



CAMBRIDGE

Teacher and staff wellbeing

East Asia Schools Conference 2025

13 April 2025

Agenda

Time	Topic	Speakers
9:00-9:25	Wellbeing for Expatriate Teachers --How educators and schools can promote staff wellbeing	Simon Andrews
9:25– 9:30	Q&A	Simon Andrews
9:30-9:35	Improving Teachers' Wellbeing in Zhangjiagang Ivy Experimental School	Babis Georgakainas
9:55-10:00	Q&A	Babis Georgakainas



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Wellbeing for Expatriate Teachers

How educators and schools can promote staff wellbeing

Simon Andrews

13th of April 2025

About Me

- I have over 18 years of experience as a counsellor, teacher trainer, literacy specialist and other education management roles in Mongolia, Thailand, Singapore, Vietnam and China. I am a qualified counsellor and psychotherapist.
- I'm currently the Counsellor, Teacher Trainer and Recruiter at Baga Tenger International School in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia. My previous role was Head of School Welfare, Counsellor and Designated Safeguarding Lead at an international school in Pattaya, Thailand.
- Before that, I worked in various education leadership roles for a large Australian literacy-based learning organization for over 15 years.
- I have a Diploma in Teaching and Training, a Bachelor of Educational Studies, a Master of Education, an MBA, a Master of Counselling and a Graduate Certificate in Migration Law.



Our Topics Today

- Managing the challenges of living overseas
- Why understanding our goals, motivations, qualities and values is so important
- Aligning our career with our goals and values
- Managing our wellbeing and preventing burnout
- Learning how schools and school leaders can foster a healthy work environment



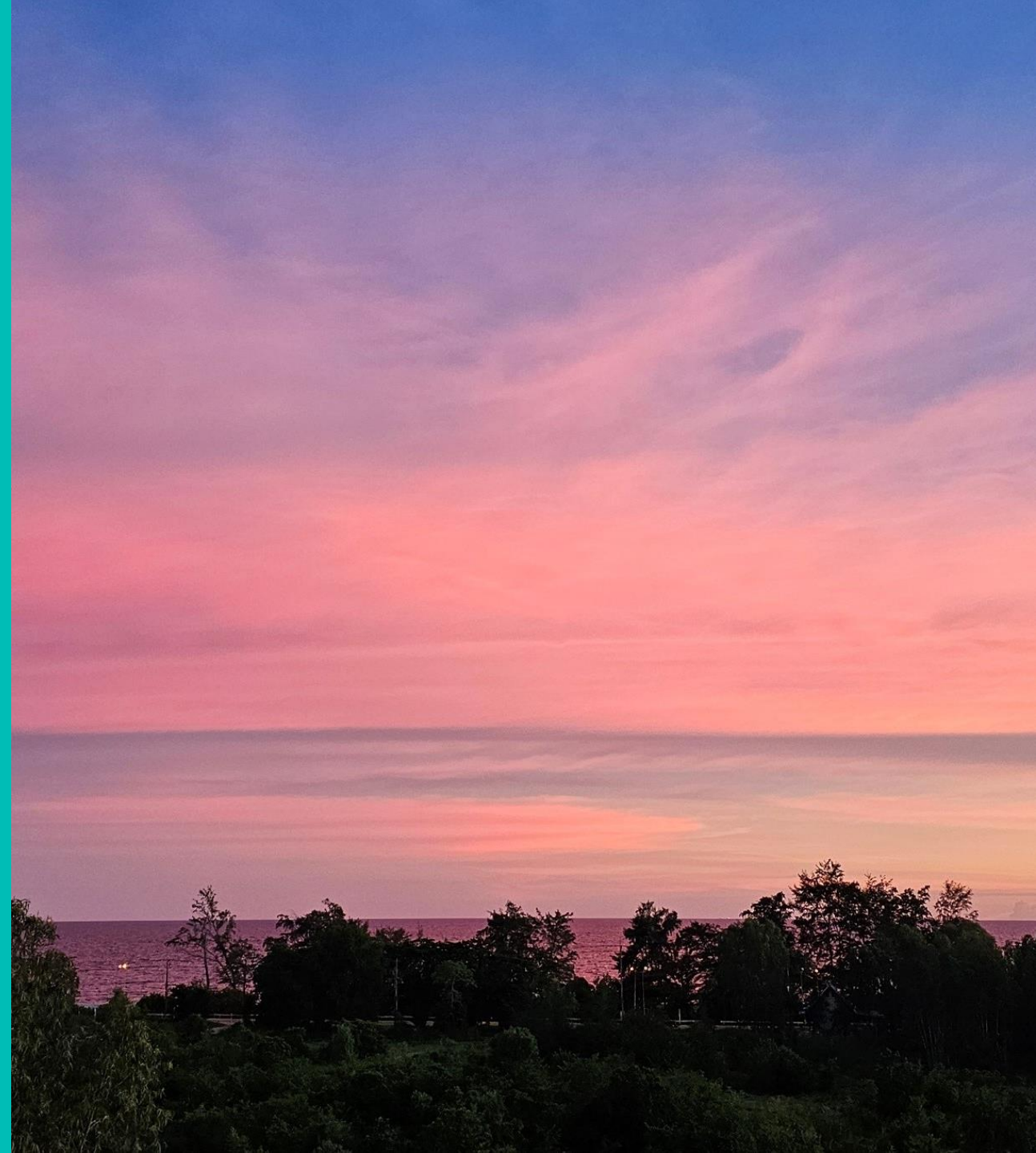
Challenges of Living Overseas

- These challenges affect even long-term expatriates
- COVID-19 has made expatriate life more difficult, even a few years on from the pandemic
- Separation from family and friends – “growing apart”
- Visa, bureaucratic and cultural issues can be stressful
- Losing our sense of purpose and identity
- Falling into unhealthy patterns, both at work and in our personal lives



Understanding Our Motivations and Values is Vital

- This may sound like a basic concept, but very few people take the time to do this
- We all have our own reasons for wanting to live and work overseas – personal, professional and financial
- Understanding these reasons and making sure that our lives align not just with them but with our personal values, is the key to getting the most out of your expatriate experience (and your life in general!)
- To do this, we really do need to go back to basics...



Ask Yourself This – and be Honest!

Why did you choose to become a teacher?



Now, Think About Your Personal Values and Qualities

- What are the things in life that mean the most to you?
- Our values are a kind of code that we can live our lives by
- If we find ourselves straying from our values, or if we're in situations where people are pushing us to act and live in a way that is contrary to our values, we can soon become stressed, depressed or anxious
- This affects our quality of life
- So... take a moment to think about the values you hold most dear in your life. For example: honesty, integrity, trustworthiness, joyfulness, empathy, reliability, consistency, independence etc.



Aligning Our Career With Personal Values and Motivations

- Teaching is a multifaceted career. We can be motivated by a love of learning and teaching, the joy of working with children, the chance to experience life in new places, the opportunity to have a better lifestyle than we would at home – and many more!
- Our lives are so much more than just our career! But when we live and work overseas, they are linked much more than they would be back home.
- So, we need to ask ourselves – are my values and personal qualities aligning with my work right now?
- If yes, great! But we can't just stop there – how can we keep growing and aligning? If we don't, we can stagnate and burn out.
- If no, then what can we do about it? Don't worry – there are many solutions!



So, What Can We Do to Manage Our Wellbeing?

- Recognise that long term expatriates can be affected by wellbeing issues – sometimes even more than new expats!
- Choosing our friends and social networks wisely – at work and in our personal lives. Your friends become like your family when you're away from home.
- Actively aligning our qualities and values with our work through personal and professional development.
- We work in a human industry – and we can always learn more about how to get the most out of our human interactions. Teaching IS learning too!
- Not falling into common traps or “rabbit holes” in our personal lives. Making sure our personal relationships outside work align with our values and qualities, and taking action if they don't.
- Mindfulness – remembering what we love about our lives and where we live.
- Knowing when it's time to make a move or a change – professionally or personally (or both).



Preventing Burnout and Other Mental Health Issues

- Continuing professional development – life-long learning
- Self-care and “personal time”
- Mindfulness – being in the moment
- Knowing what makes you happy outside of work
- Ensuring you have a healthy social network
- Make a list of constructive activities and habits you enjoy
- Journalling – both professionally and personally
- Reaching out for help if needed.



How Can Schools and School Leaders Promote Teacher Wellbeing?

- Be aware that expatriate teachers and local staff face different challenges in their personal and professional lives, and respond appropriately.
- Provide an empathetic, understanding workplace where open and respectful communication is valued and practiced by everyone, including leadership
- Ensure teachers and staff have role clarity and consistent expectations.
- Limit “busy work” and ensure that all tasks set for teachers and staff are purposeful.
- Encourage unity between expatriate and local team members.
- Practice transformational, not power-centric leadership.
- Make recruitment decisions based on an applicant’s willingness to contribute positively to school culture.
- Encourage teachers to seek help when needed, and provide a judgement-free environment for this.



Be like the monkey!

If you can't get the snail out of the drain, just smoosh it up and enjoy the goo that comes from it.





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Any questions?

Thank you!



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Improving Teachers' Wellbeing in Zhangjiagang Ivy Experimental School

Babis Georgakainas

Suzhou, April 13th 2025

Contents

- The importance of teachers' wellbeing
- How our school used to support teachers' wellbeing before
- What is happening this year
- Future initiatives

The importance of teachers' wellbeing

- Impact on Students Learning and Development
 - Quality of Teaching
 - Student-Teacher Relationships
 - Role Modeling
- Teachers Retention and Job Satisfaction
 - Reduced Burnout
 - Job Satisfaction
- School Climate and Culture
 - Positive Work Environment
 - Collaboration and Teamwork
- Health and Safety
 - Physical Health
 - Mental Health

- Educational Outcomes
 - Academic Achievements
 - Social and Emotional Learning
- Economic Implications
 - Cost of Turnover
 - Productivity
- Ethical Responsibility
 - Moral Obligation
- Long Term Societal Impact
 - Future Generations

How our school used to support teachers' wellbeing before

Support from DIPONT EDUCATION

- Annual Conference
- Continuing Professional Development
- Academic Quality Managers - Subject Panels
- From Judgemental to Developmental Observations

Support from Ivy Experimental School

- Mixed Staffrooms
- Peer Observations
- Peer Mentoring
- Let the Teachers Conduct School Policies
- Clubs
- Extra Days Holidays
- Holidays with Students
- Chinese Lessons to Foreign Teachers
- Christmas Parties, Halloween Parties
- Social Events

Dragon Boat Rowing with Students



Holidays with Students and their Families



Sports Events



Annual Football Game



Recording Songs with Students



Dinners



Halloween Party



Christmas Parties



Professional Development Workshops



“The Best is the enemy of the Good”

Voltaire
French Philosopher

What is happening now

Target for 2024-2025: Improving Teachers' Wellbeing



Step 1: Questionnaire

- Based on International researches about wellbeing
- Anonymous
- 40 Questions
- Scale 1-10
- Duration 1 week (October 2024)

School Culture - Appreciation

- Do you feel recognised and appreciated for your contributions to the school and its community? 6.18
- Does the school culture promote inclusivity and diversity? 6.18
- Are there initiatives in place to promote a positive school culture? 4.82
- Do you feel valued as a member of the school community? 5.91
- How valued do you feel by the wider community as a teacher? 7.1
- Do you feel the school is committed to evolving and adapting to the needs of its educators? 5.91

Professional Development

- How satisfied are you with the professional development provided by your school? 6.36
- Do you feel encouraged to pursue further professional development? 6.91
- Are there opportunities for mentorship within the school? 5.64
- How satisfied are you with the feedback you receive on your teaching? 7.27
- Are you satisfied with training sessions on new teaching methodologies and technologies which are provided to you? 5.91

Work Load

- To what extent do you believe your workload is manageable? 6.63
- How often do you find yourself taking work home? 4.91
- Are you able to maintain a healthy work-life balance? 7.18
- Do you feel supported in managing your time effectively? 6.72

Communication - Collaboration

- How would you rate the effectiveness of communication within the school? 2.91
- Are there opportunities for collaborative planning with your colleagues? 5.73

Leadership

- Do you feel comfortable expressing concerns or feedback to school leadership? 5.73
- Do you feel confident in the decisions made by the leadership team? 6.55
- How well do you understand and agree with the school policies and procedures? 6.55
- Are there opportunities for teachers to provide input on policy development? 6
- How open do you feel to provide to the school feedback and suggestions for improvement? 5.91

Interactions with Students

- How well do you feel you connect with your students on a personal level? 7.55
- Are there resources available to help teachers build positive relationships with students? 5
- How supported do you feel in addressing behavioral issues in the classroom? 5.45

Stress - Anxiety

- How overwhelmed or stressed you have been the last month? 5.91
- Do you feel supported in managing stress effectively? 5.18
- Do you feel safe in your workplace? 8.82
- Do you feel like you can be your true self in work? 7.45

In the classroom

- How often do you receive recognition for your achievements in your classroom?
5
- Are there incentives in place to reward outstanding teaching and non-teaching practices? 2.73
- To what extent do you feel you have control over your teaching methods and curriculum? 8.45
- How supported do you feel in trying new or innovative teaching approaches?
6.64
- How would you rate the effectiveness of current technology tools in your classroom? 7.91

Working Conditions

- Is there a comfortable and ergonomic workspace provided for teachers? 7.18
- Are there opportunities for physical activity within the school day? 5.55

Conclusion

- How satisfied are you with your current teaching position? 8.18
- Do you feel Dipont or/and Ivy school takes an active interest in your wellbeing? 6.45
- Do you feel connected to Dipont or/and Ivy values? 7.36
- Would you recommend Dipont or/and Ivy as a great place to work? 8.27

Step 2: Suggestions

- A blank Word document was sent with 2 questions
- Question 1: Please suggest up to 3 initiatives we can take by the end of the Semester that might improve teachers' wellbeing.
- Question 2: Please suggest up to 3 initiatives we can take by the end of the Academic Year that might improve teachers' wellbeing.
- Duration: 1 week (November 2025)

Better Communication

- Weekly updates about school activities
- Share meeting minutes that are school/students related
- Establish channels between Foreign and Chinese teachers and the Management Team
- Notifications of students absences
- Notifications by class teachers of students' special issues
- Facilitate team meetings for teachers of the same subject to share ideas and best practices
- Rewarding teachers for students' outstanding results

Team Building Activities

- Organise a dinner outing or coffee gathering once a month
- Host retreats, workshops or engaging activities
- Increase team building activities with students
- Wellness days (yoga, guided meditation, a short walk, a space for quiet reading)
- Appreciation and Open Dialogue Week at the End of Academic Year
- Organise opportunities for teachers to engage in meaningful community service together, like animal shelters, old people e.t.c.
- A trip at the end of the year
- A teachers' talent show
- Go for a picnic or organise a Game Night

School Life

- Establish a semester-calendar from the beginning
- Set disciplinary systems for students' actions
- Expanding parking and charging space for bikes
- Discuss constantly about students' behaviour and share strategies
- Put a plaque outside of each classroom with the name of class teacher
- Update students' namelists
- Review salaries and allowances
- Provide mini-whiteboards

Feedback

- Leaders should provide constructive criticism on time if there are problems but also express gratitude and celebrate the success
- Teachers to provide anonymously feedback to the school
- Students to provide anonymously feedback to the teachers
- Create safe spaces (e.g. mailbox), where teachers can share their concerns and suggestions openly and without judgement

Mental Health - Wellbeing

- Create a space only for teachers, for relaxation and stress-relief
- Providing a counselling at the beginning or the end of each semester
- Organise relevant workshops and Professional Development events
- Discuss with the Centre Principal and ask for some days off if there are psychological issues
- Concern for teachers' families

Stage 3: Actions

- It is decided a dinner night the last Friday of every month
- Provided to the teachers “Smart” mini whiteboards
- Shared contact information with class teachers and encouraged frequent communication with them
- Organised Professional Development Workshop about Mental Health Issues ran by a specialist (April 1st)
- Participation of the foreign teachers in a school field trip in Suzhou Paradise World (April 12th)

Future Actions

Future Actions

- Creation of Teachers' Relaxation Room
- Establish clear discipline policies for students
- Organise an Appreciation Night at the end of the Academic Year
- Reward the teachers who are more than 10 years in the school
- Introduce the Ivy Card with benefits for the staff
- The Feedback Mailbox
- Increase Professional Development Events and create Career Opportunities
- Check in a regular basis the psychological condition of the teachers through different actions
- Talk more, socialise more, enjoy more!

“The most certain way to succeed
is always to try just one more time.”

Thomas Edison

American Inventor and Businessman

Any questions?

Thank you!