

**“KHUSHI KI PAATHSHALA”
HAPPINESS EDUCATION: PEDAGOGY REDEFINED FOR GEN ALPHA**

Caesar D’Silva

Global Indian International School (GIIS), Ahmedabad, India.

principal.ahmedabad@globalindianschool.org

ABSTRACT

The growing interest in Happiness Education has prompted extensive inquiry across academic domains and beyond, particularly evident in the advent of happiness lessons within educational frameworks such as those implemented at Wellington College of South Tyneside in 2008. This paper offers a reflective commentary on the pedagogical and curricular dimensions of happiness education, contextualized within the learning characteristics of Generation Alpha. Drawing on literature in positive psychology and social-emotional learning, the paper explores how happiness-oriented practices can enhance engagement, resilience, and holistic growth. It also presents preliminary findings from a school-based survey conducted at GIIS Ahmedabad, where students reported high levels of emotional security, social connectedness, and motivation to learn. The discussion highlights the contributions of key stakeholders including students, teachers, parents, and school leaders, in cultivating positive school cultures and integrating happiness as a guiding educational principle. While acknowledging the limitations of reflective and practice-based evidence, the paper advocates empirical studies to evaluate the effectiveness and long-term outcomes of happiness-centered pedagogies.

Keywords: *happiness education, Generation Alpha, positive education, student well-being, school leadership, empirical research.*

INTRODUCTION

Background

In recent years, the concept of happiness in classrooms has emerged as a focal point in educational discourse, signaling a shift towards a more holistic approach to student well-being and academic achievement (Alam, 2022; Guilherme & de Freitas, 2017; Michalos, 2017). The significance of happiness in classrooms lies in its potential to profoundly impact on student well-being and academic performance. Beyond traditional metrics of success, such as grades and test scores, classroom happiness encompasses emotional security, social connection, and a sense of belonging. Research indicates that students who experience higher levels of happiness in the classroom

demonstrate greater engagement, motivation, and resilience, ultimately leading to improved academic outcomes (Yang & Wang, 2022).

Central to understanding classroom happiness are the underlying factors that contribute to its cultivation. Positive teacher-student relationships, a supportive learning environment, and opportunities for autonomy and self-expression are among the key determinants of classroom happiness (Liu & Geng, 2025; Cramond, 2021; Shernoff, 2013). When students feel valued, respected, and emotionally supported by their teachers and peers, they are more likely to experience a sense of happiness and fulfilment in the learning process.

Practical approaches for enhancing classroom happiness encompass a range of strategies aimed at creating a conducive learning environment where students feel safe, engaged, and empowered. Cultivating a culture of kindness and empathy, promoting social-emotional learning, and incorporating mindfulness practices into daily routines are effective ways to foster positive relationships and emotional well-being. Additionally, providing opportunities for student voice and choice, personalized learning experiences, and meaningful connections to real-world contexts can enhance intrinsic motivation and satisfaction with learning.

Generation Alpha

Children born from about 2010 onward arrive in classrooms already fluent with screens, various media devices, and on-demand information. Systematic reviews show that researchers frequently assume Generation Alpha is qualitatively different from earlier cohorts because of early digital exposure, yet the literature also cautions that empirical comparisons are still limited and that many claims remain conditional (Hofrova et al., 2024). Practically, educators report that Alpha learners prefer highly visual, interactive, game-like and personalized learning pathways, and they tend to process information across multiple media and expect rapid feedback and choice. These preferences push teachers toward multimodal pedagogy, blended and digitally augmented activities, and shorter, scaffolded learning episodes that foreground engagement and learner agency. At the same time, researchers warn that heavy screen time and social media exposure can reduce in-person social opportunities and contribute to emotional strain, so any techno-pedagogical shift must be balanced with deliberate social-emotional supports and adult mediation (Hofrova et al., 2024).

Because Generation Alpha's schooling context is both hyper-digital and emotionally pressured due to pandemic schooling experiences, high-stakes culture and social media, wellbeing and happiness-oriented practices have moved from optional extras to central design features of contemporary curricula. There is now strong meta-analytic evidence that school-based social and emotional learning (SEL) and related positive-education interventions produce reliable improvements in students' social skills, behavior, mental health indicators and academic outcomes (Durlak et al., 2011; Learning Policy Institute, 2023).

For Generation Alpha, whose ecological risks include elevated anxiety and weaker face-to-face social practice in some contexts, SEL provides foundational competencies, which are self-

awareness, self-management, social awareness and relationship skills, that support both emotional regulation and effective learning in digitally mediated environments. Positive education models adapt well to Gen Alpha because they combine brief, practical activities pedagogies that promote engagement, belonging and agency, all of which are qualities Alpha learners readily respond to when those practices are integrated into curriculum and classroom routines (Morgan et al., 2023).

For teachers and leaders this means rethinking what counts as “core” teaching. Instructional design for Generation Alpha should deliberately intertwine cognitive goals with well-being practices, inclusive of mixed content and micro-learning to match attention patterns, collaborative, project-based tasks to cultivate social skills, and short, evidence-based wellbeing practices to build resilience and positive affect.

Implementation research and program evaluations emphasize that outcomes depend less on catchy program labels and more on dependability, adult capability, and systemic support. Thus, teachers need training and school leaders must prioritize resources and reason across curriculum and pastoral systems (Learning Policy Institute, 2023; Hofrova et al., 2024). In short, Gen Alpha’s learning style has accelerated a shift toward making happiness an integral element of 21st-century schooling, because doing so addresses both the developmental risks associated with omnipresent digital media and the unique learning styles that Alpha learners bring to classroom life.

Strategies for Classroom Happiness

Effective strategies for cultivating classroom happiness entail a multifaceted approach, beginning with continuous brainstorming sessions aimed at generating innovative ideas. Deliberations among stakeholders, including teachers, students, and parents, are crucial in shaping objectives and formulating action plans tailored to meet the unique needs of each classroom community. Regular reviews and feedback mechanisms ensure ongoing refinement of the vision, fostering a culture of meaningful engagement and lifelong learning.

Intensive orientation programs serve as catalysts for igniting ideation and stimulating thought-provoking discussions among all stakeholders. By nurturing a culture of innovation and collaboration, these programs empower individuals to explore new ideas and approaches to education. Moreover, they provide a platform for aligning collective efforts towards a shared vision of promoting student well-being.

The integration of universal values and cultural heritage into lesson plans enriches the educational experience, fostering a sense of belonging and inclusivity among students (Eden et al., 2024). By eliminating fear, stress, and the burden of learning, this approach cultivates a conducive environment for creativity to thrive at all levels. Teachers, parents, and students alike benefit from a curriculum that celebrates diversity and embraces the richness of cultural heritage.

Parent engagement emerges as a pivotal factor in creating a nurturing environment where students feel emotionally secure and empowered to navigate challenges effectively (Sharma & Sharma, 2024). By involving parents in the educational journey, schools foster a sense of

partnership and mutual support, thereby enhancing student well-being. The success of initiatives such as the Make in India project underscores the transformative impact of collaborative efforts among parents, teachers, and students.

Community-building activities, such as the Joy of Giving celebration, serve to foster camaraderie among students, reduce social isolation, and enhance overall well-being. Similarly, initiatives such as the Green Initiative Ethic instill a sense of environmental stewardship and appreciation for the beauty of nature. By engaging in activities such as tree painting and bird feeder making, students develop a deeper connection with their surroundings, fostering a positive learning environment.

Incorporating the 5Cs of 21st century skills, which are critical thinking, communication, collaboration, creativity, and citizenship, into the teaching-learning process enhances cognitive abilities and fosters a culture of innovation (Bulkis et al., 2025). Happy classrooms serve as fertile ground for nurturing these skills, as students are more receptive to learning when they feel emotionally supported and engaged. In conclusion, fostering classroom happiness is not merely a pedagogical endeavor but a holistic approach to education that prioritizes student well-being. By embracing innovative strategies, nurturing partnerships, and fostering a culture of inclusivity and collaboration, educators can create learning environments where students thrive academically, emotionally, and socially.

Stakeholders Perspectives

In order to understand how happiness-oriented initiatives such as “happiness lessons” operate within schools, it is helpful to consider the roles and contributions of key stakeholders. The following describes four major stakeholder groups from a practitioner perspective.

Students

Students are the primary beneficiaries of happiness initiatives in schools. Their role in happiness in school is multifaceted. Firstly, students directly experience the effects of happiness programs on their well-being, social interactions, and academic performance. Their engagement, participation, and feedback are essential for assessing the effectiveness of these programs (Hochschild Ovalle et al., 2024). Additionally, students play an active role in creating a positive school culture by fostering kindness, empathy, and inclusivity among their peers. By embracing the principles of positive psychology and social-emotional learning, students can cultivate resilience, self-awareness, and healthy coping mechanisms, contributing to their overall happiness and success in school.

Teachers

Teachers are instrumental in promoting happiness in schools as they play a central role in creating and maintaining a positive learning environment. Their interactions with students, instructional practices, and classroom management strategies significantly impact students' well-being and engagement (Liu & Geng, 2025). Teachers facilitate happiness programs, deliver social-emotional learning

curriculum, and provide emotional support to students. Moreover, they serve as role models for positive behaviors and attitudes, demonstrating empathy, kindness, and respect in their interactions with students and colleagues (Cramond, 2021). By prioritizing students' holistic development and fostering a culture of well-being, teachers contribute to the overall happiness and success of their students.

Principal

The principal plays a pivotal role in shaping the culture and climate of the school, including its focus on happiness and well-being. As the instructional leader, the principal sets the tone for the school's values, priorities, and initiatives. They provide leadership and support for happiness programs, allocate resources, and create opportunities for professional development related to positive education. Additionally, the principal collaborates with teachers, students, parents, and other stakeholders to establish goals and strategies for promoting happiness and well-being in the school community (Vale et al., 2025). By fostering a positive and supportive environment, the principal contributes to the overall happiness and success of students and staff.

Parents

Parents are essential stakeholders in promoting happiness in schools as they play a critical role in supporting their children's social, emotional, and academic development. They provide emotional support, encouragement, and guidance to their children, which significantly influences their well-being and success in school (Gramaxo et al., 2023). Parents can actively participate in happiness programs by attending workshops, volunteering in school activities, and reinforcing positive values and behaviors at home. Additionally, parents' feedback and collaboration with teachers and school administrators are valuable for assessing the effectiveness of happiness initiatives and identifying areas for improvement. By fostering a partnership between home and school, parents contribute to creating a supportive and nurturing environment where students can thrive and be happy.

HAPPINESS EDUCATION PROGRAM AT GIIS AHMEDABAD

The Happiness Education Program at Global Indian International School (GIIS) Ahmedabad is an educational initiative that integrates the principles of positive psychology and social-emotional learning into everyday classroom practices. It aims to foster emotional well-being, empathy, and resilience among students, creating a joyful and nurturing learning environment. Rooted in the belief that true education extends beyond academic achievement, the program focuses on building mindfulness, gratitude, and interpersonal relationships that promote lifelong happiness and holistic growth (Seligman, 2011; Noddings, 2003).

By prioritizing happiness as a core educational goal, GIIS Ahmedabad ensures that students develop not only cognitive competence but also emotional intelligence, social connectedness, and a strong sense of purpose, all of which are key attributes for thriving in the 21st century (Lyubomirsky, 2008; Waters, 2011).

Student Survey

An exploratory survey was conducted among students at GIIS Ahmedabad to gain insights into their perceptions of happiness and well-being in school. The questionnaire comprised a series of Likert-type items designed to measure students' affective, social and motivational experiences within the school environment. Respondents rated statements on a five-point scale ranging from "Strongly Agree" to "Strongly Disagree". Mean scores were calculated for each item, tabulated (Table 1), and presented in the graph (Figure 1) below to capture general trends in students' emotional and academic engagement. This approach provides a preliminary quantitative snapshot of student's self-reported happiness and sense of belonging, completing the school's broader commitment to nurturing emotional intelligence and positive education.

Positive Items	Average Student Feedback
<i>I liked being with other people</i>	4.3
<i>I had self confidence</i>	4.2
<i>I wanted to come to school</i>	4.4
<i>I had fun</i>	4.7
<i>I felt that the school was safe</i>	4.7
<i>I got along well with everyone</i>	4.2
<i>I felt good</i>	4.1
<i>I was full of energy</i>	4.4
<i>I was willing to study</i>	4.3
<i>I could pay attention</i>	4.4
<i>I felt positive</i>	4.2
<i>I studied hard</i>	4.3
<i>I was calm</i>	3.8
<i>I felt very lively</i>	4.4
<i>I was relaxed</i>	4.1

Table 1: Feedback on student experience at GIIS Ahmedabad.

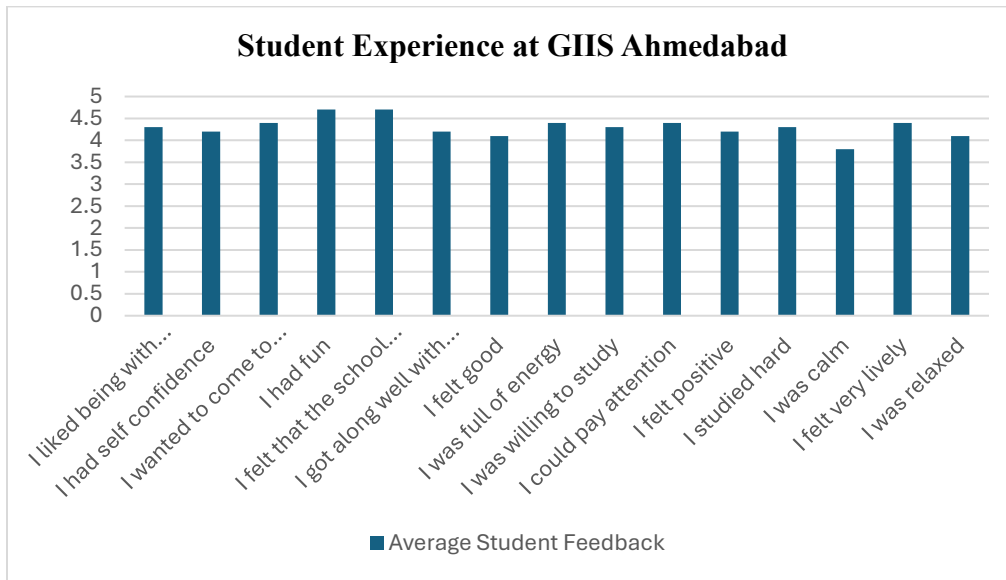


Figure 1: Bar Graph representing student experience at GIIS Ahmedabad

The data presents an intriguing insight into student happiness within the school environment, as indicated by their average feedback scores across various positive items. Notably, students generally reported favorable experiences, with the majority of responses hovering around high range of the scale. The highest-rated aspect was the perception of school safety, with an average score of 4.7, suggesting that students feel secure within their educational setting. This is a crucial finding, as feelings of safety can significantly influence overall well-being and academic engagement.

Additionally, students expressed a strong inclination towards social interaction, as evidenced by the relatively high scores for items such as "liking being with other people" (4.3) and "getting along well with everyone" (4.2). These findings underscore the importance of positive peer relationships in fostering a supportive and inclusive school community.

Moreover, the data reveals that students generally experienced positive emotions while at school, with high ratings for items such as "feeling good" (4.1), "feeling positive" (4.2), and "feeling very lively" (4.4). These findings suggest that the school environment is conducive to promoting emotional well-being and fostering a sense of vitality among students.

Interestingly, while students reported high levels of social engagement and positive emotions, there were also corresponding high scores for items related to academic motivation and energy levels. For instance, items such as "studying hard" (4.3), "being willing to study" (4.3), and "having full energy" (4.4) received comparatively high ratings. This suggests that while students feel emotionally elated and socially connected at school, they also show a higher level of energy and superior level of performance in academics leading to increased holistic development.

GIIS 9 GEMS Framework

The 9 GEMS educational framework is dynamic and comprehensive, designed to nurture the all-round development of students through an integrated, holistic approach to learning (GSG, 2024). The foundation of its approach lies in the fusion of the best practices from both Eastern and Western educational philosophies, culminating in the acclaimed 9 GEMS model. This award-winning model transcends traditional academic boundaries, placing equal emphasis on sports, skills, and values alongside academic excellence.

At the heart of the framework is the belief that education should encompass more than just academic achievements. While academic excellence is undoubtedly important, GIIS recognizes the need to foster a diverse range of competencies that are essential for success in today's rapidly evolving world. As such, curriculum in our schools is designed to cultivate not only cognitive abilities but also physical, social, emotional, and ethical dimensions of learning.

The 9 GEMS model encompasses nine essential competencies: academic excellence, sports excellence, skills development, leadership skills, artistic skills, and universal values (GSG, 2024). By incorporating these competencies into educational programs, students are provided with a well-rounded education that prepares them for life beyond the classroom. Whether it's excelling in academics, achieving proficiency in sports, honing leadership abilities, or expressing creativity through the arts, students are empowered to explore their passions and realize their full potential.



Figure 2: GIIS 9 GEMS Framework

(Source: <https://globalindianschool.org/the-gsf-difference/9gems/>)

Moreover, emphasis on universal values ensures that students develop a strong moral compass and ethical framework, guiding their decision-making and behavior in both personal and professional contexts. As students' progress through the educational framework, they embark on a journey of self-discovery and continual growth, expanding their horizons and unlocking new

opportunities for learning and development. The 9 GEMS incorporated by the Global Schools Group are as follows:

1. Academic Excellence, Collaborative & Project-based Learning
2. Sports, Health and Fitness Excellence
3. Visual and Performing Arts
4. Personality Development, Speech and Drama
5. Creativity, Innovation and Problem-solving
6. Entrepreneurship & Leadership Development
7. Universal Values, Ethics and Discipline
8. Community Connection, Care and Conserve
9. Life Skills, Career and Vocational Competency

CONCLUSION

The discussion across this paper underscores that happiness education is no longer a peripheral or aspirational concept but a pedagogical necessity in contemporary schooling. From the integration of social-emotional learning and mindfulness practices to the inclusion of parents and communities as active partners, schools are gradually redefining success to encompass emotional, social, and moral dimensions of development. The experience at GIIS Ahmedabad illustrates how structured happiness initiatives, aligned with frameworks such as the 9 GEMS model, can nurture students' confidence, sense of safety, and enthusiasm for learning. By embedding universal values, empathy, and creativity into everyday instruction, schools are equipping Generation Alpha with both academic competencies and life skills essential for flourishing in an interconnected, rapidly evolving world.

However, the evidence base for happiness education still relies heavily on descriptive or practitioner accounts rather than rigorous empirical verification. To strengthen the field, future research should adopt systematic and mixed-methods designs that measure the actual impact of happiness-oriented programmes on students' emotional well-being, academic performance, and long-term resilience. Longitudinal and cross-cultural studies could help determine whether positive-education techniques produce sustained improvements across diverse contexts. Such empirical inquiry would move happiness education from an inspirational ideal toward a validated, evidence-based pedagogy that integrates emotional well-being with cognitive growth as twin goals of modern education.

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