

22 March, 2023

**skodel**



## Student wellbeing efficacy study: Australian and NZ schools

### **Abstract**

This study investigated the efficacy of the Skodel digital platform for student wellbeing and school wellbeing management. Since the pandemic, children, young people and staff have been confronted with elevated wellbeing challenges, many of which have yet to be fully understood in terms of their psychological implications. This research sought to better understand the school student wellbeing setting and the impact of Skodel as a school and/or system-wide digital response.

Currently, there are gaps in research with respect to the efficacy of school-based student wellbeing digital tools. The Goleman, D. (1995) Emotional intelligence study is relevant to this Skodel study in terms of the underlying Skodel approach. The Gumora, G., & Arsenio, W. F. (2002) study of Emotionality, emotion regulation, and school performance in middle school children. (Journal of School Psychology, 40(5), 395-413) is particularly relevant to this study, as is Martin Seligman's work on Positive Psychology. This study works from that evidence base to evaluate the efficacy of Skodel in schools.

This study's aims were to explore Skodel's efficacy in three areas:

1. Promoting student help-seeking behaviours
2. Providing actionable student wellbeing insights for teachers; and
3. Positively influencing students' self-reported wellbeing.

The study, conducted from June 2021 to December 2022 sampled just over 10,000 students and 2,000 teachers from across Australian and New Zealand schools. Low decile primary and secondary schools in Auckland and low to middle-income Independent and public schools in Australia participated. Each school had used Skodel for at least one year with students engaging in at least one Skodel check-in per term. Students and teachers were surveyed as they checked in with Skodel. Twelve teachers and school leaders were interviewed. Andrew Fuller, a Fellow of the Department of Psychiatry and the Department of Learning and Educational Development at the University of Melbourne oversaw question design and school support strategies.

The key findings of the Skodel study were:

- 88% of students reported that Skodel had a positive impact on their wellbeing and safety.
- 58% of students reported that since Skodel, they would be much more likely to seek help for mental health issues.
- 92% of students reported they would be more comfortable or much more comfortable in discussing mental health issues after Skodel.
- Post-implementation findings found a 45% increase in students initiating help, contrasting sharply with the pre-implementation baseline.
- 95% of teachers attested to the value of the wellbeing insights drawn from the Skodel platform.
- 75% of the educators felt equipped to provide more personalised support, drawing from the platform's data.
- In 65% of cases where students were flagged as grappling with acute challenges, the data served as an early warning system, enabling timely intervention.
- 88% of participating students recognised discernible enhancements in their overall wellbeing.
- Students often attributed their augmented self-awareness and emotional literacy to their interactions with the platform. 92% noted improvements in their functioning.

The survey participation rate was 62%, meaning the overall data was informed by over 6,000 school respondents.

The study is significant as it demonstrates the Skodel environment improves the capacity and habit of students identifying and communicating their emotions and supports teachers in being better able to respond to student wellbeing needs.

## Introduction

In today's world, children and young people are confronted with numerous wellbeing challenges, many of which have yet to be fully understood in terms of their psychological implications. Evidence indicates that a significant number of students requiring extra support often go unnoticed, largely due to their reticence in discussing their wellbeing struggles. In response to these growing concerns, Skodel was introduced as a novel approach to bolster student mental and emotional wellbeing.

This study explored the efficacy of the Skodel platform in enhancing and protecting the welfare of students.

## Methodology

This study engaged schools from various regions of Australia and New Zealand to ensure a more rounded school community representation. The study, conducted from June 2021 to December 2022 sampled just over 10,000 students and 2,000 teachers from across Australian and New Zealand schools. Low decile primary and secondary schools in Auckland and Independent and public schools in Australia participated. Each school had used Skodel for at least one year with students engaging in at least one Skodel check-in per term. Students and teachers were surveyed as they checked in with Skodel. Twelve teachers and school leaders were interviewed. Andrew Fuller, a Fellow of the Department of Psychiatry and the Department of Learning and Educational Development at the University of Melbourne oversaw question design and school support strategies. The study comprised three Stages:

### Stage 1

Pre-implementation surveys gauged students' initial conditions and attitudes. Existing safeguarding tools relying on teacher observations were analysed to understand the number of concerns being identified.

### Stage 2

Usage patterns, frequency, and the nature of the check-ins were tracked over one year.

### Stage 3

Post-implementation surveys and focus group discussions were orchestrated, assessing student experiences, their evolving help-seeking behaviours, and teachers' perceptions regarding the utility of the data generated.

## Results

Student survey responses were as follows:

Students who had used Skodel for 2.5 years were asked:

"Which of the following best describes your experience with Skodel?"

88% of students said "Skodel had a positive impact on my wellbeing and safety."

12% of students said "Skodel had no impact on my wellbeing and safety."

"Since Skodel, how would you describe your likelihood of seeking help for mental health issues?"

Much more likely (58%)

More likely (32%)

About the same (8%)

Less likely (1%)

Much less likely (1%)

“How familiar were you with available mental health resources before Skodel?”

Very familiar (8%)

Somewhat familiar (32%)

Neutral (23%)

Not very familiar (27%)

Not at all familiar (10%)

“How would you describe your level of comfort in discussing mental health issues after Skodel?”

Much more comfortable (50%)

More comfortable (38%)

Neutral (10%)

Less comfortable (1%)

Much less comfortable (1%)

“What specific elements of Skodel's check-ins help you feel more inclined to seek help for your mental health?”

Themes cited by students were:

"Not having to share it face-to-face in front of my friends"

"The option to do it anonymously if I want"

"The resources provided at the end encourage me to share honestly"

“Describe any barriers or challenges you faced in seeking help before Skodel, and how they have changed afterwards”. Themed student responses were:

"I didn't trust that the issues would be resolved even if I shared them"

"I didn't know where to start before, but now I have a clear roadmap to the resources I need"

"I wasn't aware of any available outlets to share concerns privately except for face-to-face or with a counsellor"

#### Fostering help-seeking behaviours

In relation to this research goal, the following results were recorded:

- Post-implementation findings indicated a 45% increase in students initiating help, contrasting sharply with the pre-implementation baseline.
- Regular engagement with the platform was significantly associated with students seeking external aid for their wellbeing challenges.

#### Provisioning actionable insights for teachers

Results were:

- 95% of teachers attested to the value of the insights drawn from the platform
- 75% of educators felt equipped to provide more personalised support, drawing from the platform's data.

- Notably, in 65% of cases where students flagged they were grappling with acute challenges, the data served as an early warning system, enabling timely intervention.
- 85% of teachers felt ill-equipped to handle high risk mental health challenges.

#### Influencing students' wellbeing positively

Results were:

- 88% of participating students recognised discernible enhancements in their overall wellbeing.
- Students often attributed their augmented self-awareness and emotional literacy to their interactions with the platform. 92% noted improvements in their functioning.
- Over half of the respondents felt reassured by the platform's presence, viewing it as a safe outlet should they need help.

### **Discussion**

The data highlights the benefits and potential of Skodel providing confidential and secure outlets for students to reflect and access support strategies to manage their emotions. Skodel check-ins stimulate help-seeking behaviours, offering a scalable proactive mental health strategy for schools and school systems. The Skodel platform plays a supportive role for teachers, offering them nuanced insights, potentially enhancing classroom management and support strategies. The direct enhancement of student wellbeing, as reported, raises broader implications and opportunities for integrating such platforms within the school ecosystem.

### **Data and insights**

In harnessing student wellbeing insights from Skodel, it is important to strike a balance between ensuring student support and maintaining data privacy and appropriateness for different school personnel. Teachers felt ill-equipped to manage high risk data and, therefore, check-in data was designed to be general and geared towards teaching and learning. Lead indicators such as drop off in general mood, sleep and diet can establish flags for designated support staff.

#### a. Nuanced data segmentation for teachers:

Classroom teachers should primarily receive wellbeing data that directly informs pedagogical approaches and strategies for holistic student development. This means the data shared should cater to insights that can be acted upon within a classroom environment, such as general wellbeing trends, common stressors related to academic content, or group dynamics.

#### b. High-risk data management:

Data highlighting high-risk situations, which can be pinpointed through enhancements in user experience and interface design, for example, concern lodged, necessitates a more selective distribution. Such sensitive information should be relayed exclusively to key support staff, including counsellors, school psychologists, and designated safeguarding personnel. These individuals or teams must be equipped with clear response guidelines and protocols to act upon this high-risk data, ensuring timely and appropriate interventions.

### **Future research**

While the results have been encouraging, it's crucial to note the necessity for further research. To ensure an impartial and comprehensive evaluation, external research

independent of the company is proposed. This will provide a more holistic understanding of the platform's efficacy and areas for potential improvement.

## Conclusion

Skodel, in its Australian and New Zealand context, significantly increased student wellbeing help seeking behaviour, enabling earlier identification. Schools adopting this mechanism are better poised to embrace a holistic educational approach, placing equal emphasis on academic and emotional growth.

## Recommendations

Drawing from the comprehensive research, the researchers propose:

1. Further independent research into the check-in and support landscape given its potential to promote the aforementioned areas of wellbeing.
2. A roll-out of the platform across various tiers of the Australian educational system.
3. An iterative feedback loop for the platform's continual refinement.
4. Integration with existing educational ecosystems, ensuring seamless access and an enriched user experience.
5. Predictive modelling through lead Indicators. Further research should be initiated to identify lead indicators, which can anticipate potential challenges. These models can provide schools with a proactive approach, allowing them to intervene or offer support even before overt symptoms or challenges manifest.
6. Adding 'Lodge a concern' functionality. Students should be able to lodge a concern when they are at risk and this should be flagged with separate support staff, not their classroom teacher.
7. Link up lead and lag indicators across multiple data sources to produce high signal alerts and route these alerts to relevant stakeholders. For example, absenteeism might be a lag indicator but if this is tied together with declining academic results and a concerning wellbeing check-in then these lag indicators can be linked to produce a more powerful lead indicator.
8. With careful consideration and the right permissions, explore insights and support strategies for families. Actions for the student, actions for the school and actions for families.

## Contact

Skodel Pty Ltd  
Level 5, 100 Harris St, Pyrmont 2009  
**ABN:** 35 611 454 785

E: [ianfagan@skodel.com](mailto:ianfagan@skodel.com)  
M: +61(0) 439 990 640  
W: [www.skodel.com](http://www.skodel.com)