

Combating the rise in school loneliness

by Brett Henebery 23 Mar 2022
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While social distance, such as during a pandemic, is associated with elevated loneliness in young people, loneliness can persist in the society of others.

'School loneliness', defined as the inverse of school belonging and connectedness, carries risks of low wellbeing, subsequent mental health concerns, with negative effects continuing into adulthood.

The 'technology culture' of the school community seems key to unlocking the causes, and therefore, solutions to school loneliness, in addition to a strong sense of community.

Loren Bridge, Executive Officer, Alliance of Girls' Schools Australasia, says the social support provided by all-girls schools could be protective against the loneliness of a digitally driven generation.

"Research tells us that girls feel more comfortable, self-assured and supported in an all-girls environment, which in turn encourages confidence, resilience and higher levels of participation in all aspects of school life," Bridge told The Educator.

"Simply put, girls are happier in all-girls schools."

Bridge said this is supported by data from PISA (the OECD's Programme for International Student Academic Assessment) which shows that girls who attend single-sex schools experience a more positive school environment one where they feel a stronger sense of safety and belonging compared to girls in co-ed schools.

"Girls' school students often describe this support and belonging as a 'sisterhood' and it lasts well beyond their school years," Bridge said.

"One explanation for girls being happier in an all-girl environment is that every aspect of every program is specifically tailored to the needs of girls, purposefully developing their confidence and potential and ensuring that students feel seen and supported throughout their schooling."

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