



# Performance with purpose: Centering well-being in education

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**Article by Ruchi Mainali**  
**Head of Assessments,**  
Heritage International Xperiential School



Heritage International Xperiential School emphasises that student well-being is crucial for academic success. The school prioritizes creating a supportive environment where students feel safe, seen, and supported, fostering deeper engagement and reducing stress. By focusing on growth, compassion, and purposeful engagement, the school aims to cultivate ownership and prepare students for life beyond exams.

Each year, as exam results are released, schools witness a familiar wave of emotions—celebrations, disappointments, comparisons. Scores matter, but a more important question often gets overlooked: How did this journey shape the learner?

Progressive school communities like ours have leaned into a truth: Well-being is not separate from performance—it is the path to it. Not just academic achievement, but the kind that stems from purpose and agency.

This shift requires rethinking how we engage with students, not just at result time, but throughout the school journey. When done right, students come to us not just with scores, but with stories of growth, effort, and learning, preparing students to thrive in life, not just exams.

Let's explore how a wellbeing-first culture nurtures both ownership and performance, and what it asks of us, the adults who surround students every day.

### **1. Well-being First: Not Just Nice, But Necessary**

Well-being is often viewed as a “soft” add-on to academics. In reality, it's foundational.

When students feel safe, seen, and supported, they engage more deeply. Their brains are better wired for learning. Stress and fear, known inhibitors of cognition, are reduced.

Examples from the classroom:

A Grade 6 student receives feedback that focuses on thinking, not just the right answer: “I can see how you approached this differently. That shows real thinking.”

A Grade 10 student who underperformed is met with curiosity, not criticism: “What's the real cause of your disappointment? What support might help you move forward?”

In a homeroom circle, students share emotions using a “rose, bud, thorn” check-in. When one student says, “I can't think of any strength,” the teacher turns to her friend, who names one. The moment becomes a quiet celebration of connection and self-discovery.

[16:53, 17/09/2025] Vimal Mehra Treedesign: In these micro-moments, a wellbeing-first culture is born through consistent, small interactions that prioritize empathy over evaluation.

## **2. Growth Over Scores: Reframing Success**

Saying “we value a growth mindset” is different from embedding it in school life. Growth happens in the process – the redrafts, the rough days, the “aha” moments after setbacks.

This means:

- Praising process over outcome: “You really worked on revising your essay after feedback—that’s impressive.”
- Replacing grade-centric reporting with narratives of learning: What strengths are emerging? What habits are forming?
- Making reflection a routine, not a ritual: after projects, tests, and teamwork.

These moments reframe learning as a journey—where setbacks are invitations, not judgments.

## **3. The Role of Adults: Creating the Culture**

Wellbeing is built not by policies but in corridors and conversations. Adult engagement becomes the invisible curriculum.

Three behaviours matter most:

### **a. Compassion and Psychological Safety**

When students know they can fail without shame, they take more risks and bounce back faster. It’s about pairing high expectations with unconditional support. A teacher or parent saying, “I believe you can do this, and I’m here with you as you figure it out,” sends a powerful message of hope and trust.

### **b. Structured, Purposeful Engagement**

Well-being thrives in meaningful structure— Voice and choice in tasks, Interdisciplinary learning, Scaffolded support. This makes school both predictable and inspiring.

### c. Forward-Facing Conversations

Disappointments are chances to ask —What might this experience teach you? What matters more to you than this score? What will you do with this learning? These dialogues build future-oriented mindsets.

## 4. Ownership Grows in Relationships

We often speak of student agency, but it begins with adults modelling ownership.

Want students to reflect? Share your reflections: “I tried something new in class today, and I noticed...”

Want students to take initiative? Invite them into decisions about their learning.

Want students to care about their journey? Care deeply about their story, not just the outcome.

In a culture of mutual respect and listening, self-directed learning blossoms.

## 5. A Vision for the Future: Purposeful Performance

If we prioritise well-being, growth, and agency, the results will follow—but they’ll mean more.

Students will leave with Passion —Pursuing what excites them, Purpose —Seeing how learning connects to life, Perspective —Understanding setbacks as part of growth

Imagine a student saying:

“I didn’t get into my first-choice university, but I know who I am, what I care about, and how to keep growing.”

Isn’t that the real success?

## In Conclusion: It’s Never Too Late, But It’s Always Better Early

Yes, we must have empathetic conversations around results. But imagine if they’re just a continuation of what students have always felt..

## **A culture where:**

- Mistakes are seen as data
- Growth is the language of success
- Scores are feedback, not verdicts
- Adults are allies, not judges

To help students take ownership, we must take responsibility for the climate we create, the conversations we initiate, and the examples we set. Because when well-being comes first, performance is far more sustainable, self-driven, and soulful.

Let's choose that Journey. Our students deserve nothing less.

The author Ruchi Mainali is the Head – Assessments of Heritage International Xperiential School

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### **INTERNATIONAL PRIMARY CAMPUS**

DLF Phase 5, Gurugram

### **INTERNATIONAL MIDDLE AND SENIOR CAMPUS**

Heritage Avenue, Near Sector 58, Gurugram

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**info@hixs.org | Tel: 8882178996 | www.hixs.org**