

Stop teaching kids how to be happy, says education expert

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A leading educational psychologist is urging schools to stop thinking of wellbeing as another subject to be taught. Instead she is urging them to create healthier schools where students naturally develop wellbeing and a

love of learning.

Dr. Helen Street, an Honorary Research Fellow with The University of Western Australia's Graduate School of Education, has released a new book, *Contextual Wellbeing: creating positive schools from the inside out*, which offers a practical framework for building a healthy, equitable social context in schools.

Dr. Street said schools and colleges around the developed world were doing more than ever before to [support](#) the mental health and [wellbeing](#) of their students but the latest research revealed that one-sixth of pre-teen and nearly a quarter of adolescents worldwide were experiencing distress.

"While schools are trying to get it right when it comes to helping support their students, even their best efforts are just not working well," Dr. Street said. She believes the problem lies in the existence of unhealthy school contexts.

"Our schools are brimming with overloaded and struggling teachers, unhealthy physical spaces and an overriding emphasis on forced competition, outcomes and extrinsic rewards and awards.

"If we are to effectively support wellbeing and self-determination in young people, we need to create [school](#) environments that better support their autonomy, positive relationships and engagement in learning.

"It's time we changed education from the inside out so that young people develop wellbeing and a love of learning from the outside in."

Dr. Street is the Founder and Chair of The Positive Schools Initiative which advocates for educational reform to better support equity, motivation and wellbeing in [young people](#).

The Positive Schools Initiative informs educators about up-to-date, evidence-based research and practice that is relevant to their work supporting academic, social and emotional learning in schools. At the core of The Positive Schools Initiative are The Positive Schools conferences, which have become known as Australia's leading [mental health](#) and wellbeing events for educators.

More information: Contextual Wellbeing is available via the website: www.contextualwellbeing.com.au/

Provided by University of Western Australia

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