



Together We Are Safe, Together We Are Respectful, Together We Achieve

Wellbeing Wednesday #15

Each Wednesday we will be posting some exciting Wellbeing content for our community. This may include information about how you can support your children's and families' wellbeing, a snapshot on mental health issues currently prevalent in the community, or information about a local service in the area that might benefit you or your child.

Over the next four weeks the Wellbeing Wednesday Newsletter will focus on our four school values: Respect, Responsibility, Resilience and Inclusion. We respect ourselves, our school and each another, and understand that our attitudes and behaviours have an impact on the people around us. We are responsible for our own actions and behaviours. We acknowledge challenges and work together to learn, and bounce back from them. We model and demonstrate kindness, and take every opportunity to include all and help others that may be in need.

This week's topic is Inclusion.

Inclusion is being a part of a group, being welcomed and embraced as a member who belongs. Inclusive education means all students, including students with disabilities, students from different backgrounds, and students with behavioural needs, are welcomed by their school and supported to reach their full potential. As one of our core values at Woodville, this is something we take great pride in. Inclusion isn't just an action, it's an attitude to how we interact with each other. It is an expectation for all our students, teachers, support staff and families.

Why do people exclude?

Inclusion feels right. It makes sense and should be easy. And yet people, often kids find it difficult. Sometimes a group of people build their identity by keeping an individual out and attacking this person's reputation and value. They develop a sense of connectedness despite the fact that they are being mean. This is not just a school behaviour, it unfortunately happens across all ages and places. Sometimes, the group will make fun of the person, engage in name-calling and leave the person off of invitation lists. They may also take bullying online and engage in cyberbullying. At other times, the group may act like the person does not exist. It never feels good to be excluded, and often we exclude others for fear of being excluded ourselves.

Why is it important to include people who are different?

There are lots of reasons to include people in our circle that are different than us:

- It doesn't take much thought to realise being excluded sucks. Being inclusive is the right thing to do because we would want the same treatment for ourselves. It's lonely being on the outside and it makes us feel worthless and miserable. Including someone in a group or game could make a huge difference for that person.
- When we make friends we naturally gravitate towards people who look like us, act like us, and sound like us. These are the people we feel most comfortable around. However, we don't grow and learn when we are comfortable. We grow and learn when we are challenged. When we see things from new perspectives and when we are shown things we hadn't considered before. Including people who are different to you is an excellent way to make yourself a better person.
- Inclusion is contagious. If you include outsiders in your groups and games, you will often find you will be included in more and more circles too. Often people feel that if they include more people in their group, then the group won't be as special anymore. This just simply isn't true. As long as everyone is respectful, everyone can be included.

Be an upstander, not a bystander.

Often exclusion is driven by one person in a group. They might say things like “you can’t play with us” or “you’re so weird”. Others in the group who let this happen are called bystanders. These people don’t do the excluding, but they don’t do the including either. Upstanders don’t stand by and watch people be excluded and get their feelings hurt. Upstanders stand up for people who are different. They say things like “you can sit with me” or “I’ll play with you”. It takes courage to be an upstander instead of a bystander.

At Woodville we pride ourselves on encouraging upstanding and reward it when we see it. The Woodville community is comprised of many different backgrounds, abilities and cultures. Inclusion is one of the most important things we do.

Have a great week!

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