

Report to the Western New South Wales 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 Western New South Wales Primary Health Network (WNSW PHN) Project

In 2020, 76 schools in the Western New South Wales region received funding from the WNSWPHN for a Lifetime licence to access the PLS program's teaching resources. These schools varied greatly in their size and location, ranging from very remote small schools (5 to 12 students), to larger public schools in regional towns (258 to 507 students).

Online onboarding sessions for 36 of these schools took place between June and October 2021. For 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 appeared positive and excited about using the PLS programs and identified relevant issues in their local communities such as isolation, low resilience, low socio-economic backgrounds, high anxiety, high unemployment and trauma. Mental health programs previously being used included Positive Behaviour for Learning (PBL), Be You, Smiling Minds, Berry Street's Trauma-informed practice and Second Step.

One teacher noted *"I love the lessons and the lesson plans. It's just incredibly succinct"* and another commented how PLS was *"exactly what I've been looking for."*

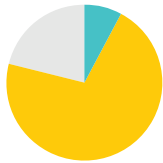
Project evaluation

All 76 participating schools received an online survey, distributed via Survey Monkey from August 2022. Most surveys were completed in 2022, with final surveys received in November 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 24 completed surveys, that represent 10 of the 76 WNSWPHN schools.

What teachers said

Which year level do you teach?	K, 1 & 2: 42% • Y3 & 4: 21%
How long have you been using PLS?	6-12 months: 50% • 1-2 yrs: 42%
How do you use the PLS resources?	A structured whole school approach to wellbeing: 71%
How easy / difficult is PLS to deliver?	Easy: 50% • Very easy: 46%



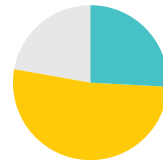
How engaged are students in PLS lessons?

- Very engaged 8%
- Engaged 71%



How does PLS support you as Educator?

- Very supportive 13%
- Supportive 74%



Would you recommend PLS to other Educators or Schools?

- Very likely 26%
- Likely 52%

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

“Students have a greater level of vocabulary to talk about their emotions and ways to focus on positive learning.”

“Students are more accepting of others and considerate of others feelings and emotions.”

“There is a noticeable difference in the level of kindness and appreciation during day-to-day activities.”

Have you noticed any students using PLS concepts and language? >> Yes! 71%

Students talk about PLS concepts like **Happy Highlights**, **Changing Channels** and they use their PLS **breathing exercises**.

Students use PLS language to **stay focused and calm**.

Students are **“asking if their peers are OK.”**

*“Students have been able to go to their **happy place** if they are upset.”*

Have you noticed any improvements in students’ resilience? >> Yes! 54%

“Students are more willing to engage in difficult tasks.”

“Students are using calming strategies (i.e., breathing) explored in PLS lessons in times when they are feeling frustrated.”

“Students are recognising that feelings don’t own them and they have strategies to regroup themselves.”

“Students were able to quickly move past a negative event.”

