

Research and References document

Importance of teacher wellbeing

The negative impacts of teacher attrition and turnover have been well documented, with teacher turnover having a significant impact on student achievement and engagement (Kelchtermans, 2017; Ronfeldt et al., 2013). Teacher attrition also has negative consequences for relationships among staff and students (Arnup & Bowles, 2016) and for community engagement and cohesion (Ronfeldt et al., 2013). Teacher turnover also has direct and indirect financial implications, with research estimating a cost of close to USD\$18,000 (approximately AUD\$25,000) per teacher, in addition to the time and energy required to recruit, induct and support new teachers in a school, and the cost of disruption to school improvement policies and efforts (Ryan et al., 2017).

Australian teachers experience levels of depression, anxiety and stress significantly above that of the broader population. This presents significant economic costs, both directly, via lost productivity and the cost of relief staff, and indirectly as teacher shortages leads to a loss of teaching quality for students (Granziera et. al., 2025).

Importantly, burnout appears to be a relatively common experience among teachers (Chang, 2009). Burnout is associated with reduced effectiveness of classroom practices and actual absence from the classroom (e.g., Kokkinos, Panayiotou, & Davazoglou, 2005; Brunsting, Sreckovic, & Lane, 2014). Teachers who report high work-related stress are less able to support their students emotionally and academically (Travers, 2017).

Motivations for entering the profession remain a key element of mitigating the negative effects of the role for some respondents (Heffernan et al., 2022)

Hargreaves et al. (2007) found in their study of teachers in England that teachers gained a sense of positive status when they felt trusted and appreciated by colleagues and parents/carers.

Importance of teacher regulation skills

Teachers reported that regulating their emotions made them “more effective in management, discipline, and their relationships with students.” (Sutton et. al., 2009)

Teachers who habitually employ adaptive emotion regulation strategies experience less negative emotion and are better able to sustain effective behaviour management over time (Chang & Taxer, 2021)

Teachers’ ability to self-regulate was shown to impact student self-regulation and performance, highlighting that supporting teachers’ own regulation is necessary for sustained classroom wellbeing and effective student learning (Herring, 2020)

Teachers with stronger emotion-regulation ability reported encountering fewer out-of-control incidents and were better able to de-escalate student outbursts before they peaked (Savina et al., 2022)

Importance of positive teacher-student relationships

Teachers high in social-emotional competence cultivate more supportive teacher-student relationships and employ preventive discipline rather than punitive reactions. Such approaches not only reduce immediate behavioural flare-ups but also curb the “burnout cascade” that can otherwise lead to increasingly harsh and counter-productive management tactics (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009)

A meta-analysis of 189 studies found medium to large associations between positive teacher–student relationships and student engagement; these relationships exert a calming and motivational effect, enabling co-regulation and the development of self-regulation skills (Roorda et al., 2011).

Importance of ND affirming

In overseas data, students with disabilities accounted for the vast majority of recorded incidents of seclusion and restraint despite constituting a small proportion of the overall student population. Within that group students with emotional and behavioural diagnoses are especially overrepresented (Gagnon et. al., 2017). This finding is consistent with Australian research (CYDA, 2019), with young people and their families describing experiences of restraint and seclusion as punitive rather than safety based.

Evidence for CPS aligned approach

Originally developed for oppositional and dysregulated youth, Ross Greene’s CPS model has been implemented in both general and special education settings with dramatic reductions in disciplinary referrals, detentions, suspensions, and use of restraint or seclusion. A 2019 review in *Clinical Child and Family Psychology Review* reported that CPS yields behavioural improvements and often enhances students’ self-regulation skills, thereby lowering the likelihood of escalation in the classroom.

Reducing the inappropriate use of restraint and seclusion requires evidence-based practices, with approaches that incorporate principles of felt safety within the context of interpersonal relationships being highly effective. Models that support students in self-regulation and emotional regulation were found to be beneficial for all students and effective in reducing aversive discipline procedures. Programs promoting compassion and trauma-informed care are some the most successful in reaching students with behaviour challenges, preventing aggressive incidents, and thus avoiding the use of restraint and seclusion (Trader et. al., 2017, cited in Barry 2021).

CPS is a non-punitive, non-adversarial, trauma-informed, evidence-based approach, with the focus centred on the lagging skills and unsolved problems keeping students from meeting the demands of the environment. Instead of deciding upon a consequence of the child (which tends to cause conflict and can promote negative exchanges), the adult works on finding a solution with the child (Greene & Winkler, 2019)

The benefit of utilising up to date understanding of neuroscience in our approach

The use of brain aligned preventative strategies that can be integrated into the how classrooms are run allows educators to look beneath surface behaviours and identify the core issues that need to be addressed (DeSautels, 2021). This approach allows for positive, connective and sustainable behavioural changes, not just short-term compliance or obedience. The use of these strategies also

require teachers to be consciously aware of their own self-care and brain states as they discipline children, resulting not only in more positive learning environments for students but also more sustainable teaching environments for educators.

“When we are disciplining children and adolescents who carry in pain-based behaviours, traditional discipline can inadvertently escalate negative behaviours in both teacher and student, as survival brains cannot process rewards, consequences or reason” (Desautels, 2021, p.36)

Emotional dysregulation in the nervous system can lead to impairments in function or risk-taking behaviour and if these are interpreted as disrespectful or threatening they can be met with aversive disciplinary action aimed at controlling the situation. Children who have experienced maltreatment are more likely to demonstrate high levels of negative emotions and aggressive behaviours due to states of mind that can lead to dysfunctional coping and impaired problem-solving abilities than can contribute to emotional dysregulation (Lavi et. al., 2019)

Evidence that rewards and punishment fall short in managing behaviour

Neurobiological research shows that punishing autonomic stress responses can exacerbate dysregulation and trauma symptoms. Childhood trauma alters threat perception and brain circuits responsible for emotion regulation, so punitive measures risk re-traumatisation (van der Kolk, 2003).

Automatic stress responses operate via subcortical circuits and cannot be directly supplanted by conscious behavioural replacements without first down-regulating underlying physiological arousal (Porges, 2009).

Meta-analytic research reveals that extrinsic rewards and punishments yield only temporary compliance but undermine intrinsic motivation, reducing long-term engagement. Performance-contingent tangible rewards significantly undermine volitional interest and autonomy, often leading to decreased persistence, heightened competition, or shame (Deci, Koestner, & Ryan, 1999).

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Understanding and addressing trauma responses

Exposure to adverse life experiences (ACES) can interrupt a child’s neurodevelopment, which can greatly impair their cognitive functioning or ability to cope with disruptive or negative emotions (DeSautels, 2021). Our trauma informed approach takes this into account in terms of how we encourage educators to view student behaviour- not always as an intentional choice but often as a symptom of the adversity students have experienced.

Rather, understanding the role of regulation and the importance of felt-safety in the classroom can have a significant positive impact on students who display threat-based challenging behaviours that are outside their volitional control.

Importance of neurodiversity affirming approaches

Children with ADHD and developmental delays often lack the neurocognitive resources—behavioural inhibition, working memory, self-regulation—to inhibit undesired behaviours or implement taught alternatives. These core executive function deficits render contingent rewards and punitive consequences insufficient for sustainable change (Barkley, 1997; Diamond, 2013).

Emotion and physiological dysregulation are hallmark features of trauma and ADHD. Effective regulation skills emerge through co-regulation with attuned adults; children internalise these regulatory patterns over time, which is why punitive or purely behavioural approaches fail to address core regulatory deficits (van der Kolk, 2003).

Benefits of asynchronous online teacher PD

Asynchronous online programs may overcome logistical issues in implementation (e.g. organising times, dates, and locations for sessions), prevent premature discontinuation, and be more feasible to roll-out at scale (Beames et. al., 2023)

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