

Well-being strategies in secondary schools: An exploration of opportunities and Challenges in the Greater Ōtautahi Christchurch region

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Biography

Myron's teaching and research focus is in applied developmental psychology. He teaches into the Bachelor of Arts in Education, the Bachelor of Youth and Community Leadership, and the Child and Family Psychology programmes at the University of Canterbury. His recent research has focused on supporting community NGOs to review, evaluate, and re-develop their programmes for a stronger evidence-informed framework for their practice.

ABSTRACT

Although the potential value of school wellbeing initiatives is well recognized, and in Aotearoa New Zealand the Education Review Office has published a series of reports to support greater implementation (ERO, 2013, 2015a, 2015b, 2016a, 2016b), there is very little research that has examined the practical implications of applying these initiatives. To address this lacuna, the present study explored the development and implementation of wellbeing strategies in secondary schools in the greater Ōtautahi Christchurch region. Key wellbeing staff from eleven secondary schools were interviewed about the theoretical underpinning of their school's wellbeing strategy and their experiences with implementation. The findings showed that all the schools had attempted to facilitate both immediate and long-term wellbeing outcomes primarily for students but also for staff, with individual differences identified across the following themes: employing a whole-school approach, providing opportunities for life skill development, creating opportunities for self-determination or youth empowerment, promoting positive student-teacher relationships, and partnering with whānau and the wider community. This study highlights both the challenges and opportunities that schools face when implementing wellbeing initiatives and the need for future research to explore the process of overcoming barriers and engaging the whole school community.