

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

Creating Resilience in Community: A focus on the role of schools in developing resilience in students to enhance their mental health, well-being and learning

Professor Sven Silburn

(Clinical Child Psychologist and Director of the Curtin Centre for Developmental Health, TVW Telethon Institute for Child Health, Perth)

ABSTRACT

The concept of resilience has, in the last decade, begun to change the way that we look at the lives of children. Families, schools and communities have a shared responsibility to ensure the education and social development of all young people. They also share an interest in promoting students' acquisition of knowledge and skills for coping with diverse, stressful settings. While not ignoring the social circumstances that make modern life more difficult for an increased proportion of students, the resiliency paradigm is emphasizing that more careful efforts are required to improve the conditions that most directly affect their ability to cope. This presentation will outline promising recent developments in prevention science, child development research and educational practice around Australia aimed at promoting resilience and reducing adverse student behaviour outcomes. It will consider how schools and teachers can more effectively meet children's primary needs and what is required to assist key developmental processes at each life-stage. Recent initiatives to produce developmentally appropriate curriculum materials and frameworks for promoting students' social development through years K-12 will be discussed along with the new availability of web-based school resources and methodologies for measuring and monitoring students' social development and resilience. Finally, the value of the resilience paradigm in facilitating effective partnerships between schools, parents and the broader community will be discussed.