



ARC EDUCATION PROJECT

8TH

# ARC ThoughtMeet

A FOCUS ON WELL-BEING AND SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING (SEL)  
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## Well-being, Social Emotional Learning (SEL) and the COVID-19 Pandemic:

*"On their minds...."*

*Questions from the ARC delegates*

- How can we measure the long-term impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the mental health and well-being of students and educators?
- What are the medium and long-term strategies that support the well-being of all students from diverse cultural backgrounds, as well as those vulnerable families?
- What are the key factors- physical, social and/or emotional- that systems should focus on in our efforts to enhance staff and student well-being during and beyond this pandemic context?

### Well-being, SEL and the curriculum:

- How can we meaningfully and effectively integrate well-being and SEL into schools at all levels?
- How can we balance student well-being and academic achievement and disrupt the use of standardized testing?
- How can we integrate restoration through the natural environment and outdoor learning into curricula?
- What resources and professional development will support teachers in this work and how do we provide it?
- How can we engage students in taking an active role in their education to improve well-being and prosperity?
- To what extent does SEL in schools contribute to resilience in students and staff?
- How can we provide space, time and access for staff and student well-being?

### Well-being, SEL and policy development:

- How can the research on well-being and SEL be made more accessible to policymakers, leaders and educators?
- What are the political challenges to designing and implementing well-being models in education?

# ARC talk 1: Professor Ársæll Már Arnarsson

THE UNIVERSITY OF ICELAND  
SCHOOL OF EDUCATION  
TITLE: THE ICELANDIC WELL-  
BEING SAGA



*"There are some problems that have nearly been solved, only to have new ones emerge...but such is life, isn't it?"*

*"Children are engaged in their well-being and they are expressing their feelings. It is our responsibility to make that acceptable and to show them the way forward."*

The guiding questions:

1. How has the Icelandic system as a whole taken this quest for increased child and adolescent well-being?
2. In what ways have Icelandic youth changed? What are the new challenges?

Problems (being) solved:

- There has been a decline in adolescent drinking. For example, In 2015, 66% of children in 10th grade report they have never tried alcohol (vs. 14% in 1995).
- Cigarette smoking among adolescents is low.
- Communication between parents and children has improved.

New or persisting problems:

- There is a high prevalence of social media use and gaming
- An increased number of children report low mood, anxiety, and feeling lonely
- Sexual abuse continues to be an issue

► How has Iceland's legislation changed in order to support its child and adolescent well-being initiatives?

Iceland's Act of the Integration of Services in the Interest of Children's Prosperity was written in June 2021 and it became implemented in January of 2022. It is a gradual, coordinated law focused on education and well-being from an early age.

Each child would have a support plan developed by a caseworker in coordination with the family, which would be re-evaluated frequently.

► How does research support Iceland's child and adolescent well-being initiatives?

Local/domestic intervention studies:

- Study on mindset, exercise, grit and resilience
- Study on group work in leisure centers

Iceland studies:

- The Icelandic Youth Survey
- Study on the implementation of the new legislation (quantitative and qualitative)

International studies:

- European School Survey on Alcohol and Other Drugs (ESPAD)
- Health and Behavior of School-Aged Children (HBSC)

Further reading:

Arnarsson, Kristofersson, G. K., & Bjarnason, T. (2018). Adolescent alcohol and cannabis use in Iceland 1995–2015. *Drug and Alcohol Review*, 37(S1), S49–S57.  
<https://doi.org/10.1111/dar.12587>





# ARC talk 2: Marc Brackett

TITLE: EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE:  
UNLOCKING THE POWER OF EMOTIONS TO  
ACHIEVE WELL-BEING AND SUCCESS  
(ESPECIALLY DURING UNCERTAIN TIMES)



"SEL is the process through which all young people and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions and achieve personal and collective goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions."

Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning

*"Why is this so important? Why do we want to get granular about our feelings? Think about it: You really have to name it, to tame it! The strategies that you would use in your education system to support a child, or a teacher, or a leader in managing anxiety vs. stress could be completely different... especially when you incorporate culture, personality, and other factors."*

*"In our view schools have too many rules, not enough feelings."*

*"Think about how you want to feel (...) The question is: What do we do as a community to help people experience these feelings more frequently?"*

- Studies conducted during the pandemic reveal that anxiety is the number one emotion reported by educators, and frustration is the number one emotion reported by children.
- Emotions are important to recognize and name because they have a direct impact on our attention, our memory and our learning; on our capacity to make decisions; on the quality of our relationships; on our physical and mental health; and on our performance and creativity.

- 'Permission to feel' allows people to be their truthful-feeling selves: Instead of being an emotion judge with a fixed mindset (emotions are good or bad), to develop the skills needed to be an emotion scientist with a growth mindset (emotions are information).
- Emotional intelligence can be defined as a set of discrete yet interrelated skills that can be learned and developed regardless of age.

RULER is a systemic approach to social emotional learning (SEL):

- Recognizing emotions in self and others
  - Understanding causes and consequences of emotions
  - Labelling emotions accurately
  - Expressing emotions
  - Regulating emotions effectively
- RULER prioritizes educator learning through professional development prior to use with students.
  - Pedagogical practices and school-wide policies should take into consideration the different existing levels of mindsets, skill-development, as well as the school and home emotional climates of students.

People need to develop the “Big 7” strategies to deal with their feelings:

- Permission to feel
- Managing your physiology
- Managing your body's bucket
- Managing your thoughts
- Managing relationships
- Managing situations
- Finding purpose/meaning/fun

We need to accept the reality we live in. We must embrace the uncertainties we face daily. Rather than dream about a return to ‘normal,’ we must consider our well-being in the present context.

Further reading:

Marc A. Brackett, Craig S. Bailey, Jessica D. Hoffmann & Dena N. Simmons (2019) RULER: A Theory-Driven, Systemic Approach to Social, Emotional, and Academic Learning, Educational Psychologist, 54:3, 144-161, DOI: 10.1080/00461520.2019.1614447



# ARC talk 3 Andy Hargreaves

TITLE: WELL-BEING IN SCHOOLS. THREE FORCES THAT WILL UPLIFT YOUR STUDENTS IN A VOLATILE WORLD.



“Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.”

World Health Organization

*“A survey of 10 countries last month, with young people aged 16 to 25, showed that 77% of them are afraid of the future. This is coming from somewhere and we need to do something about it.”*

*“What are the skills, the strategies, the ways of being that we can deliberately create through interventions of programs and support that will contribute to a wider framework of well-being?”*

*“One way to get well is to engage with the world, and to care about it and to feel that you are an actor and not only someone who is resilient or responsive or trying to cope at the same time.”*

- The well-being concept was first developed by the World Health Organization (WHO) in 1948 which considered the well-being of society as a whole, not just that of individuals and small groups.
- SEL and well-being are not opposites or in competition. Rather, SEL is an important part of the well-being concept. However, it is important to highlight that some SEL approaches in schools lack the social component inherent in well-being.
- The important question to ask when engaging in this work is “What is the role of well-being in society?”

- We need to pay attention, not only to the interactive, the emotional and the social, but also to the societal, the physical and the spiritual in terms of well-being.
- The recent interest in well-being draws from both the Global Education Reform Movement (GERM) which led to a sense of too much control and from VUCA (Volatility, Uncertainty, Chaos, Ambiguity), which led to a feeling of being out of control.
- It is important to not only know how to navigate the system through SEL, but also understand that there are things we can do collectively to change the system.
- Social prosperity, ethical technology and restorative nature are our well-being responses to GERM and VUCA.

**Further reading:**

Hargreaves, A. & Shirley, D., 2021. Why social-emotional learning isn't enough to help students today. [online] The Washington Post.

