



School connectedness

Quick reference guide

What is school connectedness?

School connectedness is the extent to which students feel personally accepted, respected, included, and supported by others in the school and classroom (Goodenow, 1993).

Two main components of school connectedness:

- **Validation and respect:** Validation is making people feel that what they have to say or contribute is meaningful and important.
- **Sense of belonging, acceptance, and being included:** A sense of belonging stems from acceptance and being included for all those involved in the school, including teachers, students, and administrators.

School connectedness is also referred to as school climate, school engagement, school attachment, school bonding, and school inclusion.

Extensive research has confirmed that an adolescent's level of attachment to their school is a core predictor of their educational, behavioural, and mental health outcomes. Higher school connectedness has been linked to:

- positive academic outcomes, including:
 - students' academic motivation
 - indexes of school performance
 - adjustment
- decreased behaviour that risks health, including:
 - delayed use of alcohol
 - less drug use, particularly cigarettes and marijuana
 - reduced delinquency and crime
 - lower probability of gang membership and violence
 - delayed sexual activity
- positive psychological wellbeing, including:
 - less emotional distress
 - a greater sense of optimism
- fewer mental health symptoms, including:
 - fewer depressive symptoms
 - less anxiety.





The research indicates that an improvement in school connectedness may be associated with fewer behavioural concerns and less depression, as well as improved wellbeing by way of increased happiness, coping resources, and general functionality.

School connectedness benefits teachers by:

- making it easier for teachers to manage classes
- giving teachers opportunities for more meaningful contact
- encouraging students to be more responsive and warmer to teachers
- allowing teachers to be more able to be themselves
- facilitating increased classroom cooperation and reduced levels of complaints
- experiencing greater job satisfaction.

When teachers enjoy their job more and are more 'real', students reciprocate and there is the 'contagion of positives'.

In summary:

There is a clear link between greater school connectedness and improved academic outcomes; reduced health risk behaviour, delinquency, and violence; improvement in other markers of wellbeing, and improvement for future life prospects.

Students who are well connected to their school:

- do better academically
- have fewer mental health problems
- are more motivated
- have better expectations for the future
- demonstrate delayed initiation of alcohol and other drug use and reduced drug abuse in later life
- exhibit delayed delinquency and crime, and lower probability of gang membership and violence
- exhibit delayed sexual activity and reduced sexual risk behaviour
- make it an easier and more enjoyable experience for their teachers.

How can you promote school connectedness?

[Building connectedness and wellbeing for young autistic adolescents](#) presents a range of strategies for promoting school connectedness. Using a multi-level model, you can explore what schools and communities can do, how teachers and support staff can increase connectedness, and what parents/carers can do.

