

Australian Schools in International Light: Lessons for Teachers and Parents

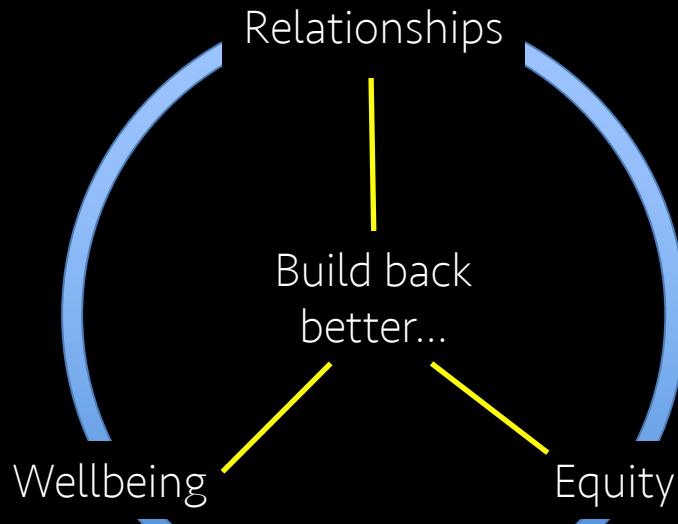
Positive Schools Mental Health & Wellbeing Conference
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1. Post-pandemic trends
2. Digital wellness for all
3. Lessons for teachers and parents

1. Post-pandemic trends



Other issues to worry less about...

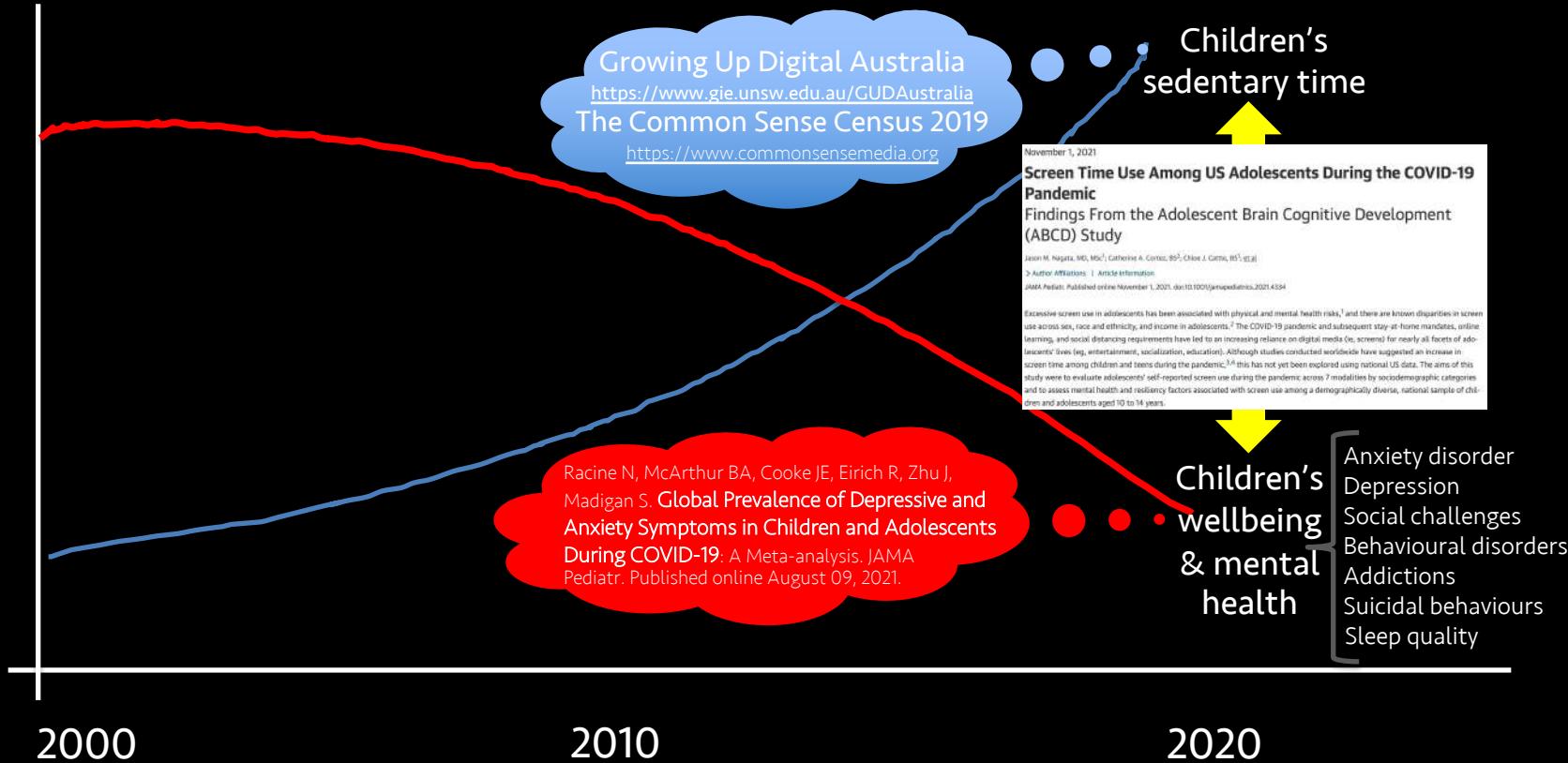
Homework: Little value, often linked to increased anxiety

'Learning loss': Little evidence of long-term harm

Test scores: Poor predictor of future success in life

2. Digital wellness for all

Changing children, changing times



Kids are not alright

Australian teachers say:

Australian classrooms are becoming more complex places to teach and learn.

In the last 3-5 years, students with:



Australian parents say:

Parenting is harder than it used to be.



Workout for better digital wellness

1. Understand the benefits and risks of our digital lifestyles.
2. Learn how to self-regulate your digital behaviour.
3. Role-model safe, healthy and responsible digital habits!

3. Lessons for teachers and parents

How do we compare with the Nordics?

Nordic countries



Australia



How do we compare with the Nordics?

Nordic countries

Short schooldays that include 20% unstructured time for all students

Low-stakes assessments and very little homework pressure

Close collaboration between schools and youth organisations for the benefit of all students

Holistic and coherent public policies that link health and social policy sectors to education

Students are trusted to have agency and active role in education policy and school life

Australia

Long schooldays with little unstructured time for students

High-stakes assessments and strong focus on homework and after-school tuition

Schools operate separately from youth and leisure organisations that are often privately funded

Education and health are provided separately in different locations

Students have a limited role in education policy and only a weak influence in their life at school

How do we compare with the Nordics?

Nordic countries

Flexibility through local governance

Trust-based responsibility

Creativity and responsiveness

Equity as a driver

Australia

Bureaucracy through central governance

Test-based accountability

Standardisation and compliance

Excellence as a driver

Three steps

Step 1: Remove the barriers

Reduce or remove policies and practices that are harmful to children and their wellbeing:

- Unhealthy competition in school
- Pressure to conform and perform
- Inequalities in school and community

Step 2: Seize the opportunity

Strengthen whole-child approach by focusing on equity, healthy relationships, and play as post-pandemic priorities:

- Balanced focus on excellence and equity in education
- Rebuild positive relationships within school and with community
- Bring play back to school as a student-led activity

Step 3: Link health and education closer together

Rethink wellbeing and health by bringing them closer to learning and teaching in school:

- Provide all students with healthy lunch at school
- Include digital wellness as a goal in every school
- Elevate health as an essential 21st century skill

A DARK SIDE OF HAPPINESS?

Happiness can make us slower: When a person is confronted with serious threat that requires fast responses, a delayed detection can be catastrophic.

Happiness can make us more gullible: Those who believe everything they hear can be in danger when in a hostile environment.

Without sense of fear or anger we may be in trouble: When facing a threat our bodies are better prepared for external challenges and resistance.

Source: Gruber, J., Mauss, I., & Tamir, M. (2011). A dark side to happiness? How, when, and why happiness is not always good. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 6(3), 222–233.

See also: Hargreaves, A. & Shirley, D. (2022). *Wellbeing in Schools*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.

THANK YOU!



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