

# Implementation of well-being in schools using the GROW method

(overview essay)

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**Abstract:** *The aim of this article is to present a practical case study demonstrating the implementation of well-being in schools using the GROW coaching method. The focus of the article is on highlighting the critical importance of well-being in the context of the Ministry of Education's strategy in the Czech Republic. In the first part, the article provides an overview of well-being's role within educational systems and why it is becoming an essential component of school management and student success. Various theoretical perspectives on the concept of well-being in education are explored, offering a broader understanding of how it can positively influence not only students, but also teachers and the entire school community. In the final section, the article outlines a step-by-step approach to implementing well-being in schools using the structured GROW coaching model, detailing the practical actions involved and how they align with achieving specific well-being goals. This detailed description of the action method demonstrates how the GROW model can be a powerful tool for school leaders to implement sustainable well-being practices, ensuring long-term benefits for both students and staff.*

**Keywords:** *Well-being, GROW coaching method, School management, Mental health in schools. Sustainable school development*

## 1 Introduction

The Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sports in Czech Republic (MŠMT) has introduced new measures aimed at improving the mental health and well-being of children and students. The goal of these measures is to create an environment where children and students feel comfortable and can reach their full potential. These measures are part of the Czech Republic's Education Policy Strategy until 2030+.

Supporting well-being is not a new topic for MŠMT. According to a report by the Czech School Inspectorate, Czech students are among those who enjoy school the least compared to other OECD countries and do not feel good in the school environment. Therefore, the ministry recognizes the need to focus more on this issue within the education process. This is why the topic is being incorporated into the revised Framework Education Program for elementary schools.

For the 2024/2025 school year, the measures include the implementation of support staff positions such as school psychologists and special education teachers in regular elementary schools, negotiations with universities to increase the capacity of psychology and special education programs, and the introduction of bullying monitoring in schools. Unlike accidents, schools currently do not have an obligation to record cases of bullying, and bullying is not yet defined in the legal system. MŠMT is preparing a proposal for its monitoring and will assess the necessity of legal regulation.

Collaboration with the Police Presidium of the Czech Republic is also planned to share anonymized data on student suicide attempts. This initiative aims to contribute to creating a safer environment in educational institutions.

By 2027, a model minimum preventive school program and a model school code will be developed, based on proven approaches to addressing challenging student behavior. The role of homeroom sessions will also be strengthened, and personal-social education and well-being support will be incorporated into the revised Framework Education Program for elementary schools. ([www.pedagogicke.info](http://www.pedagogicke.info))

## 2 Definition of well-being in the context of education

A collective approach to promoting well-being in schools has proven to be an effective way to create an environment that supports the mental and emotional health of students, teachers, and the entire school community. One of the key aspects is collaboration between all stakeholders – from school leadership, teachers, and students to families and the wider community.

A study from Chile, which examined the well-being of school communities during the COVID-19 pandemic, showed that effective mental health support strategies require coordinated efforts. Schools that successfully supported well-being focused on working with families and communities, with key elements including ensuring digital connectivity, adapting curricula, and providing emotional support to teachers, students, and their families (López et al., 2022). This collective approach is an example of how schools and communities can work together to create a sustainable and healthy environment.

Another important factor in improving well-being is **collective leadership**, which has proven to be a significant tool in enhancing students' academic outcomes.

Research shows that schools that distribute leadership among various members of the school, parents, and students achieve better results. Collective leadership in these schools led to higher academic performance and increased responsibility among all participants (Leithwood & Mascall, 2008). This underscores the importance of sharing power and responsibility within school communities to improve educational outcomes and well-being. (“Various theoretical perspectives highlight the growing importance of well-being in educational systems and how structured coaching methods like GROW can support its implementation (ChatGPT, 2024).”

A similar approach, known as **Collective Impact**, has been shown to be very effective in rural and small-town communities. Research indicates that successful initiatives of this kind require authentic community engagement and active participation, not just formal consultation. Understanding power dynamics within the community is critical for successfully addressing complex educational and social challenges within school systems (Zuckerman, 2022). This highlights the need for deeper integration of schools with the wider community to ensure the sustainability of well-being initiatives.

Finally, the entire process is supported by **whole-school approaches**, which include all levels of the school, from students to leadership. These approaches are promising as they take into account the complexity of the school system and promote collective action across all school components. Research shows that schools that integrate well-being into all aspects of education are more likely to improve both the academic and personal outcomes of students (Hoare et al., 2017). ChatGPT. (2024). *Theoretical perspectives on well-being in schools and the GROW coaching method*. OpenAI.

## 5 ways to well-being as the method aof enrichment

5 Ways to Well-being was developed by the New Economics Foundation (NEF) in 2008. It was created as part of a government-commissioned project in the UK, aimed at identifying simple, evidence-based actions that individuals could take to improve their mental well-being.

5 Ways to Well-being is a simple framework developed to improve mental health and well-being through five key actions:

1. Connect with others to build relationships.
2. Be Active to enhance physical and mental health.
3. Take Notice by being mindful and present.
4. Keep Learning to boost self-esteem and confidence.
5. Give to promote positive emotions and a sense of purpose

The **5 Ways to Well-being** framework is built around five key principles: **Connect**, **Be Active**, **Take Notice**, **Keep Learning**, and **Give**. This approach can effectively

complement the previously discussed theories and enrich school well-being programs by integrating these principles into collective leadership, collective impact, and whole-school approaches.

### 3 Collective Leadership and Connection

One of the pillars of the 5 Ways to Well-being is **Connect**. Research on collective leadership shows that schools where leadership is shared among teachers, parents, and students achieve better outcomes. Engaging all stakeholders in school decision-making fosters a sense of belonging, trust, and collaboration, which are essential for overall well-being. The 5 Ways to Well-being could enhance these efforts by emphasizing the importance of regular relationship-building and communication within the school and between the school and the community (Leithwood & Mascal, 2008).

### 4 Collective Impact and Giving

The principle of **Give** is central to the Collective Impact approach, which emphasizes collaboration between schools and their communities. The 5 Ways to Well-being can enrich Collective Impact by promoting active student and teacher involvement in community projects, encouraging mutual support, and embedding giving as a core part of the school culture. This would not only enhance student well-being but also help sustain long-term changes in both school and community environments (Zuckerman, 2022).

### 5 Whole-School Approaches and Activity

Whole-school approaches, which involve all members of the school community, can be strengthened by integrating the principle of **Be Active**. Physical activity is a crucial component of well-being, and incorporating it regularly can boost energy, improve mood, and enhance overall mental and physical health. Schools could expand their well-being programs by encouraging both students and staff to engage in regular physical activity, whether during school hours or after, contributing to better mental and physical well-being for all (Hoare et al., 2017).

### 6 Pandemic Resilience and Mindfulness

In relation to the COVID-19 pandemic, studies showed that schools focusing on well-being and emotional support had better outcomes in crisis management. The 5 Ways to Well-being principle of **Take Notice** can complement these approaches by encouraging schools to cultivate mindfulness among students and teachers—helping

them become more aware of the present moment, improve emotional intelligence, and reduce stress. This approach would aid in managing the emotional challenges of similar crises (López et al., 2022).

## 7 Learning as a Pathway to Long-Term Well-being

The principle of **Keep Learning** aligns well with long-term school development strategies. Fostering a culture of lifelong learning for both students and teachers contributes to building confidence and a sense of fulfillment, which is essential for well-being. Schools that support personal and professional growth for all members of the community are more likely to improve overall quality of life and mental health. This also ties in with approaches that focus on the holistic development of students (Hoare et al., 2017).

Incorporating these five principles into programs that already support collective leadership, collective impact, and whole-school approaches can significantly enhance well-being not only within the school environment but also in the broader community context. (The GROW model provides a structured approach to implementing well-being strategies in schools (ChatGPT, 2024).

## 8 Sample practice: project description

### **Project for the implementation of well-being in schools using the GROW method**

Selected primary schools are collaborating with the author of this article to implement well-being through the proven GROW coaching method. This method, commonly used in management and personal development, has been adapted to meet the specific needs of the school environment, where it has proven to be an effective tool for fostering positive change. The collaboration focuses not only on improving the well-being of students, who often face stress and emotional challenges related to school attendance, but also on the well-being of teachers, who may suffer from high levels of burnout. The goal is to create a healthy and supportive environment for the entire school community, including administrative staff and parents.

Within the project, a strategy has been developed that combines the systematic approach of the GROW coaching model with tools designed to support well-being. This model is valuable due to its clear and structured nature, making it easier to identify goals, analyze the current situation, explore potential solutions, and create a concrete action plan. The GROW method provides school leaders with a step-by-step framework for implementing strategies to enhance well-being while offering the flexibility to adapt to individual schools and their unique needs.

The combination of GROW with well-being tools holds significant potential, as it effectively links a guided coaching process with specific mental health interventions. While the GROW model helps schools plan and structure the steps for implementing well-being, the well-being tools ensure that interventions are practical, targeted, and promote sustainable change. This synergy provides schools with not only a strategic plan but also the practical tools necessary to support mental well-being, minimizing the risk of ineffective implementation.

### **Definition of the GROW Coaching Method:**

The **GROW** model is a structured coaching method that helps individuals achieve their goals through four key steps:

1. **G (Goal)** – Define a clear, specific, and measurable goal that needs to be achieved.
2. **R (Reality)** – Assess the current situation, resources, obstacles, and what has already been done towards achieving the goal.
3. **O (Options)** – Explore and brainstorm different options available to overcome obstacles and reach the goal.
4. **W (Will/Way forward)** – Set specific actions and create a plan with a timeline for moving forward (Whitmore, J., 2009).

### **Training Plan for School Principals Using the GROW Model to Implement Well-being in Schools:**

#### **1. Phase – Goal:**

- **Training Goal:** Ensure that school principals understand the importance of well-being in schools and are equipped to effectively implement it.
- During the first part of the training, principals will define specific well-being goals for their schools. They will set clear objectives, such as improving teacher mental health, increasing student satisfaction, or reducing stress within the school environment.

#### **2. Phase – Reality:**

- Principals will analyze the current situation in their schools. They will discuss what factors are already contributing to well-being (e.g., existing programs, teacher support) and identify major challenges (e.g., high stress levels, lack of support for teachers and students).
- It is crucial for them to recognize the barriers that might prevent the successful implementation of new well-being strategies.

#### **3. Phase – Options:**

- In this phase, principals will explore various options and strategies to improve well-being in their schools. The coach will lead discussions on possibilities such as introducing school psychologists, organizing well-being activities for both teachers and students, or collaborating with parents and the community.

- Principals will be encouraged to consider different approaches based on the specific needs and resources of their schools, while also fostering creativity and innovative ideas.

#### 4. Phase – Will/Way Forward:

- In the final phase, principals will develop a concrete action plan for implementing well-being in their schools. This plan will include the steps to be taken, a timeline, and a method for measuring success.
- Principals will be encouraged to commit to the plan and regularly assess progress to ensure continuous improvement.

Through this training, principals will not only learn the basics of the GROW model but also how to create a structured and sustainable plan to enhance well-being in their schools.

## 9 Conclusion: Risks and Challenges of Using the GROW Model for Implementing Well-being

While the GROW model offers a structured and effective approach to implementing well-being strategies in schools, there are several risks and challenges that could limit its effectiveness. One of the primary obstacles is **insufficient understanding and training**. If school principals and staff are not fully familiar with the GROW methodology, the implementation may be superficial or poorly guided. A lack of proper training can result in GROW becoming a mere formal exercise, without a real impact on the school's well-being.

Another significant risk is **lack of support or leadership changes**. Successful implementation of well-being through the GROW model requires strong and ongoing support from school leadership and the broader community. However, if leadership is not consistently engaged or if there are frequent changes in leadership, the continuity of well-being initiatives may be disrupted, leading to a loss of focus and reduced effectiveness.

**Time constraints and organizational burden** are also key challenges. The GROW model demands time for planning, analysis, and evaluation, which can be difficult to allocate within already busy school schedules. Without proper allocation of resources and time, it may be challenging to implement a long-term and sustainable well-being program.

Another factor is the **lack of measurable outcomes**. Well-being is a complex and multi-dimensional concept that is not easily quantified using traditional performance indicators. This lack of quantifiable results may lead school leadership, under pressure to improve academic performance, to deprioritize well-being as an area of focus.

Finally, there is the risk of **failing to adapt to the individual needs of each school**. Every school has its own unique cultural and organizational characteristics. If the GROW model is applied without sufficient adaptation, it may fail to address these specific needs and be perceived as a one-size-fits-all approach that overlooks the unique challenges faced by individual schools.

In conclusion, while the GROW model represents a powerful tool for structured planning and implementing well-being, its success depends on adequate training, organizational support, resource allocation, and adaptation to the specific needs of each school. Without these factors, implementation may be ineffective or superficial, reducing the overall impact of well-being initiatives.

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