

Student Engagement and Well-Being Policy and Procedure: Overview

Context:

Advance College of Education Incorporated (ACE) is an independent, special assistance school which caters for young people primarily aged 15 - 19 years who have become disengaged from mainstream education. Our students may have significant gaps in academic achievement and may find it difficult to learn in a group setting, which can lead to behavioural and social struggles at College. The College has two campuses at Hastings and Rosebud which offer the Victorian Pathways Certificate (VPC) and VCE Vocational Major - Units 1-4 (VCE-VM).

The program aims to:

- Use curriculum that builds on students' interests, abilities and strengths;
- Provide practical 'hands-on' activities to facilitate learning;
- Provide opportunities to integrate learning outcomes across one activity;
- Recognise all student achievements and value their contribution;
- Allow students to learn at their own pace and in different ways according to their preferred learning style;
- Build resilience and confidence;
- Encourage and support active participation in the community; and
- Extend learning experiences beyond the classroom.

ACE supports the principles and practices of equal opportunity and human rights and undertakes to ensure that programs are accessible to all eligible members of the community and are responsive to individual needs.

ACE is committed to the cultural safety of Aboriginal students, the cultural safety of students from a culturally and/or linguistically diverse background, and to providing a safe environment for students with a disability.

Background:

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- Difficult behaviour (acting out or withdrawn)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 ACE Learning Program 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:

- A Student Management Coordinator
- A Student Engagement Leader and a Learning Leader
- Student Support Officers with a wellbeing, pathways and occupational therapy focuses

- A School Psychologist
- A School Occupational Therapist
- 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.

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.

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.

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

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.

Scope:

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

Key Elements:***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.

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 *ACEP2 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.

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.

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.

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

Implementing Preventative and Early Intervention Approaches

ACE utilises 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.

Responding to Individual Students

ACE has appointed a School Psychologist and an Occupational Therapist to support Teachers and the Student Support Team to respond to individual students who require additional 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.

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.

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.

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 rules and responsibilities for students, staff and parents/caregivers. Student rules and responsibilities are displayed in the Student Planner and in all classrooms
- (iii) The learning environment is structured to maximise student's social and emotional support with:
 - Student Support staff with a wellbeing and pathways focus who rotate campuses on a weekly basis
 - Home Teachers who stay with a class for the duration of the school year
 - Teachers who rotate between additional classrooms
 - A Student Management Coordinator
 - A maximum of 15 students in each classroom

- (iv) The ACE Student Support team consists of Student Support Officers, a Student Management Coordinator and a part-time School Psychologist and Occupational Therapist.
Our specialist School Psychologist works closely with our Student Support team to help students to develop the stamina and resilience required to achieve their educational, social and vocational goals. The Psychologist:
Provides counselling when further individual support is required. Advance will seek parent/ guardian consent for referral to the School Psychologist for further sessions. In some cases the School Psychologist 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, CSPA Literacy and Numeracy Testing, the Six Star wellbeing Questionnaire, teacher and student support staff anecdotal evidence and student input.
- (vi) A focus on literacy and numeracy as core learning skills
- (vii) 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.
- (viii) The Assistant Principal 'touches base' with all staff regularly to debrief and work together on student engagement strategies.
- (ix) The School Psychologist meets with the Student Support team on a weekly basis for debriefing and to suggest relevant strategies to support student's social, emotional and educational development
- (x) Student support referrals are available when Teachers or Student Support 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 and targeted learning engagement activities with Student Support (Wellbeing), Student Management Coordinator (SMC) referral to the School Psychologist. The correct procedure for referrals is outlined in *ACED21 Student Support Referral Procedure*.
- (xi) Management strategies such as *Focus Plans*, *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. For more extreme behaviours there is a range of interventions and consequences as outlined in *ACEP2 Student Behaviour Management Policy and Procedure*).
- (xii) Attendance is monitored daily by the Home Teachers 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 (refer to *ACEP23 Student care, Safety and Welfare: Attendance Policy and Procedure*).
- (xiii) On-going professional development to support the implementation of programs across the school to sustain student engagement and well-being. Professional learning also encourages staff to continue to develop their professional skills and knowledge in planning relevant curriculum based on student outcomes and learning goals.
- (xiv) 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.
- (xv) Parent teacher meetings and written reports to discuss student progress
- (xvi) Student Support Group and IEP meetings
- (xvii) *The Care, Safety and Welfare of Students* suite of policies and procedures are clearly articulated and communicated to support whole school expectations.

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 Rules and Responsibilities Agreement

Six Star Student Survey (online)

CSPA 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

ACEP23 Student Care, Safety and Welfare: Attendance Policy and Procedure

Monitoring and Review:

This policy will be reviewed every three years, or earlier if required due to legislative, regulatory or operational changes.

The Senior Management Team are responsible for ensuring this policy is implemented and maintained.

Approval:

Policy last reviewed	22 nd April 2026
Consultation	College Board 22 nd April 2026
Approved by	College Board and (Principal)
Next review date	21 st April 2029