



Supporting Teachers to Promote Classroom Wellbeing Through Music

Steele M¹

¹*The University of Melbourne*

This paper will outline results from the presenter's PhD exploration of a professional learning program to support teachers to use music for promoting classroom wellbeing in a catholic primary school. This is timely as within the current school culture of "performativity" (Ball, 2003) teachers are often encouraged to prioritise the teaching of academic content over student learning outcomes in the Personal and Social Capability (ACARA, 2016; VCAA, 2016).

A range of consultative music therapy programs have been shown to support teachers to use music in their classroom over the past decade (K. McFerran, Crooke, & Bolger, 2017; K. S. McFerran, Thompson, & Bolger, 2015; Rickson, 2009, 2010a, 2010b, 2012). However, while authors suggest that music therapists can support teachers to implement engaging ways to work with students of varying needs to build student wellbeing outcomes (K. S. McFerran & Crooke, 2014), it is also noted that gains in teacher practice are difficult to sustain after the consulting music therapist leaves the school (K. S. McFerran et al., 2015).

This paper will argue that supporting teachers to use music in their classroom through a targeted professional learning program can contribute to both the development of student and teacher wellbeing and resilience. Six teachers volunteered for participation in the program, and participated in 1:1 planning sessions with the researcher to develop musical activities to address Personal and Social Capability achievement standards. Teachers then engaged in co-facilitated weekly classroom based music activities and Professional Learning Community meetings with their colleagues over a fifteen-week period. After the program, all six teachers had increased their ability to deliver classroom music activities to address wellbeing, as well as developed their own personal musicality. An interesting finding was that teachers reported that engaging in the program supported them with their own wellbeing in the classroom.

The presentation will include case studies of the six teachers who took part in the program, evidence of their shifting practice and musical activities used to address student resilience and wellbeing. Examples include writing a song to prompt students to consider practical ways of being resilient when faced with challenges, and creating a personalised music playlist to help process challenging emotions.

The results of this project have wide reaching implications for educators in both special and mainstream school settings as they strive to deliver Personal and Social Capability content in an engaging manner.