of strengthening collaboration and support amongst the AISA community as well as extending critical counselling skills
- ✦ **Webinars**- AISA will facilitate annual webinars for school counsellors. This will serve a dual purpose of fostering collaboration and equipping counsellors with best practice strategies.

DESIGNATED SAFEGUARING LEAD (DSL)/CHILD PROTECTION TEAM MEMBER

Creating safe, protective environments for students is the responsibility of all school staff. The DSL and other Child Protection Team Members play a crucial role in ensuring that a school remain focused and committed to implementing its policies and programmes in such a way as to create a culture where child protection is integrated into the fabric of the school. AISA will continue to play a valuable role in ensuring that schools have access to resources and training which will support schools to develop appropriate, context specific policies and programmes that promote the safety of all children.

Key AISA initiatives:

- ✦ **Child Protection Community of Practice (CoP) and Online Practice Groups:** AISA will provide a number of forums for Child Protection leads to access support and resources. In addition to AISA's online Community of Practice, AISA will establish Practice Groups who meet on monthly calls to gain support, share resources and discuss case studies.
- ✦ **Micro-credential:** In partnership with ICMEC & ECIS, AISA will develop a micro-credential for international school safeguarding/child protection leads. In addition to providing the skills and aptitudes needed for this role, the micro-credential will recognize the specific competencies attained by those gaining certification.
- ✦ **Resource Provision** – AISA will redevelop the Child Protection Handbook with reference to the latest best practice policy and programming guidance.
- ✦ **Professional Learning** – face to face Child Protection training will continue to feature in AISA's Professional Learning Programme.

- * **Online Professional Learning** – online access to Child Protection training with partner EduCare
- * **Child Protection Audit** – AISA is available to assist any school to undertake a Child Protection Audit using our newly developed tool
- * **Parents as Partners** – AISA has supported the development of this outreach framework & curriculum which schools can use to facilitate a shared understanding of child protection within the parent community
- * **Webinar's**- AISA will facilitate Child Protection webinars which are available to all member schools.

CO-PROFESSIONALS

To achieve positive child protection and well-being outcomes a school-wide and whole of school commitment is needed. This includes HR, Admissions, Communications, Business and Facilities Managers and other non-teaching staff. All have an important role to play in ensuring their school creates a safe, nurturing place for students. HR managers are involved in recruitment, induction training, performance appraisals and staff training. Facilities managers lead school security and oversee public spaces. Admissions and Communications play a valuable parent and community outreach role and Business Managers oversee the resourcing of all school initiatives. Developing these staff is therefore vital to ensuring that child protection and well-being is integrated into strategic planning for every school-system and operating procedure.

- * **Professional Learning**- Co-professionals will be included in the target audience of well-being and child protection professional learning.

4. Risks & Implementation Factors

There is a growing evidence and research base of what factors contribute to schools achieving successful outcomes in SEL of PPI programming⁸. These include:

- * Planning and foundations
- * Implementation support systems
- * Implementation environment
- * Implementer factors
- * Programme characteristics

With these in mind, listed here are key risks, identified from the literature and AISA's own research, which can negatively impact child protection and well-being programming in schools:

⁸ Humphrey. 2013. Social and Emotional Learning: A Critical Appraisal



✦ **School strategic environment – School culture**

‘We are (or become) what we measure.’ A primary rationale for taking a whole-school approach to child protection and well-being is ensuring that it is on everyone’s agenda. The goal of a whole-school approach is to embed child protection and well-being into the strategic priorities of the school, hiring practices, staff performance appraisals, professional development plans, school infrastructure, etc. The danger of siloing child protection and well-being is that it fails to get staff buy in, is not prioritised in terms of funding and resourcing, initiatives become fragmented and staff lose motivation and momentum when there is little support for initiatives.

✦ **Leadership**

Shifting school culture is not easy. Active leadership and backing are needed from the Head of School to drive cultural change and support staff as they develop and implement initiatives.

The school also needs to identify a leader or leaders from within the school who will champion efforts, support staff in implementation, source resources, reach out to parents and other key stakeholders and keep the school focused and moving forward on its mission. This position must be resourced in terms of time and funding.

✦ **Not another initiative – innovation fatigue**

As already discussed, any new initiative needs to be implemented with appropriate leadership support and resourcing. If teachers and other school staff are expected to implement child protection and well-being initiatives in addition to their already busy and highly stressed working context, the school will naturally meet resistance. Even if staff theoretically support the initiative, without the appropriate time allocation and resourcing, it is just another task to add to an already overly full schedule.

✦ **Teacher will - belief’s and attitude’s**

“Is student well-being really my job?” This comment, conveyed by an AISA member school teacher, may reflect the underlying beliefs and attitudes of many teachers. Raising the level of awareness, knowledge and understanding of SEL among teachers, as well as their comfort in delivering instruction in this area, is a necessary component for effective implementation.

Even with training, some teachers will be reluctant to teach or integrate social and emotional learning in their classroom practice. Schools will need to work hard to understand the barriers to uptake and adoption for their specific context and develop strategies to overcome barriers identified.

✦ **Teacher skill - teacher training & support**

Teachers cannot be expected to implement SEL or PPI initiatives without appropriate training. For most teachers, social and emotional learning was not part of their pre-service training. Schools need to provide training for staff to not only understand their role in SEL, but to develop their competencies and dispositions to deliver SEL effectively.




5. Programme Partners

AISA has already established several partners that provide critical support to AISA and our member schools. Listed here are partners that AISA will continue to work with to help support and guide our programming in this important area:

- * **Cardiff University:** Cardiff University undertook the first ever research into well-being in international schools. AISA has developed a partnership with Cardiff University to extend this research into the AISA region
- * **Doug Walker:** Clinical Director of Mercy Family Centre. Doug has trained AISA Counsellors in Cognitive Behaviour Intervention in Schools (CBITS) and provides in-country traumatic incident support.
- * **EduCare:** a provider of a range of online Child Protection curriculum.
- * **International Centre for Missing and Exploited Children (ICMEC):** ICMEC house the Education Portal – the online library of child protection related resources for international schools. They also deliver face to face child protection training and produce resources related specifically to international schools.
- * **Maria Hersey:** A consultant, Maria has been involved in leading Deep Dives on well-being to AISA conferences and also conducts in-school training.
- * **Mona Stuart/Safe Passage Across Networks (SPAN)**
- * **International Child Protection Taskforce (ITFCP)**
- * **IPEN/PESA:** These are two positive education networks. AISA has attended the PESA Conference which is the largest national positive education network in the world.
- * **Truman Group:** The Truman Group provides a clinical psychologist to lead the AISA Online Consultation Groups. They are also involved in facilitating the AISA Counsellor's PLI which also provides an opportunity for the consultation groups to meet face to face. The Truman Group is also available to offer online counselling to individuals from within the AISA community.

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