

# RETURNING TO ON-CAMPUS LEARNING: WELLBEING CONSIDERATIONS

As students return to school gradually, schools will be able to draw upon their existing approaches to whole-school wellbeing. Relationships are central to belonging and connectedness in the school environment - a sustained focus here will always support student wellbeing. Schools may find some of the following considerations useful in their planning as students transition to on-campus learning.

## PRE-STUDENT RETURN

- Staff preparation is key for the first day of student return. Opportunities for school staff to meet in advance to discuss their thoughts and provide input into the planning for student return will be beneficial.
- A coordinated, consistent, age and Stage-appropriate approach from staff is needed when discussing COVID-19.
- Provide support for and guidance to staff as part of a whole-school approach to the return to on-campus learning. This guidance may include agreeing on consistent messages and responses to students and families, remind and acknowledge that staff will be modelling behaviours and reactions to students.
- Staff may need support to recognise signs and symptoms of students experiencing grief, loss, and trauma.
- Remind staff of the internal policies and procedures for triaging students with wellbeing concerns.
- Recognise that some students may have fallen behind with their learning. Whilst some will seek support, others will not and might be concerned about their progress. Unsupported worry may affect longer-term wellbeing.
- Plan to support students returning and displaying additional anxiety which may affect both wellbeing and academic achievement. Liaise with school executive, school counsellor/psychologist, wellbeing leaders and reputable resources including AISNSW in respect to a whole-school approach when supporting these students.
- Consider students who are known to be at risk and who may need additional support returning to school.
- Encourage parents and carers to reach out to school staff in relation to any grief and loss they have experienced.
- Wellbeing can be supported through a faith or values-lens, where applicable.
- Refer to the [NSW Health](#) website and AISNSW COVID Portal for Principals (login required) for updates and changes to COVID-safe requirements, that may change over time.



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## WHEN STUDENTS RETURN

- Time will likely be needed to reconnect with students and staff before recommencing teaching and learning programs.
- Students may like the return to on-campus learning to the start of an academic year.
- Consider psychological wellbeing. Make time to talk. Longer breaks, circle/class or tutor time, peer support and mentoring, wellbeing meetings with Stage/Year Coordinators, Heads of House, Wellbeing leaders and counsellor/psychologist advice and time will be important.
- Connection, validation of feelings, empathy from staff and student-led problem solving can support student wellbeing and learning.

- Routine and connections with school staff can (or will likely) increase feelings of safety and security.
- Daily timetables can focus on a range of KLAs to allow all students success and a sense of achievement.
- Friendship groups may have changed when students were learning at home which can affect social health.
- Some students may have left the school e.g. family situations may have changed, which adds to changes in friendship groups. Privacy should be respected whilst allowing students to express their feelings about this change.
- Support students and families who may be experiencing additional grief, loss, trauma, or anxiety.

- Consider students and families with complicated grief and loss e.g. those in bushfire and drought prone areas or those in LGAs more significantly impacted.
- Students may need support with digital and media literacy e.g. constant news articles, stigma. Consultation with those staff whose KLAs include this content and approach e.g. PDHPE, HSIE, English can assist with this.
- PDHPE and Wellbeing staff collaboration can support students developing social and emotional learning (SEL) e.g. help-seeking, communication, empathy, interpersonal skills.
- Explicit modelling and teaching of social and emotional learning (SEL) skills, a reminder of school values and encouraging student voice can support transition back to school.

