There is now substantial evidence of the role wellbeing, resilience and mindset plays in raising student attainment and we set out a very brief summary of what schools might consider in looking to further raise student attainment and further improve their performance. This is based on substantial evidence, which you can review by reading our full paper, which is available for download at www.successfullives.co.uk/wholeschool-research.

**What Works?**

Robert Coe, Cesare Aloisi, Steve Higgins and Lee Elliot Major, in their 2014 report, ‘What Makes Great Teaching’, suggested there are six key components to consider: Pedagogical content knowledge, quality of instruction, classroom climate, classroom management, teacher beliefs and professional behaviours.

The toolkit developed by the Education Endowment Foundation and The Sutton Trust sets out the impact of different evidence based approaches, where feedback, collaborative learning, mastery, metacognition and self-regulation and peer tutoring all score highly.

Professor John Hattie, Director of the Melbourne Educational Research Institute at the University of Melbourne, has also put forward what his research suggests leads to higher attainment, which includes; teachers knowing how to best represent the subjects they teach (and not their subject knowledge); being able to link their subject to other subjects and lessons; being able to adapt to meet specific student needs; being able to create an optimal classroom climate where mistakes are welcome; monitoring learning and providing effective feedback; knowing that a typical lesson doesn’t go to plan and to prepare for it; knowing who and who isn’t
understanding the lesson; believing all students can meet the success criteria set and having a passion for helping them to achieve it; and believing that intelligence is adaptable and not fixed.

None of this is new to good practitioners and in many cases is obvious.

Distractions

Professor Hattie also sets out areas that evidence suggests bring little improvement and are big distractions for educators, including; looking at providing a greater choice of schools, new schools; different class sizes; tinkering with the curriculum; new buildings; enquiry to learn and learning style programmes; labeling students; providing greater finance over a certain funding level; extending the school day or school year; performance related pay; embracing new technologies; changing initial teacher training; and providing more teaching assistants.

An Alternative View

What we do see from the evidence is that two things really make the biggest difference: the relationship between teacher and students (the teachers ability to get their message across) and the ability and willingness of students to learn.

However, taking a close look at what is happening within schools and the education sector shows some significant challenges. Growing numbers of mental health disorders in students and staff, rising anxiety and stress, the number of teachers leaving the profession or expressing a desire to, greater difficulties in teacher recruitment, teacher’s concerns over their workload and life balance, and evidence to show that student anxiety leads to lower performance.

We believe there is a different and simpler answer for many schools. If a significant number of teachers are turning up to school with one of more of the issues we have highlighted: stress, anxiety about workload, mental health disorders, lower engagement or energy (and as a result possibly poorer physical health), worries about life balance and the changes they face, or are simply tired or exhausted, then how is this likely to be showing up in their teaching and in their students?

No matter what direct actions we take or pressure we place on them to improve their teaching, this is unlikely to change while the underpinning issues remain. In fact placing greater pressure on them is likely to cause further deterioration for many staff members.

The answer to creating sustainable improvements in attainment, through improved teaching and learning, is to take a whole school approach to raising wellbeing, building those skills that better allow people to overcome adversity (resilience) and to develop the right positive and growth mindset in teachers and students.

The evidence for this is highly compelling and available to review in our full research paper.
A Recommended Approach

We recommend a five level approach for schools serious about sustainably raising the performance and wellbeing of all students and teachers.

1. Leadership - being role models of the behaviours needed and creating the right environment through effective policies and practices.

2. Planning - having a clear long-term plan for staff wellbeing, for how change is managed, on removing tasks as new ones are created and a ruthless focus on effective implementation.

3. Staff training and development - to make sure staff have the wider skills needed to look after themselves and their students, to deal with adversity and challenge and that they feel good about coming to school.

4. Students - teaching specific social and emotional learning, skills to overcome adversity and the development of a growth mindset.

5. The wider community and particularly parents and carers - moving from involving them in school life to truly engaging them in supporting the learning of their children at home.

Likely Impact

While the evidence for improvements in attainment for each of the five levels is not always measured in the same way, meaning that it isn’t easy to aggregate benefits, we estimate that implementing this approach could raise attainment for students by over 40% (depending on their starting point, their existing skills and the level of support they currently receive).

In addition Professor Katherine Weare, from Southampton University, a recognised UK expert in this area and a strong advocate of a whole school approach, suggests that taking action, such as that suggested, could also see a 75% reduction in many of the mental health, behaviour and other connected issues that schools currently face.

For more details of the evidence and the approach we recommend please download the full paper, available at www.successfullives.co.uk/whole-school-research.

If you would like to find out more about our research or how we support schools then please call 020 3303 0496 or e-mail enquiries@developingpotential.co.uk

Developing Potential is a not for profit company supporting schools to raise attainment through a whole school approach and has also created the Successful Lives Curriculum to help schools develop important life skills in their students.