



**International Network for School Social Work**

**<http://internationalnetwork-schoolsocialwork.htmlplanet.com>**

**Contact [mhuxtable@olympus.net](mailto:mhuxtable@olympus.net)**

## **Electronic Newsletter August 2018**

Editor: Marion Huxtable

### **The Well-Being of Students**

#### **A report from PISA, the Programme for International Student Assessment**

The mission of social work involves promoting people's well-being, including both the objective goal of helping them meet their basic human needs and the subjective goal of living in a way that makes them happy. The United Nations and the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) report annually on well-being and happiness around the world. A few countries, including South Korea and Bhutan, are actively promoting happiness through national policies. Some other countries (Australia, Austria, Belgium, Ecuador, Finland, Germany, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, Slovenia and the UK) have started to measure well-being, and a few of them are incorporating the data in social policy.

Countries that are planning on incorporating well-being into national policies need to focus attention on school policies and practices that promote well-being among children and youth. Consequently the OECD has turned its attention to measuring the objective and subjective well-being of the school population and using the data to make recommendations to school systems.

#### **The OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA)**

PISA examines and reports what students know in science, math and reading, plus various other aspects of schools such as policies, quality of education and equity. In 2015 PISA also measured Students' Well-Being and published results as Volume III: Students' Well-Being, one of five volumes of results of the 2015 survey. The study explored well-being measures ranging from negative indicators such as anxiety and low performance to positive outcomes such as motivation to achieve and life satisfaction.

A 27-page overview <http://www.oecd.org/pisa/PISA-2015-Results-Students-Well-being-Volume-III-Overview.pdf> includes information about overall life satisfaction, school-work related anxiety, bullying, motivation to achieve and relationships with others. The report shows large variations in various indicators including many that school social workers typically work on with students. Correlations between pairs of indicators such as life satisfaction and students' perception of support from teachers are also reported. These interactions between indicators are highly relevant to the interventions that school social workers provide for students who have problems at school and also for prevention programs that school social workers work on to improve school climate. Helping students cope with the web of factors that affect their lives is central to school social work.

An OECD PowerPoint <https://www.slideshare.net/OECD/EDU/the-wellbeing-of-students-new-insights-from-pisa> reports results graphically and provides many suggestions for what teachers, schools and parents can do to enhance students' well-being. These suggestions reflect typical prevention programs and interventions that school social workers offer, such as:



- Intervention for students with low levels of life satisfaction
- Programs to help all students develop psychological well-being
- Training teachers to recognize and address anxiety over school-work
- Helping schools address the needs of disadvantaged students
- Involving parents in school activities
- Teaching students how to use the Internet in a healthy way
- Implementing programs to prevent bullying
- Providing support to victims, bullies and by-standers
- Helping schools develop practices to raise intrinsic motivation, rather than offering rewards
- Providing programs to help students develop positive relationships
- Helping teachers develop positive relationships with students especially vulnerable students.

Now that governments, school systems and teachers are increasingly recognizing the importance of students' well-being and life satisfaction, there is opportunity for school social workers to become involved in training school staff in effective methods for promoting students' well-being. Schools need support staff such as school social workers to help teachers remain committed over the long term to integrating new strategies that promote well-being into a changed school environment that benefits the whole school community of students, families and staff. Listen to Dr. Peta-Ann Baker, Senior Lecturer in Social Work at the University of the West Indies, argue for hiring school social workers <http://rjnnews.com/local/employ-more-social-workers-in-schools-lecturer-urges>.