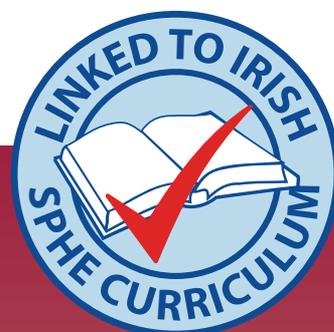


A Whole School Guide to the Weaving Well-Being Programme

By Fiona Forman



Weaving Well-Being



About the Author

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Framework of the Weaving Well-Being Programme



A Whole School Guide to the Weaving Well-Being Programme

'The Student is infinitely more important than the subject matter'

- Nel Nodding

Introduction:

Schools do incredible work. Day after day, they nurture the well-being of children in their care. Caring relationships are formed. Supportive and positive environments are created and provide the foundation for children to flourish and thrive. Children feel safe, secure, seen, heard and valued. Within this culture, children can reach their full potential.

Embedding the **Weaving Well-Being Programme** into such a culture can provide enhanced opportunities to nurture children's well-being. Research shows that a 2 level approach, comprising of a positive school culture combined with the teaching of a multi-year evidence-based skills programme, is most effective. The DES guidelines *Best practice guidance for primary schools in the use of programmes and/or external facilitators in promoting wellbeing (2018)* also recommends that well-being programmes should be implemented as part of a whole school approach.

A positive school culture conveys three powerful messages to children.

These are:

You matter here.

You belong here.

You can succeed here.

How do schools do this? The aim of this guide is to suggest a range of practices to cultivate this type of culture, whilst also showing how the **Weaving Well-Being Programme** contributes to its development. As teacher well-being is a critical part of such a culture, suggestions are also offered as to how to prioritise this at whole school level.

It is very likely that your school is already engaging in many of these practices on an informal level - possibly without even being fully aware of their importance. It's encouraging for us, as educators, to acknowledge the value of the work we're already doing. Realising the value of these practices and placing them on a more formal footing can help us to better focus and prioritise.

The guide is in 3 parts:

Part 1 offers ideas to help embed and develop the programme in the whole school setting, both before, during and after the 10-week time frame.

Part 3 suggests practices to support teacher well-being.

Part 2 offers examples of whole school practices which promote a culture of well-being on a more general level. These practices are suggested within the structure of the *Well-Being Policy Statement and Framework for Practice* (DES, 2018). This policy states that by 2023, 'the promotion of well-being will be at the core of the ethos of every school'. Schools are also directed to use The School Self Evaluation (SSE) process for a 'well-being promotion review and development cycle'. By offering a list of practices, this guide also aims to assist schools in this process by helping them to identify good practice already in place and providing practical ideas for improvement in targeted areas.

Part 1: Embedding Weaving Well-Being in a Whole School Setting



Well-being means feeling **good** and **strong** in our **minds** and **bodies**, having **energy**, getting along with and helping **others**, knowing our **strengths** and feeling **proud** because we are doing our **best**. It means we can **cope** with the little problems and disappointments of life. It means **enjoying** life, being **grateful** for what we have and **accepting ourselves** just as we are!

These ideas are suggested as a guide and schools should choose only the ones they feel are most appropriate and beneficial to their own particular needs or preferences.

A. Before the programme begins:

- Send the **Weaving Well-Being Parent Information Letter** to all parents available on www.otb.ie/WWB
- Launch the programme with an announcement to the whole school. Through this announcement, children can be told how important well-being is, how the school values it and that they will soon be learning lots of ways to improve their well-being through the **Weaving Well-Being Programme**.
- Endeavour to teach the programme throughout the school within a specific time-period. A ten-week block is suggested, however, schools are busy places so this may not be possible. Aim to have the lessons completed within one term, possibly the first or second.
- Set up a **Well-Being Display Board** or area in the school's foyer or reception area. Display the **Language of Well-Being Posters** (printable from all Teacher Resource Books DVDs). Add to and change the display board throughout the year in line with specific well-being themes.
- Have a **Well-Being Suggestion Box** for children, teachers and parents to offer suggestions. Explain that all ideas are welcomed and will be considered, but it may not be possible to implement them all!
- Consider displaying a **Well-being Charter** or **Well-Being Declaration** in a prominent position in the school. A simple declaration could be formed using the three messages previously referred to:

Message to Our Students

**You matter here.
You belong here.
You can succeed here.**

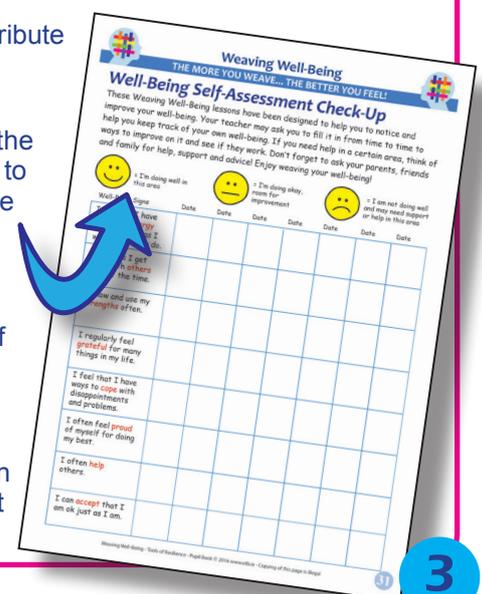
B. For the duration of the formal lessons:

- Reinforce the skills and strategies in the SEN setting for children who may need extra support.
- Introduce a **Shake-Up to Wake-Up** time throughout the school. Choose a certain time each morning (it may vary from day to day) and allow all classes to participate in a movement break either in their classrooms or outside. Alternatively, teachers can schedule **Shake-up to Wake-Up** time for their own classes for times that suit them. Perhaps aim for a whole-school **Shake-Up to Wake Up** break together once a week or at various intervals. Use www.gonoodle.com or similar sites for guided movement breaks.
- Emphasise the school's healthy eating policy through targeted activities or consider a **Healthy Eating Week**. See suggestions at www.foodafactoflife.org.uk/Sheet.aspx?siteId=20§ionId=138&contentId=2901
- **Well-Being Poster Competition**: Organise a poster competition throughout the school in which children illustrate their favourite well-being quotes or make up their own. Choose a different theme for each year level, e.g. Gratitude, Kindness, Inspiring People, Resilience, Healthy Body, Happy Mind etc. Display the posters around the school.
- Display the **24 Character Strength Posters** throughout the school or under a heading such as 'In this school, we value these strengths'.
- Create a school **Gratitude Tree** in a prominent position in the school. Children can write or draw something they're grateful for on leaves. A selection of leaves from all classes can then be used to decorate the tree. A leaf template is available on page 75 of the **Positive Emotions Teacher Resource Book**.

Part 1: Embedding Weaving Well-Being in a Whole School Setting

C. After all classes have completed the lessons:

- Have a whole school announcement to mark the end of the formal lessons. Remind children of how important their well-being is and encourage them to use the skills they've learned in their daily lives from now on.
- Encourage individual classes or year levels to present assemblies to the school showing what they have learned about their well-being during the programme. Second class children could perform the rap and make up their own dance routines or actions to it. Parents could be invited to attend also.
- Continue the whole school **Shake-Up to Wake-Up** morning routine as previously suggested.
- Display the **Character Strength Posters** (2nd Class Programme) around the school.
- Focus on the **24 Character Strengths** at award ceremonies – Creativity Award, Kindness Award, Bravery Award, Optimism Award etc.
- Have a **Gratitude Week**. Children can be encouraged to write and deliver letters of gratitude, keep a gratitude diary and make posters. Place **Random Thank-You signs** around the school, for example:
Thank-you for holding this door open! Thank-you for not pushing in the line!
Thank-you for being a good friend! Thank-you for being kind!
- Have a **Strength-Spotting Week** at whole school level.
- Choose a particular day of the week for a **Random Act of Kindness Challenge** throughout the school. Allow children to choose, perform and record five acts of kindness that day. Continue this challenge over a six-week period, e.g. every Tuesday for six weeks. Discuss and celebrate at whole school level after the six weeks.
- Incorporate 5 to 10 minutes of **Mindfulness Time** at the same time daily throughout the whole school. The guided meditations from the **Weaving Well-Being Programme** are available on the website www.otb/WWB or there are many other mindfulness resources online for schools to choose from. Mindfulness colouring can also be used on alternative days for variety. A guide for introducing mindfulness colouring can be found here:
www.twinkl.ie/blog/how-to-create-moments-of-calm-in-the-classroom-using-mindful-colouring
- Introduce **Rainbow Moments Week** on a whole school level. All classes can be taught/reminded of the lesson (*Positive Emotions, Lesson 7*) and use individual **Rainbow Moments notebooks** to record three positive events from the day before. After this week, individual teachers may wish to continue this practice in their own classes for a more extended period of time.
The lesson plan is available at www.otb.ie/weaving-well-being-lesson-plans
- Introduce the **'Win-Win'** concept as a whole school strategy for dealing with conflict (*Positive Relationships, Lesson 4*). The lesson plan is available at www.otb.ie/weaving-well-being-lesson-plans
- Introduce the **NABB** strategy - **Name, Accept, Breathe, Body** - for emotional regulation at whole school level (*Tools of Resilience, Lesson 10*). The lesson plan is available at www.otb.ie/weaving-well-being-lesson-plans
- Have a **Give, Give, Give Week** in which children brainstorm ways to contribute to the school or local community and decide which ones to implement.
- Have regular **Well-Being Self-Assessment Weeks**. All classes can be directed to use the **Well-Being Self-Assessment Check-Up** which is at the back of each Pupil Book. Children choose an area of their own well-being to improve on and work on it for a week. They then reassess at the end of the week and record any changes.
- Have a **Well-Being Week** towards the end of the year to celebrate and recognise well-being at whole school level. Each day could have a specific theme, e.g., Healthy Body-Happy Mind Day, Gratitude Day, Random Acts of Kindness Day, Resilience Day, Care and Connect Day.
- Have a **Weaving Well-Being Booster Week** the term after completion of the lessons. Teachers can decide which lessons they would like to reinforce at individual class level. The selected PowerPoints can be shown and followed up with some of the supplementary materials which were not previously used.



The image shows a 'Well-Being Self-Assessment Check-Up' form. At the top, it says 'Weaving Well-Being THE MORE YOU WEAVE... THE BETTER YOU FEEL!'. Below this, it explains the purpose: 'These Weaving Well-Being lessons have been designed to help you to notice and help you keep track of your own well-being. Your Teacher may ask you to fill it in from time to time to help you improve on it and see if they work. If you need help in a certain area, think of ways to improve on it and see if they work. Don't forget to ask your parents, friends and family for help, support and advice! Enjoy weaving your well-being!'. The form is divided into three columns, each with a smiley face icon and a title: 'I'm doing well in this area', 'I'm doing okay, need for improvement', and 'I am not doing well and may need support or help in this area'. Each column has a grid for recording progress. Below the grid, there are several statements for reflection, such as 'I regularly feel grateful for many things in my life.', 'I feel that I have ways to cope with disappointments and problems.', 'I often feel proud of myself for doing my best.', 'I often help others.', and 'I can accept that I am ok just as I am.'. A blue arrow points to the grid area.

Part 2: Whole School Practices to Promote Well-Being

The following suggestions are more general practices which can help promote well-being at whole school level.

The *Well-Being Policy Statement and Framework for Practice (DES, 2018)* outlines the following four areas for well-being promotion in schools:



1. Culture and Environment
2. Curriculum
3. Policy and Planning
4. Relationships and Partnerships

Schools are directed to review their well-being practices in these areas with the aim of identifying areas of strength and areas to target for improvement.

To assist schools with this process, the suggested practices in this guide are offered in two of these areas - *Culture and Environment* and *Curriculum*.

Area 1: Culture and Environment

Indicators of Success

- *Children, young people and staff experience a sense of belonging and feel safe, connected and supported.*
- *Systems are in place so that the voice of the child/young person, teacher and parent are heard and lead to improvements in school culture and ethos.*
(*Well-Being Policy Statement and Framework for Practice DES, 2018, page 21*).

Suggested Practices

- **Letter from Parents:** At the start of each school year, class teachers can invite parents to write them a letter about their child. Parents can be encouraged to share the child's strengths as well as any concerns they may have about their child. They can be sent in to the class teacher in a sealed envelope to ensure confidentiality. Letters can be kept and discussed at the parent-teacher meetings or beforehand, at the teacher's discretion.
- **Letter from Children:** Teachers can also ask their students to write them a letter at the start of the year. Children can be encouraged to share their strengths and interests as well as things that help them learn and succeed in class. They can also share anything that they may be worried about for the coming year and anything else that they would like their teacher to know.
- **What would you like me to know?** Have a 'What would you like me to know?' box or tin in each classroom or at whole school level so that children can write a note about anything that they feel they would like the teacher to know on a day-to-day basis. This could be worries, concerns or something that is happening in their lives that they would like to share with their teacher. Teachers can discreetly have a word with any child who shares any concern or any information in this way. Often it is just the act of listening that is very reassuring and it is a concrete way of telling each child that they matter and that their teacher cares about them.
- **Sensory Area or Well-Being Area** in classrooms or in a particular area of the school with sensory items, cushions or beanbags for children who need to take some time out to deal with overwhelming emotions.
- **Friendship Bench/Friendship Stop** on yard.
- **Playground Helpers** system for yard.
- **Weekly Class Meetings** – children and teacher share what is going well and set class goals for the week ahead.
- **School Well-Being Committee** – teachers and students meet to discuss and implement new suggestions.
- **Buddy Systems/Mentoring Systems** between older and younger classes.
- **Social and Emotional Support Groups** for children needing additional support.
- **Suggestion Boxes** in each classroom.
- **Student Council:** Representatives from each class can express ideas and follow up on decisions.
- **Regular assemblies** which outline common goals and celebrate contributions towards shared goals or values.

Part 2: Whole School Practices to Promote Well-Being

Area 1: Culture and Environment

Suggested Practices (continued)

- **'We All Belong Right Here'** display to celebrate and recognise the various cultures and identities represented in the school.
- **Culture Day** to celebrate the diverse cultural backgrounds of the school community.
- **School Mascot** which reflects the identity of the school can help to build a sense of belonging and unity.
- **Friendship Week, Sport for All Day, Arts Week** to promote opportunities for fun and enjoyment across the school community.
- **School Garden** in which the children are involved.
- **Expert Day** in which children present short projects or talks in class on a self-chosen area of expertise.
- **Restorative Practices** used to deal with conflicts.

Area 2: Curriculum

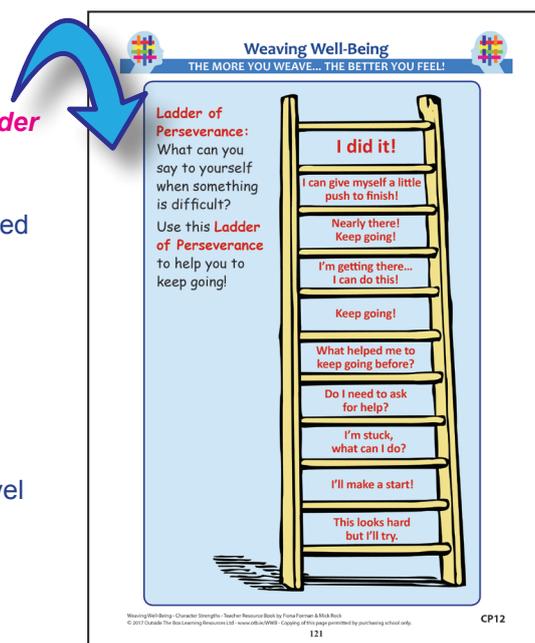
Indicators of Success

- *Children and young people experience positive, high-quality teaching, learning and assessment, which provide opportunities for success for all.*
- *Children and young people access curricular activities to promote their physical, social and emotional competence to enhance their overall wellbeing.*
(Well-Being Policy Statement and Framework for Practice DES, 2018, page 21)

Suggested Practices

- Use of the **Weaving Well-being Programme** to teach emotional, social and coping skills.
- Use of a variety of teaching approaches e.g., pre-teaching, co-teaching, team teaching.
- Student reflective learning logs used weekly to record learning and set targets.
- **Growth Mindset Praise** (Process Praise) used throughout the school – see examples on page 31 of **Empowering Beliefs Teacher Resource Book**.
- Use of **Peer Tutoring** approaches.
- Teaching helpful self-talk strategies – see examples on the **Ladder of Perseverance – Character Strengths Teacher Resource Book**, page 121.
- Use of the **24 Character Strengths** to promote a strengths-based approach to writing I.E.Ps.
- Use of **What Helps Me to Learn?** checklists to help children understand and become engaged in their own learning.
- Use of differentiation in all lessons to provide opportunities for success and challenge.
- Regular use of self-assessment in all classes.

Many additional ideas for promotion well-being at whole school level are contained in the DES publication *Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion: Wellbeing in Primary Schools (2015)*.



Part 3: Whole School Practices to Support Teacher Well-Being

'Self-care is not selfish. You cannot serve from an empty vessel'
- Eleanor Brown

- Consider teacher well-being when new initiatives are being considered to ensure that workload is not continually increasing.
 - Make time to nurture and build positive staff relationships.
 - Have a **Staff Well-Being Committee**. See suggestions at www.theguardian.com/teacher-network/teacher-blog/2018/feb/01/staff-wellbeing-team-school-improved
 - Encourage staff to use the skills and strategies from the **Weaving Well-Being Programme** on a personal level as appropriate.
 - Allow teachers to share areas of strength and expertise at whole school level.
 - Ensure teachers feel recognised and valued on a day-to-day level.
 - Develop an active staff **Social Committee** and provide opportunities for social events to develop a sense of belonging.
 - Promote a mentoring system for new staff.
 - Promote a collaborative approach throughout the school.
 - Recognise the value of encouragement and support for teachers.
 - Give teachers a sense of autonomy, control and choice wherever possible.
 - Aim for consultation wherever possible in areas of change.
 - Provide appropriate training and resources for new initiatives.
 - Provide specific training in well-being skills and coping strategies.
 - Encourage a culture of self-care and self-compassion within the staff.
- See suggestions at:

www.self-compassion.org/

www.mindfulteachers.org/p/start-here.html

www.selfcareforteachers.com.au/

www.actionforhappiness.org/

www.greatergood.berkeley.edu/

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