



**DUNECREST
AMERICAN
SCHOOL**

*Raising
Student
Achievement
Every Day,
Every Way*

**WELLBEING
POLICY**

2023-2024



Dunecrest Wellbeing Policy

Rationale

At Dunecrest American School, we believe that the wellbeing of our students, staff, and community is of utmost importance. We are committed to creating a safe, supportive, and inclusive environment that promotes the physical, mental, and emotional wellbeing of all individuals within our school community. This policy outlines our approach to wellbeing and the measures we will take to ensure the holistic development and happiness of our students and staff.

Wellbeing is embedded in our vision and goals, and highlights that when individuals feel safe and secure, healthy, and happy, then they will be better prepared for learning and academic excellence can be achieved. We expect all members of our community to be successful! We ensure that our goal of maintaining wellbeing across the board is reached by embedding practices into our daily routines, our approaches to teaching and learning, and by implementing a more targeted approach for those who need additional support to achieve a sense of wellbeing.

As the world is experiencing high levels of change, stress, and uncertainties, the aim at Dunecrest is to ensure that students feel supported, valued, and equipped with tools that they can access when needed.

Definitions - What are "wellbeing" and "mental health"?

Wellbeing is defined by the Oxford English Dictionary as "[the state of being comfortable, healthy, or happy.](#)" However, it is important to realize that wellbeing is a much broader concept than moment-to-moment happiness. While it does include happiness, it also includes other things, such as how satisfied people are with their life as a whole, their sense of purpose, and how in control they feel. (*Mental Health Foundation*)

Mental health is a state of mental wellbeing that enables people to cope with the stresses of life, realize their abilities, learn well and work well, and contribute to their community. It is an integral component of health and wellbeing that underpins our individual and collective abilities to make decisions, build relationships and shape the world we live in. Mental health is a basic human right. And it is crucial to personal, community and socio-economic development. (World Health Organization)



Link to our Guiding Statements

This policy reflects our school Goal to ensure wellbeing is the cornerstone for the personal development and success of our students which promotes an individual's overall health, happiness, quality of life and success. We are a supportive, safe, positive, and thriving community.

Key Objectives

- To foster a positive and inclusive school culture that promotes wellbeing and supports the personal growth of all individuals.
- To provide a safe and nurturing environment that prioritizes the physical, mental, and emotional health of our students and staff.
- To develop and implement comprehensive wellbeing programs and initiatives that address the diverse needs of our school community.
- To promote healthy lifestyle choices and habits that contribute to overall well being.
- To establish effective wellbeing data collection and analysis, communication channels and support systems to address wellbeing concerns and provide timely assistance.

Key Guidelines and Measures

Physical Wellbeing

- Encourage regular physical activity through physical education classes, sports programs, and extracurricular activities.
- Provide nutritious meals and promote healthy eating habits through the school cafeteria and educational programs.
- Ensure a safe and clean environment that supports physical health and hygiene practices.

Mental and Emotional Wellbeing

- Implement a comprehensive counseling program that offers individual and group counseling services to students, staff and parents.
- Provide professional development opportunities for staff to enhance their understanding of mental health and wellbeing.
- Promote emotional intelligence and resilience through social-emotional learning programs and workshops.
- Establish a peer support system to encourage students to seek help and support from their peers.



Social Wellbeing

- Encourage positive relationships and social connections through extracurricular activities, clubs, and community service initiatives.
- Promote a culture of respect, empathy, and kindness through anti-bullying campaigns and character education programs.
- Provide opportunities for students to develop leadership skills and engage in collaborative projects.
- Foster practices that educate our community and promote diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice for all community members.

Digital Wellbeing

- Educate students, staff, and parents about responsible and safe internet use through digital citizenship programs.
- Establish guidelines for appropriate technology use within the school premises.
- Encourage a healthy balance between online and offline activities.

Support Systems

- Establish a wellbeing committee comprising representatives from different stakeholders to oversee the implementation of this policy and monitor its effectiveness.
- Provide regular training and professional development opportunities for staff to enhance their knowledge and skills related to wellbeing.
- Develop effective communication channels for students, staff, and parents to report wellbeing concerns and seek assistance.
- Collaborate with external agencies and professionals to provide additional support and resources when needed.

Student Outcomes

On a student level, we aim to develop protective factors that build resilience to mental health difficulties. The school's target outcomes for student wellbeing are that:

- Students will feel valued
- Students will feel safe and be able to talk openly to a trusted adult about their feelings without any judgment or stigma
- Students will engage in social-emotional learning (SEL) lessons during advisory sessions/moral education classes that revolve around mental health and wellbeing



- Students will access support of professional resources within and beyond school
- Students will respect themselves and show respect towards others

School Wide Outcomes

On a school-wide level, we aim to educate the Dunecrest community about wellbeing and its importance. Below are the points that will be the focus of Dunecrest's approach to mental health:

- Positive mental health and wellbeing will be promoted and valued across the school
- Awareness events will run during different times of the year
- Positive student-staff, student-student, staff-parent relationships will be built
- Educating staff of early signs of mental health struggles
- Developing staff wellbeing
- Providing support for staff working with students with mental health difficulties
- Provide counseling and overall support to students with mental health difficulties
- Providing parental access to school support personnel, such as school counselors to offer advice where sought.
- Awareness of physical wellbeing and its impact on psycho-social wellbeing
- Collaborating with mental health professionals outside of the school to ensure student well-being

Curricular Programs and Experiences Outcomes

- Curricular, co-curricular, and extra-curricular programs are innovatively crafted to provide enriching experiences that ensure advanced wellbeing throughout all divisions.
- Across all divisions, precise and highly successful wellbeing initiatives are integrated, having a profound impact on wellbeing development.
- Innovative programs are implemented to empower students, equipping them with skills to master all components of personal wellbeing.
- Teaching teams skillfully cultivate a classroom environment where wellbeing permeates every aspect of the classroom experience, to ensure students can thrive at every level.



- Students almost always express very high levels of positivity, clearly linked to a deep-rooted sense of connection in the school community.

Wellbeing Support

At Dunecrest, wellbeing support is provided on an individual level; whether through student-teacher interactions or through counseling support. Wellbeing support is provided at a classroom level through the positive teacher-student interactions, but also during the advisory/moral education/social emotional learning lessons that are a part of their timetable. During these sessions, students are engaged in activities and lessons (from the Second Step Program as well as the UAE Moral Education curriculum) that provide social and emotional learning tools and skills. Wellbeing is also promoted on a community level where students, staff and parents are educated and involved in wellbeing and mental health awareness celebrations, wellness days, fitness challenges set by the physical education team, and healthy living initiatives by the school doctor and nurses.

What are some warning signs?

Staff may become aware of warning signs which indicate a student or colleague is experiencing mental health or emotional wellbeing issues.

These signs should always be taken seriously and staff who notice any of these warning signs should alert a counselor, divisional principal, or member of SLT.

Possible warning signs, which all staff should be aware of include:

- Physical signs of harm that are repeated or appear non-accidental
- Changes in eating / sleeping habits
- Increased isolation from friends or family, becoming socially withdrawn
- Changes in activity and mood
- Lowering of academic achievement / enthusiasm for extracurriculars
- Talking about or joking about self-harm or suicide
- Abusing drugs/alcohol/use of tobacco products (i.e. vaping)
- Expressing feelings of failure, uselessness, or loss of hope
- Secretive behavior
- Repeated physical symptoms with no evident cause
- School wellbeing data suggest a change in levels of happiness, engagement, mental or physical health or academic progress.



Targeted Support

At Dunecrest, we are mindful of the fact that there are some students who are at greater risk of experiencing more mental health struggles. We have a dedicated team of school counselors located at the school to support and provide advice to the school community, as well as cater to the emotional and mental health needs of our students. A plan is implemented with families of those individuals when necessary.

Our staff work hard to identify issues early, determine potential risks and provide early intervention to prevent issues escalating. We ensure timely and effective identification of students who would benefit from targeted support and ensure appropriate referral to support services by:

- Ensuring young people have access to counseling support, as well as specialist services, so that early intervention for emotional, social, and behavioral difficulties are initiated
- Providing a range of evidence-based interventions that have been proven to be effective, according to the child's needs.
- Identifying children who are showing early signs of anxiety, emotional distress, or behavioral problems.
- Providing young people with clear and consistent information about the opportunities available for them to discuss personal issues and emotional concerns.
- Identifying, assessing, and supporting those caring for someone with high emotional needs.

This policy is for all stakeholders at Dunecrest.

Dunecrest Students are expected to:

- Engage in wellbeing activities and events that are provided at school (or off-campus if available) regarding mental health awareness
- Engage in advisory lessons where SEL content is being addressed and taught
- Consider their own wellbeing and the wellbeing of others by advocating for themselves and others and communicating with trusted adults (teachers, counselors, parents) if needed



Dunecrest Staff are expected to:

- Integrate a culture of wellbeing into classes, events, and/or school ethos
- Integrate SEL concepts taught into daily academics
- Be role models when it comes to wellbeing practices
- Engage in events and activities revolving around wellbeing awareness
- Monitor and identify any warning signs or concerns about a student's wellbeing to counselors or divisional principal
- Identify any concern about a staff member's wellbeing to counselors, divisional principal or SLT
- Follow the school's safeguarding procedure (*see safeguarding policy and flowchart*) for any concerns related to a student's safety
- Be familiar with support resources available within Dunecrest and in the local community
- Engage in yearly safe-guarding and child protection training
- Assist the school in collecting and analyzing wellbeing data

In addition to the above-listed points, Counselors are expected to:

- Continuously engage in professional development related to supporting students who are emotionally vulnerable
- Have the necessary skills to support all members of the Dunecrest community
- Be at least Level 2 Safeguarding trained and at least one member is Mental Health First Aid trained
- Continue to develop and review the counseling program as per ISCA standards (*see Counseling Department Manual*)
- Implement improvement targets and regularly review the Wellbeing Improvement Plan
- Lead the work of the school Wellbeing Committee

Dunecrest Parents are expected to:

- Communicate and collaborate with a counselor, principal, or SLT member for any concerns regarding their own child or another student's wellbeing
- Support the wellbeing practices at school by engaging in school events revolving around wellbeing

Dunecrest Administrators and Board members are expected to:



- Ensure a Board member sits on the Wellbeing Committee
- Ensure the school collects and actions the findings from wellbeing data through the Wellbeing Improvement Plan
- Hold senior administrators accountable for Wellbeing at Dunecrest American School
- Support the wellbeing practices at school by engaging in school events revolving around wellbeing
- Foster manageable workloads
- Implement positive and meaningful appraisal systems to promote staff wellbeing

All stakeholders are expected to maintain confidentiality when handling any sensitive information revolving around student wellbeing or mental health. Staff members are trained and encouraged to refer any concerns regarding wellbeing to the school counselor team in the first instance.

Wellbeing Data

At Dunecrest, the school implements different approaches to gathering data in relation to all stakeholders' wellbeing including:

- Parent Satisfaction Surveys are analyzed in depth and the school makes changes/improvements based on the results
- Student Surveys (includes a wellbeing component) are analyzed and interventions for wellbeing are put in place based on the results
- Pupil Attitudes to Self and School (PASS) GL test for students are conducted termly - interventions for wellbeing are put in place based on the results
- **Komodo** platform is used to give regular wellbeing data so that all students are tracked at regular intervals throughout the school year
- Staff Wellbeing surveys - staff feedback is taken into consideration and concerns are addressed
- Staff Committee - a team of staff members from different school departments and divisions (teachers, SLT, non-teaching staff) who get together to address any teacher concerns (many of which are submitted anonymously) - staff feedback is taken into consideration and concerns are addressed
- Wellbeing Committee (includes a Board member, staff, parents, students) - a team that works together to address any concerns regarding student wellbeing



- Student of Concern meetings (once a quarter or on needs basis) - teachers, inclusion team, ELL team, principals and counselors meet to discuss concerns and create a plan for the student
- Referral form (on ABC) that teachers can complete if concerned about a student's academic, social, and emotional wellbeing.
- Teachers are informed about the wellbeing referral process at the start of each academic year.
- Qualitative data is collected through one-on-one counselor-student interactions

Policy Review and Evaluation

This wellbeing policy will be reviewed annually to ensure its effectiveness and relevance. Feedback from students, staff, and parents will be sought to identify areas for improvement and to address emerging wellbeing needs. The policy will be revised accordingly to reflect the evolving nature of wellbeing and to ensure the continued wellbeing of our school community.

Policy Updated on: Oct. 26, 2023 (ZM/JS)	Policy endorsed by Board: Nov. 13, 2023
Policy communicated to staff through: SLT Academic Minutes	On: Nov. 9, 2023
Lead reviewer signature: Zeina Mouganie	