

Media release

Healthier students, better outcomes?

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AERO releases new paper on the impact of health and allied health initiatives in schools

The Australian Education Research Organisation (AERO) is continuing its work towards more equitable education outcomes, with a new paper exploring the role and impact of health and allied health initiatives in schools.

Students from low-socioeconomic status (SES) backgrounds are disproportionately burdened with health challenges, and low-SES schools report lower average academic achievement levels compared to others.

The new literature review, 'Health and allied health initiatives in schools – Impacts on academic, wellbeing and attendance outcomes' provides policy-makers with insights into how these initiatives impact student outcomes.

The review found evidence that some school-based programs, when delivered effectively and in a way that supports learning, are associated with improved outcomes.

Among them, school-based health centres for students are associated with improved wellbeing and attendance outcomes, and may improve academic outcomes. Counselling, psychology and therapy are also associated with improved wellbeing and may improve academic and attendance outcomes.

Effectiveness depends on factors including sustainable resourcing, stakeholder collaboration and implementation approach.

With existing Australian research scarce, the review draws primarily on relevant international sources and notes that more research is needed – for example, into whether delivery methods such as telehealth could improve student outcomes in remote areas.

AERO CEO Dr Jenny Donovan said the new paper offers an important entry point for policy discussion and further research.

“Equity in schools is crucial to improving outcomes for low-SES students, so it’s important that we analyse the difference health and allied health initiatives can make.

“If health professionals can reduce some of the barriers that hold students back, teachers can better focus on effective instruction and planning.

“These findings offer initial guidance, but with gaps in available research, future studies are needed to rigorously assess initiatives in Australian contexts.”

The full paper is available on the [AERO website](#).

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About Us

AERO is Australia’s independent education evidence body, established in 2021 and funded by the Commonwealth, state, and territory governments.

Our vision is to achieve excellence and equity in education outcomes for all children and young people through the effective use of evidence. AERO’s role is to generate high-quality evidence, make it accessible, and encourage the adoption and effective implementation of evidence into practice and policy.