



Gifted Minds, Flourishing Lives: Integrating Wellbeing into Gifted Education

Author

Szilvia Fodor, PhD

Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest, Hungary

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Effective Parenting for Gifted and Creative Minds

Szilvia Fodor, PhD, Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest, Hungary

Well-being has become a critical focus in education, shaping how schools address the holistic needs of their students. This article explores the concept of well-being and its significance, with a particular emphasis on student well-being and the unique challenges faced by gifted learners. It examines the interplay between well-being and academic performance, highlighting the importance of nurturing emotional and psychological health alongside intellectual growth. Additionally, the article addresses the challenges inherent in promoting well-being within gifted education and offers insights into whole-school approaches that foster a supportive environment. Finally, it underscores the role of skill development in cultivating resilience and thriving among students, presenting practical strategies to enhance well-being for all learners. Through these discussions, the article aims to provide educators, policymakers, and stakeholders with actionable insights to integrate well-being into educational practice effectively.

Understanding well-being: the PERMA model

Psychological well-being is a multifaceted construct that encompasses various dimensions of mental health and life satisfaction. It is characterized by positive self-evaluations, emotional resilience, and the ability to engage meaningfully with life. Psychological well-being is not merely the absence of mental illness; rather, it signifies a state of flourishing where individuals feel satisfied with their lives and can realize their potential (Sin & Lyubomirsky, 2009). Enhancing psychological well-being is crucial, as it is linked to improved mental health outcomes, greater life satisfaction, and better coping mechanisms in the face of challenges (Weiss et al., 2016).

The concept of well-being, as articulated by Martin Seligman (2011) in his PERMA model, provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the various dimensions that contribute to an individual's overall quality of life. The acronym PERMA stands for Positive Emotion, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, and Accomplishment, each representing a crucial pillar of well-being that can significantly influence performance in various contexts, including educational and professional settings.

Positive Emotion: This dimension emphasizes the importance of experiencing positive feelings such as joy, gratitude, and contentment. Research has shown that positive emotions can enhance cognitive flexibility and creativity, which are essential for high performance (Donaldson et al., 2022). In educational settings, fostering positive emotions can lead to improved academic outcomes, as students who feel good are more motivated and engaged in their learning (Kern et al., 2014).

Engagement: Engagement refers to the state of being fully absorbed and involved in activities. This concept is closely related to the idea of flow, where individuals lose track of time and experience deep satisfaction in their tasks. High levels of engagement are linked to better performance, as engaged individuals are more likely to invest effort and persistence in their work (Ryan et al., 2019). In the context of gifted education, ensuring that students are appropriately challenged and engaged can lead to higher academic achievement and personal fulfilment (Beacham, 2020).

Relationships: The quality of relationships plays a pivotal role in well-being. Positive relationships with peers, family, and mentors provide emotional support, enhance feelings of belonging, and contribute to overall happiness (Butler & Kern, 2016). In educational environments, strong relationships can foster collaboration and teamwork, which are essential for high performance. Students who feel connected to their peers and teachers are more likely to thrive academically and socially (Golle et al., 2022).

Meaning: This dimension involves having a sense of purpose and direction in life. Engaging in activities that align with one's values and contribute to a greater cause can enhance well-being and motivation (Noor, 2023). In education goal orientations, particularly those that emphasize mastery and meaning, are critical predictors of academic success, indicating that when students find meaning in their goals, they are more likely to perform well academically (Steinmayr et al., 2011).

Accomplishment: The final pillar of the PERMA model focuses on the importance of achieving goals and experiencing a sense of success. Accomplishments contribute to self-esteem and confidence, which are vital for ongoing motivation and performance (Sun et al., 2017). In educational contexts, recognizing and celebrating achievements—both large and small—can

encourage students to set and pursue ambitious goals, thereby enhancing their overall performance (Woo et al., 2022).

In summary, Seligman's PERMA model provides a holistic view of well-being that encompasses emotional, cognitive, social, and motivational aspects. Each dimension is interrelated, and together they contribute to an individual's ability to perform at their best. By fostering positive emotions, engagement, strong relationships, a sense of meaning, and a focus on accomplishments, educators and organizations can create environments that not only enhance well-being but also drive high performance.

Why well-being?

Well-being and mental health of students after COVID

But why should we focus on the topic of well-being? The mental health and well-being of children and adolescents aged 6 to 18 years is a critical area of concern, particularly in light of recent global events such as the COVID-19 pandemic. This age group is experiencing increasing rates of mental health issues, influenced by various factors including socio-economic status, family dynamics, and external stressors. Research indicates that children and adolescents experienced heightened levels of anxiety, depression, and behavioural issues during the pandemic, exacerbated by disruptions in routines, social isolation, and limited access to mental health services (Meherali et al., 2021; Miranda et al., 2020; Viner et al., 2022). A systematic review highlighted that children from low-income households and those with special educational needs exhibited elevated symptoms of mental health issues during the pandemic, indicating that socio-economic factors significantly influence mental health outcomes (Panchal et al., 2021).

Longitudinal studies have shown that the prevalence of mental health disorders among children and adolescents has been on the rise over the past two decades. For example, a meta-analysis found that approximately 13% of children and adolescents globally are affected by mental disorders, with anxiety and depression being the most common (Polanczyk et al., 2015). A study by Gregory et al. (2021) also found that there is an overall decline in well-being with age among children and adolescents, indicating that as they transition from childhood to adolescence, they may experience

increased emotional challenges such as sadness and anxiety. This underscores the importance of addressing the well-being of students in this age group through targeted interventions and support systems that foster resilience, engagement, and positive emotional experiences.

Well-being and giftedness

The mental health and well-being of gifted students is also a complex issue that includes various psychological, social, and emotional dimensions. Research indicates that gifted students face unique challenges that can impact their mental health, including high expectations, perfectionism, and social isolation.

One significant factor affecting the well-being of gifted students is the role of parenting styles. Authoritarian parenting has been shown to negatively impact the well-being of gifted students, suggesting that a more supportive and understanding approach from parents can enhance the psychological health of these children (Chen et al., 2018). Furthermore, the pressure to excel academically can lead to detrimental levels of perfectionism, which is more prevalent among gifted students compared to their non-gifted peers. This heightened perfectionism is often linked to increased anxiety and stress, suggesting that while some degree of perfectionism can be motivating, some types of perfectionism can be harmful (Eident et al., 2022).

Other social relationships also play a critical role in the mental health of gifted students. Studies have found that gifted individuals who lack satisfying friendships may experience significant social-emotional difficulties, including feelings of loneliness and peer exclusion (Yıldırım & Kayhan, 2022). The perception of their social-emotional skills and peer relationships is crucial; positive correlations have been observed between these perceptions and overall well-being. Moreover, gifted students often experience asynchronous development, which can lead to emotional challenges that differ from their chronological peers, further complicating their social interactions (Ismail & Anuar, 2020).

Interventions aimed at promoting mental health among gifted students have shown promise. Positive psychology approaches, such as flourishing training, have been effective in reducing symptoms of depression and anxiety in this population (Abbasian et al., 2022). Additionally, emotional intelligence training has been suggested as a beneficial intervention for gifted students,

particularly those who struggle with social-emotional deficits (Zeidner & Matthews, 2017). School-based psychologists are also crucial in addressing the cognitive, emotional, and social needs of gifted students, advocating for engaging learning environments that foster both academic and emotional growth.

Despite the challenges faced, some studies suggest that gifted students may report higher levels of life satisfaction compared to their non-gifted peers, indicating that their unique abilities can contribute positively to their overall well-being (Bergold et al., 2015). Additionally, studies have shown that gifted students can possess higher levels of resilience, which may enhance their coping mechanisms and overall mental health. Alexopoulou et al. (2019) found that when internal protective factors such as self-awareness and realistic goal setting are nurtured, gifted students can demonstrate improved resilience and mental well-being. Furthermore, Lavrijsen & Verschueren (2023) reported that while gifted adolescents may experience fewer mental health issues than their non-gifted counterparts, this relationship can be influenced by various factors, including parenting styles and the fit between the students' needs and their educational environment.

Overall, these findings suggest a complex relationship between giftedness and well-being, highlighting the importance of supportive educational environments that cater to the unique needs of gifted students.

Well-being and academic performance

We must also prioritize well-being as it plays a crucial role in influencing academic performance: the relationship between well-being and academic performance, particularly in school-aged children and adolescents, is a well-documented area of research. This relationship is influenced by various factors, including social-emotional learning (SEL), mental health status, and positive emotions.

Social-emotional learning programs have been shown to enhance students' academic performance by fostering essential skills such as self-regulation, social awareness, and relationship management. Durlak and his colleagues (2011) conducted a meta-analysis that highlighted the positive impact of SEL interventions on academic performance, indicating that students who participated in these programs exhibited improved school attitudes and outcomes. The findings

suggest that enhancing students' social and emotional competencies can lead to better engagement in academic activities, ultimately resulting in higher academic achievement.

Mental health is another critical factor influencing academic performance. Duncan and his colleagues (2021) found that mental health issues, particularly depression and anxiety, are associated with lower academic achievement among secondary school students. Their research indicated that even when students were present in class, poor mental health could impair their ability to engage with course material effectively. This aligns with other studies that provide evidence of a strong association between positive mental health and academic outcomes in elementary school students (O'Connor, et al., 2019; Wickersham et al., 2021). They indicate that fostering mental well-being can lead to improved academic performance, emphasizing the importance of addressing mental health in educational settings.

Barbara Fredrickson's (2001) research on positive emotions is foundational in understanding their role in enhancing well-being and high performance. Central to her work is the "broaden-and-build" theory, which posits that positive emotions broaden an individual's thought-action repertoire, leading to the development of personal resources that enhance resilience and overall functioning. One of Fredrickson's key contributions is the assertion that positive emotions can counteract the effects of negative emotions. In her seminal work, she describes how experiences of joy, gratitude, and love can not only improve immediate psychological states but also build lasting resources such as social connections, resilience, and coping strategies. This is particularly relevant in high-performance contexts, where the ability to manage stress and maintain motivation is crucial. For instance, her research indicates that individuals who frequently experience positive emotions are better equipped to cope with challenges and setbacks, which is essential for sustained high performance (Tugade & Fredrickson, 2004).

Fredrickson's studies have also demonstrated that positive emotions can enhance cognitive flexibility and creativity. For example, her research found that positive emotions broaden attention and cognitive processes, allowing individuals to think more creatively and solve problems more effectively (Fredrickson & Joiner, 2002). This cognitive broadening is particularly beneficial in academic and professional settings, where innovative thinking and adaptability are often linked to

success. This suggests that fostering an environment that promotes positive emotional experiences can lead to better academic outcomes and overall student well-being.

The implementation quality of mental health programs within schools has also been shown to significantly impact academic performance. Dix and her colleagues (2011) found that schools with high-quality mental health initiatives reported better academic outcomes for their students, suggesting that effective mental health promotion can create a conducive learning environment. This underscores the necessity of integrating mental health support into educational frameworks to enhance overall student performance.

In summary, the relationship between well-being and academic performance is complex with social-emotional learning, mental health status and positive emotions all playing significant roles. Positive mental health and well-being are associated with improved academic outcomes, while mental health challenges can hinder academic success. Therefore, fostering a supportive environment that prioritizes mental health, and well-being is crucial for enhancing students' academic performance.

Key challenges of gifted education concerning well-being

The key challenges of gifted education concerning student well-being are diverse and require careful consideration of various factors that influence both the mental health and academic performance of gifted students.

One significant challenge is the transition from primary to secondary school, which can be particularly stressful for gifted students. Lester and Cross (2015) found that peer support is a critical protective factor for mental and emotional well-being during this transition. Gifted students may struggle with feelings of isolation or disconnection from their peers, which can lead to increased anxiety and frustration. This challenge is compounded by the fact that gifted students often have different social and emotional needs than their non-gifted peers, making it essential for schools to foster an inclusive environment that promotes social connectedness.

Another challenge is the need for effective social and emotional learning (SEL) programs tailored to the specific needs of gifted students. Durlak and his colleagues (2011) highlighted the

importance of interpersonal and environmental supports in enhancing academic performance through SEL interventions. However, many gifted students may not receive adequate support in developing their social-emotional skills, which can hinder their ability to cope with stress and maintain positive relationships. This gap in support can lead to negative outcomes, including underachievement and mental health issues.

Furthermore, the concept of well-being in education is often narrowly defined, focusing primarily on academic achievement rather than a holistic view (Norwich et al., 2022). We can argue for a more nuanced understanding of well-being that encompasses meaningful work and challenges, emphasizing the need for educational frameworks that integrate all PERMA elements.

The impact of school climate on student well-being also cannot be overlooked. A positive school climate has been shown to correlate with better mental health outcomes for students. Research indicates that a supportive school environment, characterized by strong teacher-student relationships and a sense of belonging, can significantly enhance the well-being of gifted students (Dabravolskaj et al., 2021), conversely, a negative school climate can exacerbate feelings of loneliness and alienation, further impacting the mental health of gifted students (Løhre et al., 2014).

This phenomenon underscores the importance of fostering a balanced approach to education that encourages high performance while also supporting students' emotional well-being.

Whole-school approaches to enhance student well-being

Implementing positive education and whole-school well-being approaches can significantly enhance student well-being and academic performance. Based on the literature, several recommendations can be made for schools to support student well-being effectively:

Integrate positive psychology interventions: Schools should incorporate positive psychology interventions into their curricula to foster students' emotional and psychological well-being. These interventions can include gratitude exercises, mindfulness practices, and strengths-based activities that promote positive emotions and resilience (Schiavon et al., 2020). Such programs can lead to improved mental health outcomes and enhance students' overall life satisfaction (Waters, 2011).

Foster positive relationships: Building strong, supportive relationships among students, teachers, and staff is crucial for creating a positive school climate. Schools should implement programs that encourage collaboration, peer support, and mentorship. Positive relationships have been shown to enhance students' sense of belonging and engagement, which are essential for their well-being and academic success (Baum et al., 2014; Chodkiewicz & Boyle, 2016).

Promote engagement through active learning: Schools should adopt teaching strategies that promote student engagement and active learning. This can include project-based learning, collaborative group work, and experiential learning opportunities that allow students to immerse themselves in their studies. Engaged students are more likely to experience flow, leading to higher academic performance and well-being (Shoshani & Slone, 2017; Harzer & Weber, 2017).

Implement Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) Programs: Schools should prioritize SEL programs that teach students essential skills such as emotional regulation, empathy, and conflict resolution. These programs can help students manage stress, build resilience, and improve their interpersonal relationships, contributing to better mental health and academic outcomes (Waters, 2011).

Encourage a growth mindset: Educators should foster a growth mindset among students by emphasizing the importance of effort, perseverance, and learning from failure. This approach can help students develop resilience and a positive attitude toward challenges, which is vital for both well-being and performance (Blackwell et al., 2007; Yeager & Dweck, 2012).

Monitor and evaluate well-being initiatives: Schools should regularly assess the effectiveness of their well-being initiatives through surveys and feedback mechanisms. This evaluation can help identify areas for improvement and ensure that programs are meeting the needs of students (Schiavon et al., 2020).

Engage families and communities: Schools should actively involve families and the wider community in promoting student well-being. This can include workshops, informational sessions, and collaborative events that educate parents and community members about the importance of mental health and well-being (Chodkiewicz & Boyle, 2016).

In conclusion, implementing these recommendations can create a holistic approach to education that prioritizes student well-being alongside academic achievement. By fostering a positive school environment, promoting social-emotional learning, and integrating positive psychology principles, schools can significantly enhance the overall well-being and performance of their students.

Skill development and trainings for the gifted

To enhance the well-being and performance of students, particularly gifted students, focus on skill enhancement is essential. This approach should encompass character strengths, resilience, coping strategies, mindset development, goal setting, and other relevant activities.

Schools should implement programs that help students identify and cultivate their character strengths, such as curiosity, perseverance, and social intelligence. Research indicates that recognizing and utilizing personal strengths can enhance students' engagement and motivation, leading to better academic performance. Activities such as strength-based assessments and group discussions can facilitate this process (Proctor et al., 2011).

Resilience is also crucial for gifted students, who may face unique challenges such as perfectionism and high expectations. Programs that teach coping strategies, stress management, and adaptive thinking can help students build resilience. For instance, Alexopoulou et al. (2019) emphasize the importance of enhancing self-awareness and realistic goal-setting to improve resilience among gifted students.

Teaching effective coping strategies is vital for managing stress and anxiety. Schools can incorporate mindfulness practices, relaxation techniques, and cognitive-behavioral approaches to help students develop healthy coping mechanisms. Akgül's (2022) research highlights the benefits of physical activities, arts, and music as outlets for emotional expression and stress relief.

Promoting a growth mindset, which emphasizes the belief that abilities can be developed through effort and learning, is essential for fostering resilience and motivation. Interventions that educate students about the growth mindset can lead to improved academic outcomes and reduced anxiety (Burnette et al., 2017).

Concerning goal setting, teaching students how to set realistic and achievable goals can enhance their motivation and focus. Effective goal-setting strategies include SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound) goals, which can help students track their progress and celebrate their achievements. Research indicates that students who engage in structured goal-setting are more likely to succeed academically (Chen et al., 2018).

In conclusion, enhancing the well-being of gifted students requires a comprehensive approach that includes character strengths development, resilience training, coping strategies, growth mindset cultivation and goal setting.

Summary

In a summary, this article has explored the intricate nature of well-being, emphasizing its critical role in shaping educational outcomes, particularly for gifted students. By examining the PERMA model, the unique challenges faced by gifted learners, and the connection between well-being and academic performance, we have highlighted the necessity of integrating holistic approaches into educational frameworks. Addressing these issues through whole-school strategies and targeted skills development is essential to fostering environments where all students, especially the gifted, can thrive both personally and academically. As educators and policymakers, embracing these insights can pave the way for a more balanced and supportive educational system.

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