



Basic needs not being met

Behaviour support and student management are key aspects of teaching. Teachers and other school professionals are constantly required to respond to challenging, difficult or emotionally 'needy' students on a day-to-day basis.

What are basic needs?

A healthy lifestyle is integral to being resilient, without it children and adults will find it difficult to cope with life's challenges. Four basic needs that are the [foundations for building resilience](#) in children include:

- A set bedtime that allows for 8-12 hours of sleep each night.
- A healthy balanced diet.
- At least 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous exercise each day.
- Feeling safe.

The following strategies can be used as part of general teacher practice or more formally through the establishment of individual learning plans, behaviour support plans, student management plans or whole school management plans.

For guidelines, templates and more information on writing behavioural support plans, created by the Victorian State Government, Department of Education and Training, [click here](#).

Teacher strategy 1. Intervene and provide assistance to students who regularly do not have enough sleep, have an unhealthy or inadequate diet or are unclean.
Purpose. To ensure the student's wellbeing and learning capabilities are not being negatively impacted on by unmet physiological needs. (This is a key area to consider when a student is struggling in the classroom). Ensuring the student's physiological needs are met is usually something the school can, with a little creative thinking, partnering with parents, and/or resources from an external agency such as <i>Good Shepherd</i> or <i>State School Relief Fund</i> (Vic only) can assist with. Once addressed the positive impact on learning is often significant.
Action. Provide sleep or a rest period, food, clothing, access to showering where possible and if needed, with parent permission treat the student's hair for nits and lice. Note, there may be a small group of students in the school who all need to be treated regularly for nits. If the child is regularly coming to school tired, from late bedtimes or midweek 'sleepovers', the student may need to be picked up by a parent to go home to sleep. Ensure parents understand that students require 8 to 12 hours sleep depending on their age.

Teacher strategy 2. Review fluid intake, breakfast habits and the need for a balanced diet with the student and parents.



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Purpose. To maximise access to a balanced diet and appropriate fluid intake. Children who have breakfast each day, and eat a balanced diet are more able to learn and focus in class, than those who do not. They are also less likely to suffer from mental illnesses such as depression. Information about the recommended balanced diet for children of different ages can be found at the [Department of health and aging](#).

Action. Focus the student on drinking water instead of fruit juices, carbonated or 'energy' drinks. Provide (or request parents to provide) breakfast and lunch where necessary. Ensure student has access to fruit and some vegetables at school.

Teacher strategy

3. Make a mandatory report if required.

Purpose. To ensure the student is protected and you have met your legal or ethical obligations to that student.

Action. If you form a belief of significant harm or abuse, or the student is accessing or believed to be accessing illegal substances or committing crimes, then make a report to the government department overseeing child protection in your State or Territory, or the police, following the department or governing authorities protocols and procedures. See the Psych4Schools document, [Reporting child abuse: A guide for teachers](#).

Teacher strategy

4. Establish a 'at risk' program by linking an additional teacher to the student.

Purpose. To help build rapport, responsibility and trust by having the student assist another staff member (e.g. physical education or art teacher, deputy or assistant principal or school maintenance officer) with tasks once or twice a week.

Action. The teacher or trusted adult meets with the student once or twice a week for 10 minutes or so on a consistent basis on a term-by-term basis to help with school based tasks. All staff involved with the student should maintain a consistent approach and communicate regularly with each other.

School strategy

5. Help the student to participate in co-curricula activities.

Purpose. To provide participation in school co-curricula activities to promote learning and succeeding academically. Many parents who live near or under the poverty line have difficulty paying for additional educational expenses associated with camps, excursions



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and incursions, even when these are subsidised by the school.

Action. Have a staff member at the school (e.g. the deputy or assistant principal, school counsellor or wellbeing teacher) develop a list of local agencies that provide food, shelter, counselling, medical assistance, camp money, and other basic necessities to students and families so that families may be able to pay for an activity. The local Magistrates Court or Community Bank may also be able to assist.

Teacher strategy

6. Set predictable classroom routines, fair rules and consequences.

Purpose. Ensure the student knows what is expected, promoting feelings of security and safety.

Action. Teacher reactions to student's behaviour should be consistent and predictable based on written or previously discussed rules.

Teacher strategy

7. Assist the student to find alternative places to complete homework when their living environment is not conducive to learning.

Purpose. To assist the student to find alternative places for homework and study. The student may live in a house or housing estate with frequent verbal or physical conflict, lack physical space away from disruptive siblings or the student's family work commitments, experience poor heating or cooling, or other conditions that do not support homework, relaxing, or adequate sleep at night.

Action. Encourage the student to participate in a school homework club, use a space in the library or classroom during part of break time, or after school to complete their homework. Some local libraries may run a homework club.

Student strategy

8. Encourage the student to talk to someone they trust.

Purpose. Ensure the student can talk to a trusted teacher or adult at the school if feeling scared, sad, lonely, upset or unsafe.

Action. Talk with the class about whom they can speak to at school when they are feeling scared, sad, or unsafe such as the classroom teacher, assistant or deputy principal, school nurse or student counsellor.



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Refer to *Mindmatters* for classroom activities on help seeking behaviour.

Have a 'communication box', use email, *Edmodo*, or similar communication tool so the student can write to their teacher if needed. Most students find it helpful to then discuss concerns either privately with a teacher, or as part of a small group.

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