

Report to Murrumbidgee Primary Health Network on the Positive Living Skills Primary School Wellbeing Program

Background to the Positive Living Skills program

Positive Living Skills (PLS) is an inclusive and preventative evidence-based mental health education initiative. PLS lessons, resources and professional development sessions support children to learn essential social and emotional learning (SEL) skills; help educators and school leaders to promote positive behaviour and relationships in their school communities; support educator wellbeing; and enhance school and family partnerships (PLS, 2023).

Positive Living Skills' social and emotional learning concepts

Twelve main concepts are taught in the Positive Living Skills Primary School Wellbeing programs. The first six SEL concepts are taught across all learning levels from Foundation to Year 6. These are **Highlights, Feelings, Focus, Relaxation, Cooperation, and Self-esteem**. The second six SEL concepts taught in Years 3-6 are **Appreciation, Communication, Choice, Solutions, Leadership, and Potential**.

Schools participating in the Murrumbidgee Primary Health Network (MPHN) Project

In 2020, 34 schools in the Murrumbidgee region received funding from the MPHN for a Lifetime licence to access the PLS program's teaching resources. These schools varied greatly in their size and location, ranging from small rural village schools (8 to 12 students), to larger public schools in regional towns (180 to 290 students).

Online onboarding sessions for twenty-two of these schools took place in early 2021. For all the other schools, PLS staff met with school principals and /or schools' wellbeing coordinators. Some schools had their full faculty on a Zoom meeting, and some elected

to peruse the PLS materials themselves. PLS also created and included a video-recorded onboarding session.

In their onboarding sessions teachers generally appeared positive about using the PLS programs and identified relevant issues in their local communities such as trauma, low resilience, low socio-economic backgrounds, high anxiety, student disability and diversity. Mental health programs previously being used included Positive Behaviour for Learning (PBL), Bounce Back, Smiling Minds, and Berry Street's Trauma-informed practice. One teacher noted how *"this program flows beautifully with what we are trying to achieve,"* and another commented how PLS was *"mapped out beautifully to the syllabus."*

Project evaluation

All 34 participating schools received an online survey, distributed via Survey Monkey from August 2022. Most surveys were completed in 2022, with the final survey being received in Nov 2023.

Each survey contained 22 questions, asking teachers to provide simple demographic information (e.g., which classes they taught and how long they had been teaching PLS), to comment on the utility of PLS within their school, and to reflect on their students' engagement with PLS, noting any improvements in students' social and emotional learning, or changes in their levels of resilience since the introduction of weekly PLS lessons and activities. Teachers were also asked if they would recommend the PLS program to other teachers or schools. Information reported here is from the 16 completed surveys, that represent 10 of the 34 MPHN schools.

What teachers said

Which year level do you teach?	K,1 & 2: 37.5% • K to 6: 25%
How long have you been using PLS?	For 6-12 months: 62.5%
How do you use the PLS resources?	A whole-school approach to wellbeing: 68.75%
How easy / difficult is PLS to deliver?	Very Easy 62.5% • Easy 37.5%



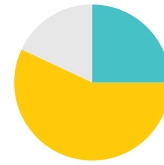
How engaged are students in PLS lessons?

- Very engaged 18.75%
- Engaged 68.75%



How does PLS support you as Educator?

- Very supportive 42.86%
- Supportive 42.86%



Would you recommend PLS to other Educators or Schools?

- Very likely 25%
- Likely 56.25%

Have you noticed any improvements in students SEL? >> Yes! 75%

“The empathy lessons really helped the students stop and think about how others might feel in different situations.

“The students in my class are calmer than they were at the beginning of the year.

“The staff and students have been implementing a range of positive talking activities. Students have been using this talk to others and been more encouraging towards each other.”

Have you noticed any students using PLS concepts and language? >> Yes! 62.5%

Children talk about **Happy Highlights**; **Cooperation**

Children use PLS concepts **during conflict resolution** and to help them **concentrate and relax**

Children use PLS language to help them with **Changing channels**

*“The students will often use language from the highlights lessons when reflecting. They will also talk about what **Possa Bill** might say in a situation.”*

Have you noticed any improvements in students' resilience? >> Yes! 62.5%

“Students have been able to identify strategies to improve their resilience when faced with challenges.”

“Students are able to move on from disappointment readily as we have language to use.”

“Students have become more resilient by utilising PLS.”

“The students are quicker to ‘bounce back’ after an issue occurs”

