

WellBase Digital Resource Review

Abstract

We are living in a time when education addressing physical, emotional, intellectual, and social wellness is critical. Many young people struggle with seemingly simplistic physical and mental health issues. For example, about 7 out of 10 high school students (72.7%) did not get enough sleep on school nights according to a study conducted by the CDC in 2015. Additionally, the prevalence of obesity among children and adolescents in 2017-2018 in the U.S. was 19.3% and affected about 14.4 million children and adolescents.

These physical issues can lead to problems in emotional, intellectual, and social wellness. Sleep plays an integral role in the consolidation of memory. This means that one learns slower without an adequate amount of sleep, and in individuals with dyslexia, learning disabilities are further exaggerated. Without sleep, regulating emotion becomes a tough task, as does maintaining social relationships.

Studies over the years have revealed a complex interrelationship between obesity and mental health. A common risk factor is a sedentary lifestyle which several students find themselves falling into. Besides body image issues, those who struggle with obesity can find themselves also battling anxiety disorders and depression. A 2010 study found that individuals with excess weight were at a 55% higher risk of developing depression compared to people that did not struggle with obesity. Intellectually, BMI data shows that individuals who are overweight “fall in the lowest quartile of global cognition, verbal fluency, delayed recall, immediate logical memory, and intelligence.” In children especially, obesity has been linked to lower academic scores, a lack of inhibitory control, weaker memory, and lack of mental flexibility and attention. Weight-based stigmatization and teasing can make socialization difficult for people who are overweight or obese.

However, few students get wellness education at school. In 2016, 244 out of 1,463 surveyed schools in the New York City area (16.7%) offered no wellness programs (addressing health of any kind) at all while 166 (11.3%) had five or more programs. High schools that offered no programs were disproportionately high (46.8%) in the schools surveyed. Not much has changed in 2021. **Mental health was and is a taboo topic, and it is not just stigmatized in the education space but across the nation due to social pressures, stereotypes, and misconceptions, which also makes this project and review especially key at this time.**

This literature review will discuss alternative offerings in the wellness website space, including those from academic institutions, private companies, and government agencies. WellBase will further advance wellness awareness by educating students about wellness issues through uniquely engaging materials created by fellow students. In a culture where having discussions about mental health and wellness, especially with students, is still considered taboo, it is crucial to create resources that will not only educate the youth but empower them to create and act further.

WellBase Overview

The Wellness Database (WellBase) is a by-students, for students wellness website providing high school students nationwide with the knowledge and skills to make healthy choices and informed decisions for themselves, others, and their communities. WellBase will address four issues that impact middle and high schoolers (students age 12-18) through a three-step approach of self-awareness, self-education, and self-improvement. The four issues are nutrition, sleep hygiene, fitness, and academic wellness. There will be one resource page per topic and they will follow this structure:

1. Students will begin by assessing where they are in each category using open-ended reflection questions, which are completely optional and will not be collected. This metacognitive element will help students become aware of their strengths and weaknesses as they embark on their wellness journey. Those who know their strengths and weaknesses in these areas will be more capable of and invested in monitoring how and what they are learning. Those who are unaware of their own deficiencies and strengths have no basis to begin improving nor will they be invested in their own progress; it's human nature and scientifically proven. Metacognitive skills — learning correct skills and knowing how to recognize them and how to practice them— are needed in many contexts.
2. Students will read information about the issue, its significance, and what “being well” in this context means. Research from leading institutions will serve as the background for this information. The information will be presented in written, video, and audio form. All of the information will be *student-curated and presented by students*. Content will be presented explicitly, keeping in mind accuracy but also engagement.
3. Students will be provided with planners, action items, and to-do lists to make a difference and “do what they can.” Thus, they are not only educated about the wellness topics presented, but they are presented with a path forward.

The Resources

The 20 wellness websites reviewed include:

- 9 sites by academic institutions: [UCSD Center for Mindfulness](#), [UCLA Mindful Awareness Research Center](#), [Harvard University Health Service's wellness resource page](#), [Dartmouth College's Mindfulness and Meditation page](#), [The University of Minnesota's Center for Spirituality & Healing](#), [UCSB's Health and Wellness page](#), [UC Berkeley's Be Well Cal and GGSC page](#), [University of Illinois' Campus Recreation](#), and [WashU's Health and Wellness Digital Library](#).
- 3 government- and state-provided resources: [The CDC's database on young adult health](#), [MedlinePlus](#), and [Klein ISD's prevention and wellness page](#).
- 8 privately curated sites: [Well+Good](#), [The Art of Healthy Living](#), [Teen Health and Wellness](#), [Learning to BREATHE](#), [The Youth Mindful Awareness Program](#), [Change to Chill](#), [Search Inside Yourself Leadership Institute](#), and [Left Brain Buddha](#).

These websites were selected because they contain medically-backed information, are either created by reputable institutions or unbiased publications, and inform visitors about either/both mindfulness and/or the wellness topics that WellBase will tackle. A brief outline of each website and how their offerings compare with WellBase's is provided below.

UCSD Center for Mindfulness

The UC San Diego Center for Mindfulness provides information most similar to the mindfulness page on WellBase. Mindfulness programs for teens, parents, and schools are posted on the main site, while guided audio and video mindfulness practices (created by UCSD medical faculty) are linked. Offerings are more limited than WellBase, which will have similar audio and video mindfulness practices embedded on the mindfulness page but will also include yoga. Each practice will also have a short written explanation/overview to explain its purpose and significance. The mindful poetry included on the UCSD database is unique, and the mindfulness handouts and activities on WellBase are inspired by a similar concept. Mindfulness recordings are provided in many languages; since WellBase is in its pilot stage, recordings will initially be all in English, then expand to other languages.

UCLA Mindfulness Awareness Research Center

UCLA's wellness page is most similar to the mindfulness page on WellBase. It advertises classes and events in LA and virtually, which WellBase will not offer (as it is an information bank that can be used across the world). Lots of unique, recorded guided meditations are included (in multiple languages too), and weekly podcasts are created by UCLA faculty. One can access the database in app form as well. WellBase will have similar guided meditations, though all will be created and curated by students. Podcasts will not be utilized, nor will WellBase be available in app form.

Harvard Center for Wellness and Health Promotion

Harvard University Health Service provides brief overviews, tips, and resource pages for a variety of issues including sleep, stress resiliency, and nutrition. Lists of tasks/pieces of advice are provided in an easy-to-understand, concise manner even though no studies are cited. WellBase will include a bit more detail in the overview of each issue and will cite studies, but actionable advice will be delivered similarly. Some posters and infographics are included; this is similar to what WellBase will offer, though WellBase graphics will be more colorful/eye-catching and have more information.

Dartmouth College's Mindfulness and Meditation page

Dartmouth College's Mindfulness and Meditation page mirrors most closely the mindfulness offerings of WellBase, but there are differences here as well. The overview of meditation, its core elements, and benefits has about the same amount of content in the same amount of depth that will be provided on WellBase. Mindfulness video and audio recordings are linked, as are music and art resources to help practice mindfulness and be present. The recordings have similar content to the WellBase, but Dartmouth's videos and audio recordings are longer. The Koru Mindfulness curriculum and drop-in sessions (where students and faculty can log onto a Zoom session and meditate together) offered by Dartmouth will not be offered on WellBase as the resource caters solely to students (therefore, there is no need for a curriculum) and the site is in its incipient stages so Zoom coordination is not a top priority (therefore, no drop-in sessions are planned).

University of Minnesota Center for Spirituality and Healing

University of Minnesota's database focuses on lots of issues, including diet and nutrition, mindfulness, relationships, sleep, stress, and physical activity. Each issue has a linked "assessment" (like the self-check metacognition element on WellBase) The data from these assessments is collected (though respondents are anonymous), and there are 12 "rank yourself" questions in total. On the other hand, WellBase data is not collected and there are only 3-5 reflection-based questions. Some issues have more than one assessment. Videos, articles, audio recordings, and modules are linked under each issue. The modules have more content than WellBase (about five to six paragraphs versus two to three) and don't have any interactive elements. Videos and articles are all created by the university community, similar to how all WellBase elements are designed, created, and curated by students.

UCSB Health and Wellness

Every "resource page" on UCSB's wellbeing site contains a short introduction, advertisements for upcoming UCSB events related to the topic, videos, surveys, external sites, and library guides. WellBase will include similar content, though there will not be any surveys (instead, open-ended reflections) and there may not be reading recommendations on every resource page. Everything on the site is either compiled or created by UCSB faculty, while WellBase is completely by-students, for-students. UCSB Psychology faculty have created an external site with mindfulness and positive psychology information; WellBase will house all information locally, on just one website, to make the UX more intuitive. On the UCSB database, content is not delivered in as dry of a manner as on other academic websites; still, audience makes a difference. Pages about eating disorders, drugs, and sexual health – which WellBase does not focus on – are included on UCSB's database. WellBase will package information for ages 12-18; therefore, language will be more compelling and vivid and information will be limited.

Be Well Cal and the Greater Good Science Center - UC Berkeley

UC Berkeley updates its wellness site with a unique wellness calendar each month. For each day, a different wellbeing task is outlined (take some time for meditation, talk to a friend, etc.). This is similar to WellBase's printable offerings. WellBase will also offer a calendar, but parts will be customizable to put visitors' wellness journeys in their own hands. Topics like stress, healthy eating, exercise, time management, and sleep are tackled on Cal's web resource page, as are values like gratitude. Each wellness topic has a short paragraph of information as well as articles, campus resources, action items, and book recommendations. WellBase will have more factual information but similar resources available, minus external articles and campus resources. Be Well Cal also sends out a monthly newsletter (Be Well Monthly Buzz); it is possible that, after it is fully built out, WellBase includes a newsletter feature, but during its pilot stage, this will not be offered.

University of Illinois

University of Illinois' Campus Recreation page is, as the name would suggest, extremely campus-specific. There are wellness workshops and programs advertised (of which most are restricted to Illinois students). Information provided is more about the different meanings of wellness than tackling specific issues; for example, the University of Illinois' page provides definitions of all the dimensions of wellness (mental, social, vocational, etc.) and then links to other university pages with reflection and calendar templates as well as an extremely detailed, scientifically-backed site called Campus Well (<https://campusrec-wellbeing.com/>) which tackles all the issues WellBase does, but through scholarly articles and studies rather than the three-step process. There are advice articles, quizzes, and "ask the professor" columns. It's certainly creative, and the interactive, engaging elements are similar to those offered by WellBase. As mentioned before, though, the way information is delivered is different, and the user experience on WellBase is more intuitive than Campus Well; one must click four to six buttons to get to the Campus Well site, while all information is hosted locally on WellBase.

The Habif Health and Wellness Center at Washington University in St. Louis

WashU's site uses *only* infographics to drive home information about the following categories: general mental health (exercise and stress, perfectionism, deep breathing, procrastination, etc.), sexual health, alcohol and drugs, and public health. The organizational method differs, as does the method of information delivery. The resource pages on WellBase will include but not solely use infographics to drive home points; information will be delivered in text, video, and audio form. WashU's audience is mainly undergraduate and graduate students, so sections about sexual health and alcohol were included; as WellBase caters to students age 12-18, these sections were not included. The three-step approach WellBase uses is not employed by the Habif Center (specifically, the reflection portion), but they do provide students with information and provide several pieces of actionable advice (thereby following steps 2 and 3). The public health and community wellbeing section contains resources similar to those WellBase will provide, though WellBase worksheets and planners will have space to track progress rather than being information sheets; once again, the element of reflection is missing.

Klein ISD

The audience is the same here: high school students. The content is delivered in a drier manner, though. Klein ISD uses a mix of videos and text that ISD employees have either created or curated. WellBase differs in that its information is all created, analyzed, interpreted, and presented by students in an engaging manner for other students. None of the resources on WellBase will be linked to an external site; all information will be housed on the same website. Information about dating violence, bullying, anxiety, human trafficking, and self-injury has been included on Klein ISD's page; as WellBase is currently in its pilot stage, these categories will not be included. Some bullet-pointed information about each category (anti-bullying, prevention, anxiety, dating violence, human trafficking, mental health, and substance use) and several action items are provided on the Klein ISD website. Action items are rather detailed, though there aren't many printables/worksheets/planners to supplement them. WellBase will provide a longer, more detailed explanation of each wellness topic, its importance, and its impact. Some games, apps, and listicles have been linked on the Klein page, but none were created by ISD students/employees (difference - see the first point about student-created content). Mindfulness is also not addressed.

CDC Young Adult Health Database

The CDC's Database on Adolescent and School Health is nearly the polar opposite in organization and content to WellBase. It contains almost exclusively survey and study data (pure numbers), which the WellBase does not deal with. The page is specific to adolescents and tackles risk behaviors, bullying in schools, physical education, and much more. However, these issues aren't clearly divided up into sections like WellBase. Depending on what subheader (ex: School Health Profiles) one clicks on, different studies (most of which deal with more than one of these issues) are provided. In these studies, information is presented through a large volume of data which is explained in great depth. The volume of information and crude data is vastly different from WellBase. WellBase will be organized in an intuitive fashion (clear headers on all resource pages) without complex figures.

Medline+

Medline+ is a medical encyclopedia, so it has information past what WellBase offers, covering different diseases and issues. Medline+ contains detailed articles, actionable advice, and links to clinical trials/studies/articles related to the topic being discussed. There are pages about everything from adenoids to child abuse. Often, if an issue is specifically related to kids, there will be links addressing how the issue affects children and teenagers. The language used on Medline+ is more technical and dry than WellBase. The audience is also broader (as is the scope). WellBase will only discuss the aforementioned four issues. The metacognition element is missing here as well.

Well+Good

Well+Good is a blog-style publication all about wellness. Well+Good package all of their information (mostly about nutrition, fitness, relationships, and some other lifestyle topics) as articles/listicles. “8 Surprising Food Hacks That Made Us Better Cooks in 2021” and “I Design Recipes With One of Today's Most Elite Athletes—Here's Why Butter Is Always on the Menu” are two examples. Each of these articles goes into a good amount of scientific detail while maintaining an informal tone. The audience of the site is clearly adults. Though the organization (articles vs resource pages) and audience are different, Well+Good’s content delivery tone is similar to WellBase. Each article is written to “hook” the reader and leave them with key takeaways. There is a Well+Good shop; however, WellBase (for the time being) will not offer an e-commerce component.

The Art of Healthy Living

The Art of Healthy Living addresses topics including beauty, food, fitness, health, and wellbeing. It contains articles and reviews about wellness topics, much like Well+Good. The tone of each article is a bit blander and there is less scientific information available than with Well+Good. The audience of the site is clearly adults. Though the organization (articles vs resource pages) and audience are different, Well+Good’s content delivery tone is similar to WellBase. Each article is written to “hook” the reader and leave them with key takeaways. Web design is basic but clean, and it is likely that WellBase will look like either this page or Well+Good given the amount of time allotted to the project.

Teen Health and Wellness

Teen Health and Wellness is a database containing everything one needs to know about issues including drugs, grief, developmental disorders, and sexual health. The scope is larger than WellBase’s, but the audience is the same: teens! The database has Google and LMS integration, a feature which WellBase will explore. All videos have closed captioning, which will also be offered on WellBase. There is also a unique Calm Room where students can take quick mindfulness breaks, nearly the exact concept WellBase has, except there will not be any animal cams or nature videos on WellBase. The database has teen-created personal stories and videos as well, like WellBase; however, the whole site is not put together by teens. The one key area where Teen Health and Wellness and WellBase differ is that WellBase is a free, no-subscription-needed resource page while Teen Health and Wellness is a paid database (like EBSCOHost or Gale).

The Youth Mindful Awareness Program

The Youth Mindfulness Awareness Program is a mobile app-based mindfulness program for teens (which comes with questions about health, mood, and stress). WellBase is a website with pages about various wellness topics including mindfulness. Both share the element of metacognition. YMAP is a research project by students, much like WellBase; however, the students are from UCLA, Northwestern, and Vanderbilt, not high schools. The site provides an overview of what mindfulness is, with videos about the program itself, the benefits of mindfulness. The app promises mindfulness recordings of various lengths, similar to WellBase, though the mindfulness page on WellBase will contain more resources including mindful eating/walking/running/reading tips, printable, and audio recordings.

Change to Chill

Change to Chill contains a variety of mindfulness and stress relief resources including a quiz about using stress to fuel resiliency, pages about finding balance in life, about mindfulness in general, for athletes, and when in motion. There are pages about guided imagery meditation and music-guided meditation as well. WellBase will provide similar offerings. The “mental remix” will be similar to the student-made/curated music on WellBase. Slightly more data will be provided and analyzed on the WellBase. Change To Chill’s content is aimed at various ages, not just kids; on the other hand, WellBase is solely for kids age 12-18.

Search Inside Yourself Leadership Institute

Search Inside Yourself Leadership Institute contains blog articles, case studies, and unique guided meditations. Of all these offerings, meditations are the only thing SIYLI holds in common with WellBase. The meditations are unique; some examples are finding joy, acknowledging impermanence, and focusing your attention. The audio quality is high and the practices vary in length. WellBase will hopefully be similar in its audio quality, though it will have shorter meditations available (3-5 minutes max).

Learning to BREATHE

Though Learning to BREATHE is actually not a web resource but a curriculum, it contains studies and information on the site that parallel what WellBase may include. Write-ups about the importance of emotion regulation, attention, and mindfulness, research about how to create an effective mindfulness program for teens, as well as several videos of mindfulness practices in real life are linked. The curriculum is exclusively designed for adolescents, and so the audience overlaps with WellBase’s audience. There are no resource pages on Learning to BREATHE’s site, but factual information is scattered across the site. The wealth of studies on the site could be utilized in some way on the mindfulness page of WellBase.

Left Brain Buddha

Left Brain Buddha is a site that promotes mindfulness. Articles describe the benefits of mindfulness using data, and the “Mindfulness 101” course offered promises one week of daily mindfulness lessons comprising guided meditations, written lessons, instructional videos, journals, and printable. The course provides nearly the exact same content as WellBase, though all of the content on WellBase is compiled by students using leading research rather than by an instructor with a Master’s Degree. There will not be any written lessons on WellBase, but there will be content delivered in text form. Videos will be used on WellBase, but they will not be “instructional” (a teacher will not be lecturing); rather, a student will be demonstrating, for example, the practice of yoga. The audience differs here too; Left Brain Buddha is intended for parents (all articles are written with parents and adults as a target audience), while WellBase is for kids aged 12-18.

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