



Resilience Strategies for Grades 7 & 8

by Dr Andrew Wicking

The work of Resilient Youth Australia in over 1,300 schools with nearly 400,000 school students has identified the three main components of resilience: to be Connected Protected Respected™ (CPR).

<https://resiliencyouth.org/survey>

By Grades 7-8 too many students feel unsafe, disrespected and isolated. They have great capabilities, but too many of them don't apply them at school. This represents a major opportunity lost. This is a time of maximal neuroplasticity but despite the great surge in cognitive ability, the engagement at school seen in Grades 5- 6 slows and lessens, positive connectedness weakens, and achievement levels in numeracy and literacy often languish.

Suggested strategies:

One of the doorways to engagement for this age group is the strength of positive relationships students form with one another, and with teachers, and how this translates into school belonging. It is worth noting that feeling encouraged by a teacher averages at 85% in primary school and then falls to 76% in Grades 7-8 and 70% in Years 9-10. Generally, boys feel less encouraged than girls.' The Resilience Survey dataset indicates that Grade 7 is a significant and important transition time.

To capitalise on the enormous opportunities of this age range and to improve student belonging to school, we need to consider more powerfully implementing the findings on effective middle schooling and more focus on CPR. We need to build relationships, social skills, knowledge and confidence in self, school belonging, sense of safety and

community and instill values of trust and forgiveness while reducing anxiety, face to face and online bullying and risky behaviours including attitudes to substances, gaming, violence and carrying weapons.

The best and most successful teachers of this age group base their work on relationships rather than power. Teachers need to "own" their own classrooms so they can develop support and routines, implement guided practice and create a visually interesting, engaging and safe learning environments. This is especially true in secondary schools.

Case study:

A large co-educational secondary school used the Resilient Youth Australia 'No Bullying Survey' to measure the student perception of 300 Grade 7 students in relation to bullying. Staff conducted focus groups, asking students questions around the data including type of bullying, who, where, why and elicited student ideas on what could be done to reduce it. Students responded positively to having their thoughts and feelings acknowledged and proactively engaged.

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Follow Andrew on LinkedIn:

www.linkedin.com/in/andrew-wicking-52354b28

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