



Perth Modern School

Student Wellbeing

Bringing wellbeing to
the forefront of our thinking

Kadadjiny Dandjoo

Listening, Thinking and Learning Together



Our Core Beliefs

Wellbeing and learning are deeply connected.

When students feel they belong, engage meaningfully, and are supported to thrive, wellbeing strengthens and learning deepens.

Relationships are our most powerful lever.

High-impact teaching is inherently relational, and effective learning is strengthened through positive, trusting connections.

High challenge and high care must coexist.

Gifted students excel when high expectations are paired with responsive teaching, psychological safety and supportive structures.

Wellbeing is a shared responsibility.

Student wellbeing improves when there is a collective focus on belonging, engagement and compassionate support in everyday practice.

BELONG • ENGAGE • THRIVE

Student wellbeing is a **shared responsibility**, embraced collectively by teachers, students, parents, caregivers and the wider community. Everyone who plays a role in a child's life can make a positive difference.

Purpose

At Perth Modern School, we place Student Wellbeing at the heart of gifted education and at the forefront of our thinking. As a team, we lead, guide and support each other to put wellbeing before achievement. **Our commitment** is to create the conditions for every gifted student to be known, challenged, and empowered to thrive socially, emotionally, and academically.

Guided by our Business Plan, *Kadadjiny Dandjoo*, **Belong • Engage • Thrive** provides the **whole-school framework** for

enacting this commitment. It guides how we cultivate the environment in which students transform their natural abilities into exceptional talents.

- **Belong** establishes safety and identity
- **Engage** invites challenge and agency
- **Thrive** sustains wellbeing and performance

Together, **Belong • Engage • Thrive** create the foundation for students to grow with confidence, courage, and purpose.



Wellbeing and Learning in Gifted Education

Gifted students often experience the world with amplified intensity and complexity. At Perth Modern School, we recognise these characteristics and respond in ways that support both wellbeing and growth.

When students experience:

- **heightened sensitivity** we respond with compassion, supporting emotionally intensive moments with kindness and empathy.
- **a strong sense of justice** and concerns with fairness and ethics, we encourage curiosity about different perspectives and ways of thinking.
- **perfectionism** and high self-expectations, we assist students to develop courage by building balance, flexibility and self-compassion.
- **asynchronous development**, where intellectual ability may outpace emotional or social maturity, we nurture commitment and perseverance to support a growth mindset.
- **a simultaneous need for challenge and care**, we foster collaboration between students, teachers and families, so that students can thrive when both are present.
- **twice-exceptional characteristics**, we celebrate their strengths while thoughtfully scaffolding their areas of need.

BELONG establishes safety and identity

Belonging creates the conditions for learning. When students feel known, valued, and connected, they are more willing to take intellectual risks, engage deeply, and persist through challenges. For gifted learners, a **strong sense of belonging** is essential to both wellbeing and high achievement.

At Perth Modern School, our strength lies in **celebrating individuality** within a **connected community**. We foster strong relationships and create an **inclusive environment** where students are recognised for who they are, respected for their differences, and valued for the contributions they make to our community.

Why Belonging Matters | What the Research Shows:

“Improving students’ relationships with teachers has important, positive and long-lasting implications for both students’ academic and social development.”

Rimm-Kaufman & Sandilos (2019), *Improving Students’ Relationships with Teachers*

Academic Achievement

Students achieve more in environments where they feel understood, challenged and supported. A sense of belonging enables gifted students to stretch themselves without fear of failure.

Engagement

When students feel they belong they are more likely to participate actively, contribute to discussion, take ownership of their learning and engage with complex and challenging ideas.

Social and Emotional Development

Strong relationships and a supportive school culture enhance wellbeing and help gifted students navigate sensitivity, perfectionism, and asynchronous development, while fostering connection, confidence, and positive peer relationships.

We foster belonging through:

- inclusive learning environments
- welcoming classroom practices
- safe entry and exit for sensitive learning
- knowing students’ passions and interests
- Advocacy Program
- House System, activities and carnivals
- themed days/weeks: NAIDOC, Harmony etc.
- classroom displays
- Mod Clubs
- greeting students beyond lesson time
- Transition Programs
- camps and cohort social events
- whole school celebrations e.g. assemblies.

A Student’s Perspective

“I am grateful for all my teachers this year because they have not only taught me important lessons, but also created a sense of belonging in the classroom. Their encouragement and support make school feel like a place where everyone is valued and included. I appreciate the way they help us grow academically and personally, while ensuring we feel part of a community.”

Year 7 Student (2025)

ENGAGE invites challenge and agency

Students engage in school through purposeful challenge, meaningful participation and sustained effort. In a gifted context, engagement grows when students have voice and agency, experience **challenge alongside care**, and are supported to develop mastery over time through learning aligned to their strengths and interests.

When students feel **intellectually stretched and supported to take risks**, they are more likely to persist through challenge and sustain motivation. Opportunities to pursue areas of passion and talent enable them to grow their potential across learning and leadership.

Why Engagement Matters | What the Research Shows:

Challenge

Appropriate intellectual challenge supports deep engagement and achievement. Students are more likely to sustain effort, persist through complexity and achieve at levels that reflect their potential when learning is demanding and purposeful.

Agency

Opportunities for voice, choice, and ownership strengthen motivation and commitment. When students experience agency, they are more likely to engage deeply and contribute meaningfully across learning and school life.

Support

Engagement is strongest when challenge is balanced with care and guidance. Supportive environments empower students to take risks, persevere through setbacks, and build the confidence needed for future independent learning and wellbeing.

“Gifted students often demonstrate high initial interest but struggle to sustain engagement unless learning environments provide sufficient challenge and personalised support so that potential can develop into talent.”

Ronksley-Pavia & Neumann (2020),
The Learning Needs of Gifted Children

A Student's Perspective

“When we are given a real voice to make choices within our classes and school community, we feel less like school is just something that happens to us. Instead, it's somewhere we feel valued and want to be involved in because we know our thoughts and opinions can make an actual difference in our lives.”

Year 9 Student (2026)

We create engagement through:

- compacted, extended and accelerated curriculum
- real-world problem-solving tasks
- reframing errors as part of deep learning
- student leadership committees
- lesson structure building to deeper thinking
- student voice and agency
- shared experiences and stories
- collaborative group work
- interest-driven enrichment opportunities
- competitions and co-curricular programs
- students teaching students
- mentoring programs
- future pathways guidance.

THRIVE sustains performance and wellbeing

Thriving is the foundation of learning. When students have a **deep awareness** of their own wellbeing, they are better able to use strategies that enhance their ability to thrive. This positive impact naturally extends to peers, younger students, and the broader school community.

Our approach to social and emotional learning is designed for gifted students, equipping them with the **skills and strategies** to understand themselves, relate effectively to others, cultivate resilience, and form habits that help them manage the demands of high challenge. When additional support is required, the school intervenes early with targeted assistance to ensure every student continues to progress.

Why Thrive Matters | What the Research Shows:

"Participation in universal, school-based social and emotional learning interventions has been linked to improved academic achievement and wellbeing outcomes."

AERO (2025)

Healthy Habits

Wellbeing is the foundation of thriving. Strong habits around sleep, food, exercise etc. strengthens the body and mind.

Social and Emotional Skills

Social-emotional learning interventions that teach students how to identify, communicate and regulate emotions, as well as foster respect for self and others, are effective in enhancing students' perception of school.

Academic Outcomes

Strong academic self-concept, that is, confidence in their abilities and competencies related to learning, is related to improved academic outcomes.

We support students to thrive through:

- fostering wellbeing in every classroom
- explicit wellbeing lessons (Thriving Minds)
- reflective and growth orientated language in assessment review
- celebration of effort, progress and achievement
- Focus Days
- being responsive to what we observe
- acknowledging struggles and supporting solutions
- Wellbeing Week and R U OK? Day
- explicitly encouraging healthy study habits
- small group intervention activities
- connecting with allied professionals at school
- external partnerships for targeted support
- meaningful relationships between school and parents/caregivers.

A Student's Perspective

"Balance gets talked about a lot with the ATAR, but I see it more as a 'seesaw of attention' than a perfect midpoint. You don't need to sit in the middle; you just need to fully commit to whichever end you're on. If one side is study and the other is sport, social life, or hobbies, the real skill is being completely present in the moment. Giving your full attention to what you're doing creates a rhythm you can sustain."

Year 12 Student, Class of 2025

How this Framework is used

Belong • Engage • Thrive is a shared framework that guides how the Perth Modern School community supports student wellbeing and learning. It helps students, staff, parents and leaders to develop a **common understanding** of the conditions that enable gifted learners to thrive.

The framework informs **everyday practice** across classrooms, programs, relationships and support systems, ensuring that wellbeing and learning remain closely connected.

Students

Understanding how to thrive at school

Students use the framework to understand the conditions that support their learning and wellbeing. It encourages them to develop healthy habits, engage in challenge, seek support when needed, and contribute positively to the school community.

Parents and Caregivers

Partnering with the school

Parents and caregivers use the framework to understand how the school supports both wellbeing and academic development. It provides a shared language that helps families partner with the school to support their child in managing challenge, balance, and growth.

Modernians

Connection across generations

Modernians use the framework to remain connected to the life and values of Perth Modern School. By sharing experiences, mentoring students and supporting school initiatives, they strengthen the sense of belonging that connects generations of the school community.

Teachers and Allied Staff

Creating the conditions for learning

Staff use the framework as a guide for reflecting on school culture and learning environments. It reinforces the importance of ensuring students feel known and respected, experience purposeful challenge, and are supported to sustain engagement in their learning.

School Leaders

Aligning systems and supports

Leaders use the framework to guide decision-making, programs, and student supports across the school. It ensures that structures, policies and wellbeing initiatives align with the goal of creating the conditions for students to **Belong • Engage • Thrive**.

Wider Community

Partnerships and Opportunity

The wider community uses the framework to strengthen connections between the school and the world beyond it. Partnerships with universities, organisations and community groups create opportunities that extend students' belonging, challenge and purpose.

Related Documents

Australian Education Research Organisation (AERO). (2025). *Evidence-based practices in school settings for student wellbeing*.

Department of Education (WA). (2025). *Aspiration for All*. Government of Western Australia.

Department of Education (WA). (2024). *Student Wellbeing and Care: Future Directions*. Government of Western Australia.

Department of Education (WA). (2022). *Teaching for Impact*. Government of Western Australia.



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