

## **Student Engagement and Well-Being Policy and Procedure: Overview**

### **1. Background**

Advance College of Education (ACE) is a specialist independent school consisting of three campuses in Rosebud, Hastings and Mornington. Each of the three campuses is quite different however they all offer a secure environment in which to learn within vibrant surroundings.

ACE offers the Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL) to approximately 60 students aged 15-19 years who have become disengaged from mainstream education. Students at ACE generally display one or more of the following characteristics:

- A marked lack of confidence
- Poor academic performance
- Poor attendance records
- Poor self-image
- Difficulty in forming relationships
- Difficult behaviour (acting out or withdrawn)
- Social and emotional difficulties such as school refusal, ADHD, ADD, OCD, ASD, anxiety, depression and conduct disorders.

The ACE curriculum is delivered by a highly skilled, experienced staff with expertise in delivering innovative educational programs to cater for the individual needs of our students.

The educational program offered at ACE is underpinned by the central theme of developing each student's self-esteem, responsibility, independence and capacity to engage with school/ learning utilising the Berry Street Education Model (BSEM). The BSEM is a consistent whole school approach which provides all staff members with actionable strategies to meet the complex wellbeing and academic needs of each student.

The ACE educational model also includes:

- Two Education Support Officers with a wellbeing and work readiness focus
- Individualised Education Plans based on each students learning, social and emotional needs
- An engaging project-based program that emphasises personal development, work related skills and practical application of learning
- A strong literacy and numeracy focus
- A reassuring environment for students to develop social competencies that will support them to return to mainstream school, access other learning pathways and/or enter the workforce.
- Access to a dedicated wellbeing team which includes the Education Support Coordinator, an Education Support Officer (Wellbeing) and the School Psychologist

### **2. Rationale**

Students can reach their full educational potential only when they are happy, healthy, and safe and when there is a positive school culture to support them. This interdependent relationship between student wellbeing and student learning is fundamental to students' positive and successful engagement with their education. ACE is committed to a learning environment which centres on improving wellbeing, stamina and resilience to strengthen educational, social and vocational outcomes for each student.

ACE creates a positive school culture to ensure that students feel valued and cared for, have meaningful opportunities to contribute to the school and effectively engage with their learning. We are inclusive, recognising and responding to the diverse needs of our students, accommodating different learning profiles and rates of learning and intervening early to identify and respond to individual student needs.

Our commitment to the ethos that each student deserves the very best that we can give ensures a school that students and staff enjoy being at, and speak highly of.

### 3. Aims

This policy aims to ensure that:

- A culture of positive reinforcement and encouragement will permeate all facets of our school.
- All staff assume responsibility for student wellbeing and engagement, striving to provide successful and positive experiences.
- Students feel safe and secure in a supportive environment where a sense of belonging and wellbeing are strengthened.
- All members of the school community develop positive social behaviours and problem solving skills.
- Staff are confident, skilled and proactive in the management of student learning, engagement and wellbeing issues through utilisation of the Berry Street Education Model (BSEM) and associated strategies.
- Communication processes and protocols are clear and well known to ensure the effectiveness of student support.

### 4. Legal and regulatory basis for compliance

- Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (Vic.)
- Education and Training Reform Regulations 2007 (Vic.)
- Equal Opportunity Act (Vic.) 2010
- Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth.)
- Disability Standards for Education 2005 (Cth.)
- Australian Education Act 2013 (Cth.)
- Australian Education Regulation 2013 (Cth.).
- Information Privacy Act 2000
- Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006

### 5. Key definitions

**Student engagement and wellbeing** can be defined as three interrelated components: behavioural, emotional and cognitive:

- *Behavioural engagement* refers to students' participation in education, including the academic, social and extracurricular activities of the school.
- *Emotional engagement* encompasses students' emotional reactions in the classroom and in the school. It can be defined as students' sense of belonging or connectedness to the school.
- *Cognitive engagement* relates to students' investment in learning and their intrinsic motivation and self-regulation.

Student engagement has a significant impact on both the quality and opportunity for learning. Since it underpins effective student learning and positive behaviour, it needs to be a community wide responsibility. Lack of engagement can arise through individual, social, emotional or physical factors, related to school, family or community.

### 6. Scope

The application of the policy is relevant to the governing board, the principal, to school staff, students and parents.

### 7. Key Elements

#### 7.1 Creating a Positive School Culture

**Positive relationships with teachers and other school staff are vital for students.**

ACE has a positive school culture that is fair and respectful. Particular focus is placed on establishing positive and respectful relationships within a *learning community* that provides multiple and diverse opportunities for students to experience success.

A key strength of the BSEM is its recognition of students as individuals. ACE acknowledges the diversity of its student population as central to creating a positive and inclusive school culture. Engagement and wellbeing strategies are incorporated into the school ethos and curriculum so students are more likely to attend school and be engaged in a meaningful way.

### **7.2 Building a Safe and Supportive School Environment**

Building a safe and supportive school environment is essential to student engagement and wellbeing. Students can only learn effectively in environments in which they feel safe and supported and where their teachers have high expectations for their learning. ACE has a range of policies and procedures to promote student care, safety and welfare. The behaviour management system is outlined in the *Student Engagement and Well-Being: Student Behaviour Management Policy and Procedure* which is based on pro-social values, social competencies, incentives and positive relationships. Teamwork and respect are core values of the school philosophy.

ACE involves and engages all students, sets high expectations and seeks feedback from students.

### **7.3 Expecting Positive, Supportive and Respectful Relationships that Value Diversity**

ACE is an inclusive school with a strong moral purpose. It is imperative that all staff, students, parents/carers and members of the school community exhibit positive relationships and value difference, as this supports both a positive school environment and effective learning engagement. ACE teachers adapt current pedagogical knowledge and thinking and apply it in different ways, so that each student is engaged in meaningful learning experiences.

Expecting positive and supportive relationships that value diversity between students, their peers, ACE staff and the whole-school community encourages students to take personal responsibility for participation in their education and enables them to model positive behaviours.

ACE recognises that cultural safety is vitally important for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and that respect for Aboriginal cultures, values and practices is at the heart of creating a culturally safe school. Our respect for the Aboriginal culture is reflected in our physical environment where culturally appropriate symbols, images and objects are selected and displayed after consultation with the families of our Aboriginal students.

### **7.4 Promoting Pro-Social Values and Behaviours**

Promoting and teaching pro-social values and behaviours helps young people to engage with school, their peers, school staff and their learning. ACE has clear expectations of individual responsibility to foster positive relationships among students.

ACE has adopted the therapeutic Berry Street Education Model (BSEM) which includes the learning domains of Body, Relationships, Stamina, Engagement and Character. The BSEM encourages students to work with others, and to take greater responsibility for their learning and participation at school.

In the context of the BSEM, the school curriculum includes pro-social values and behaviour to enable students to acquire knowledge and skills, value diversity and build a culture of learning, community and engagement.

### **7.5 Proactively Engaging with Parents and Carers**

ACE provides an environment that openly engages all families/carers as equal partners in the education of young people. ACE staff create a welcoming culture that fosters high parent/carer/family expectations for the school's performance for their child.

Keys to successful partnerships with parents/families/carers include:

- ensuring all parents are aware of the school's Student Engagement and Wellbeing Policy and Procedure and the Student Behaviour Management Policy and Procedure ;
- conducting effective school-to-home and home-to-school communications

### **7.6 Implementing Preventative and Early Intervention Approaches**

ACE's *Student Engagement and Wellbeing Policy and Procedure: Overview* includes preventative and early intervention strategies to support student engagement and address individual barriers to learning.

Prevention strategies target the whole school community and are designed to reduce any risk factors that may contribute to attendance or behavioural issues. They are based on the research informed BSEM and the school's knowledge of the students' needs and therefore provide a solid platform for inclusive educational provision. Effective early intervention strategies enable early

identification of vulnerable students and those at risk of disengagement from school. Strategies are targeted at students displaying inappropriate coping skills, stress reactions, depressive symptoms and other personal and social vulnerabilities.

A comprehensive understanding of the whole-school community and of the wellbeing and/or learning issues that students may be experiencing provides the foundation for an inclusive and positive school culture.

### **7.7 Responding to Individual Students**

ACE has appointed a School Psychologist to support Teachers and the Education Support Team to respond to individual students who require additional emotional assistance and support.

All ACE students have Individual Education Plans– a document which links the specific needs of the young person to our curriculum.

Students with specific behavioural needs will be provided with *Positive Behaviour Management Plans* involving whole school structures and classroom based approaches. Student Support Groups including the parent/carer may be formed to enhance targeted strategies.

Students who present with challenging behaviours will have a *Student Recipe* created for them. All staff will contribute to this 'recipe' which outlines the student's challenges, strategies that have been used and further strategies that can be put into place.

### **7.8 Linking to the Local Community**

Linkages within the local community provides access to an extended network of community members, professionals and educators who provide expertise and experience that builds our capacity to respond to the needs of their students.

Young people with a meaningful connection to the broader community tend to be more resilient in the face of problems and stress. Partnerships between schools and community-based service providers involve an acceptance of shared responsibility for addressing common areas of concern and a collaborative approach to developing strategies to reach goals. These partnerships can also provide optimum service delivery for vulnerable students.

### **7.9 School Strategic Planning Process**

The *Student Engagement and Wellbeing Policy and Procedure: Overview* is reviewed during the strategic planning process to ensure that the school Strategic Plan continues to reflect changing approaches to student engagement, attendance and positive behaviour. It will also ensure that the goals, targets and key improvement strategies within this plan reflect the key principles and support the prevention and early intervention focus of the *Student Engagement and Wellbeing Policy*.

The wider strategic planning process provides for development of long-term targets for student engagement and wellbeing, which are linked to short-term actions. These actions will assist in the implementation of the school's vision and should be known and understood by the whole-school community. Review of measures to promote student engagement and wellbeing is crucial to supporting a culture of continuous improvement.

## **8. Engagement Strategies**

The strategies outlined below, support the development of a safe and inclusive environment that supports student well-being and encourages engagement while developing core skills for continued learning. The school actively promotes a whole school approach that reflects the ACE community aspirations for students and a positive school culture.

- (i) Positive constructive behaviours are promoted as an integral part of the school culture in order to build students' self-esteem and sense of security within a supportive environment built on individual relationships and trust. This is underpinned by the whole school commitment to imbedding and integrating the BSEM into every aspect of the school to ensure that our language, modelling and relationships are unified. The BSEM focuses on building every student's *capacity* to engage and then nurturing their *willingness* to engage through five developmentally informed domains: Body, Stamina, Engagement and Character which are all anchored by Relationship. The five domains of the Berry Street Education Model correspond with the development capacities that each student must build in order to be 'ready to learn' and are consistently and explicitly taught in each classroom. This provides the opportunity for

- students to develop their social and emotional skills, stamina and resilience in a structured but supportive environment.
- (ii) There are clearly defined and documented roles and responsibilities for students, staff and parents/caregivers. These are displayed in all classrooms (refer to Appendix Three Roles and Responsibilities.)
  - (iii) The learning environment is structured to maximise student's social and emotional support with:
    - Two Education Support Officers with a wellbeing and work readiness focus who rotate campuses on a weekly basis
    - Three Home Teachers who are permanently based at a campus
    - Two Teachers who rotate campuses on a fortnightly basis
    - A Learning Engagement Coordinator who spends one day per week at each site and an Education Support Coordinator who regularly rotate sites
    - A maximum of 20 students in each classroom
  - (iv) The ACE Education Support team consists of 2 Education Support Officers, a Full Time Education Support Coordinator and a part-time School Psychologist. Our specialist School Psychologist works closely with our Education Support team to help students to develop the stamina and resilience required to achieve their educational, social and vocational goals. The Psychologist:
    - Facilitates group activities based on the focus areas within the five Berry Street domains within the classroom.
    - Is available to meet one: one with students for an introductory session prior to commencing classes. Parents/guardians must speak with an Advance staff member if they do not want their child to participate in this session.
    - Provides counselling when further individual support is required. Parent/guardian consent will not be required for the initial session. Advance will seek parent/ guardian consent for referral to the School Psychologist for further sessions. In some cases a counsellor may make a decision that a child is able to make an informed decision about seeking help from a psychologist. In these situations, parent/guardian consent will not be required.
  - (v) Individualised curriculum programs supported by Individual Education Plans based on: previous school reports, enrolment interviews, Compass Literacy and Numeracy Testing, the Six Star wellbeing Questionnaire, teacher and education support staff anecdotal evidence and student input.
  - (vi) The elective program provides an opportunity for student choice to engage in learning programs that develop their personal interests
  - (vii) A focus on literacy and numeracy as core learning skills
  - (viii) All staff are encouraged to debrief daily with a colleague. This provides an opportunity for staff to work collaboratively and consistently to manage and support student's individual social/ emotional and learning needs.
  - (ix) The Teaching and Learning Manager 'touches base' with all teaching staff weekly to debrief and work together on student engagement strategies.
  - (x) The School Psychologist attends two staff meetings per term to encourage the team to discuss classroom dynamics and to provide guidance regarding strategies to foster student learning and engagement.
  - (xi) The School Psychologist is available to meet with individual staff on a fortnightly basis for debriefing and to suggest relevant strategies to support student's social, emotional and educational development
  - (xii) Student support referrals are available when teachers or ESOs identify that a student requires additional assistance to help them to overcome obstacles that may be preventing them from actively engaging in appropriate learning. Support includes but is not limited to: Student meetings with the Education Support Coordinator (ESC) and/or the Learning Engagement Coordinator, targeted learning engagement activities with the

- Student Wellbeing ESO and referral to the School Psychologist. The correct procedure for referrals is outlined in [ACED21 Student Support Referral Procedure](#).
- (xiii) Management strategies such as *Regulate, Student Recipes, Flexible Access to School Plans* and *Positive Behaviour Support Plans* are utilised to encourage positive behaviours and provide students with an opportunity to better manage their behaviours. These strategies are summarised in the Responding to Difficult Classroom Behaviour Guide (Appendix One). For more extreme behaviours there is a range of interventions and consequences as outlined in Appendix A: [ACEP2 Student Behaviour Management Policy and Procedure](#).
  - (xiv) Attendance is monitored daily by the Home Teacher and is followed up with a range of individual strategies put in place following consultation with staff, parents/caregivers and health professionals (where applicable) to manage attendance issues.
  - (xv) On-going professional development to support the implementation of programs across the school to sustain student engagement and well-being. Staff professional learning also assists teachers to continue to develop their professional skills and knowledge in planning relevant curriculum based on student outcomes and learning goals.
  - (xvi) Positive home school relationships developed through:
    - enrolment interviews
    - regular opportunities for parents and the school to communicate through phone contact, meetings, SMS, newsletters and emails.
  - (xiv) Parent teacher meetings and written reports to discuss student progress
  - (x) Student support group meetings
  - (xi) *The Care, Safety and Welfare of Students* policy is clearly articulated and communicated to support whole school expectations.

## 9. Associated Documents

*ACEP2 Student Engagement and Well-Being: Student Behaviour Management Policy and Procedure*

*Care Safety and Welfare of Students Policies and Procedures*

*ACEF31 Student Code of Conduct*

*Six Star Student Survey (online)*

*Compass literacy and numeracy test (online)*

*ACEF50 Flexible Access to School Plan*

*ACEF51 Positive Behaviour Support Plan*

*ACEF52 Student Support Group Meeting*

*ACEF38 Individual Education Plan*

*ACED21 Student Support Referral Procedure*

*ACEF56 Student Support Referral*



## Appendix One

### Responding to Difficult Classroom Behaviour

- If a student's behaviour is disruptive to the class, a verbal warning must be given by the classroom teacher. The teacher must speak one: one with the student, naming the disruptive behaviour so the student is clear on where he/she stands and is given a fair chance to change their behaviour. Options for altering behaviour should be provided to the student. This could include but is not limited to:
  - Directing the student to look at and apply a strategy on their 'regulation list'
  - Directing the student to move seats
  - Asking the student if they know what work they should be completing
  - Changing or adapting the task that the student is working on
- If the student fails to alter their behaviour, the classroom teacher will direct them to leave the classroom with an Education Support Officer (ESO) or another teacher to "regulate".
- ESOs can remove students to regulate without teacher direction when they see a need.
- *A warning is not always appropriate if a student's behaviour is so unsafe as to warrant instant departure from the class. In this instance the teacher must direct the student to immediately leave the classroom.*
- A classroom teacher may ask the ESO to go and get the Learning Engagement Coordinator (LEC), or the Education Support Coordinator (ESC) or a member of the Leadership Team to remove a student if the student is unwilling to do so in the appropriate manner.
- If more than one student is sent to 'regulate' at the one time, they will need to be isolated from each other.
- If a student is sent to "regulate" the ESO/teacher must discuss behaviour management strategies with the student before the student returns to class after a five to ten (maximum) minute break. Strategies might include but are not limited to: Scrunch, Problem-solving Tree, repetitive activity, Assertive 'I' Statements. "Regulate" allows the student to reflect on alternative behaviours with the aim of putting them into action when they return to class. The ESO/teacher should at all times remain detached. "Regulate" is not intended as a counselling time, though reflective listening and clarifying questions may help a student "regulate" and reflect more fruitfully on their "regulate" time. While it is not the ESO's/teachers role to solve the issue, they should encourage students to think through and clarify the events that led to "regulate". The Home Teacher and student will sort out the issues upon the student's return. The Home Teacher must log a case note outlining the behaviour displayed and how it was resolved.
- Note: Students are allowed one "regulate" per day. Any student that exceeds this limit must immediately be placed on Level One (or higher) of the Discipline Levels System (Appendix A: [ACEP2 Student Behaviour Management Policy and Procedure](#)).
- Teachers may refer students for additional assistance when "difficult classroom behaviour" regularly impacts on a student's capacity to successfully engage in appropriate learning (refer to [ACED21 Student Support Referral Procedure](#)).

## Appendix Two

### Responding to Repeated Challenging Behaviour:

When concerns arise about a student's behaviour or when a student is displaying chronic patterns of challenging behaviour a more targeted response by the **LSC, LEC or a member of the Leadership Team** is required. This may include both support measures and disciplinary measures. This is described in detail in Appendix A – Discipline Levels System: [ACEP2 Student Behaviour Management Policy and Procedure](#)).

Successful interventions require:

- Strong staff-student relationships
- An understanding of the underlying factors influencing behaviour and engagement
- An understanding of the immediate triggers for its occurrence
- Implementation of BSEM strategies
- Knowledge of Each student's IEPs.

The type of response used for challenging behaviour will depend on finding the appropriate balance between the special needs of the students involved and the nature and severity of the incident.

### A staged response

Where students repeatedly demonstrate challenging behaviour, the school will implement more structured intervention strategies as part of a staged response to address the behaviour (see Appendix A – Discipline Levels System: [ACEP2 Student Behaviour Management Policy and Procedure](#)). The focus for any response to challenging behaviour is to:

- enhance understanding of the factors influencing behaviour
- build skills in promoting positive behaviour
- build skills in responding to challenging behaviour.

Intervention strategies to be implemented include:

- Assessing the behaviour, focussing on its influences, triggers and function (i.e. what purpose it serves). This involves observation and talking with the student, teachers and/or ESO s, their family and relevant wellbeing professionals.
- Selecting and implementing appropriate BSEM strategies
- Developing a Student Recipe
- Developing a Positive Behaviour Management Support Plan
- Teachers referring student for additional support ( [ACED21 Student Support Referral Procedure](#) )
- Considering if any environmental changes need to be made, for example changing the classroom set up
- Working in conjunction with the School Psychologist to develop strategies for explicit teaching of replacement behaviours (recognise students will need time to practice these before they become habit)
- Referral to the School Psychologist
- Engaging appropriate external support services
- Establishing a Student Support Group to ascertain the student's needs and supports required
- Implementing appropriate disciplinary measures (as outlined in the [Student Behaviour Management Policy and Procedure – Appendix A – Discipline Levels System](#))



### Appendix Three Rights and Responsibilities

<p><b>Student Rights:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The right to an effective learning environment which is safe and secure</li> <li>• The right to be treated with fairness and respect</li> <li>• The right to express views in an appropriate manner, time and place</li> <li>• The right to fair settlement of problems</li> </ul>	<p><b>Student Responsibility Statements:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I will contribute to a positive atmosphere at ACE</li> <li>• I will respect others' opinions and work cooperatively</li> <li>• I will <b>not</b> disrupt the learning of others</li> <li>• I will avoid put downs, sexism and racism</li> <li>• I will act in a way which doesn't interfere with others' beliefs, rights and property</li> <li>• I will attend all classes, be punctual and ready to learn</li> <li>• I accept the right of staff to give lawful direction or school policy instruction</li> </ul>
<p><b>Staff Rights Statements:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The right to teach and increase the learning opportunities for <b>all</b> students</li> <li>• The right to a safe and secure working environment</li> <li>• The right to be treated with fairness and respect</li> <li>• The right to fair settlement of problems</li> <li>• The right to express views in an appropriate manner, time and place</li> <li>• The right to advice from other staff and external support services</li> </ul>	<p><b>Staff Responsibility Statements:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I will approach every individual with unconditional positive regard</li> <li>• I will plan relevant, interesting lessons and cater for individual's abilities and interests</li> <li>• I will communicate clear expectations</li> <li>• I will avoid put downs, sexism and racism</li> <li>• I will be a positive role model in terms of respect, fair treatment and resolving problems</li> <li>• I will attend meetings, share ideas and support others</li> <li>• I will fully commit to the implementation of the BSEM and encourage a positive and cooperative atmosphere at ACE</li> <li>• I will make positive contributions to the school's curriculum through fulfilling my particular teaching and administrative duties</li> <li>• I accept the right of the school to give lawful direction and/or school policy</li> </ul>
<p><b>Parent/Carers Rights</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The right to expect that my child will be educated in a secure environment in which care, courtesy and respect for the rights of others are encouraged</li> <li>• The right to be contacted when my child continually disregards the school policies and procedures or is involved in a major incident</li> <li>• The right to be involved in my child's learning and to be included in decision making regarding my child's education</li> </ul>	<p><b>Parent/Carer Responsibility Statements:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I will support and respect the school culture and its practices and norms.</li> <li>• I will provide relevant information to the school related to my child's enrolment.</li> <li>• I will ensure that my child attends school and is ready to learn.</li> <li>• I will maintain contact with the school and attend all meetings upon request.</li> <li>• I will inform the school of changing circumstances related to my child's health and/or well-being.</li> <li>• I will avoid put downs, sexism and racism</li> </ul>