



School-wide practices to enhance student and staff wellbeing

Positive Schools 2013



GEELONG GRAMMAR SCHOOL®
| Exceptional Education |



Character Strengths

“Character strengths are ways of thinking, feeling, and behaving that come naturally and easily to a person and that enable high functioning and performance.”

Alex Linley, 2006

Professors Chris Peterson and Martin Seligman lead a large team of scientists and philosophers to identify Virtues and Character Strengths that have been valued throughout history, across cultures and across religions. They identified 6 Virtues and 24 Character Strengths that appear to be universal.

They named this identification of strengths as the VIA Classification of Character Strengths. The VIA stands for Values in Action.

The 24 Character Strengths are listed below under the six over-arching virtues to which they belong.

1. Wisdom and Knowledge

- Curiosity, interest
- Love of learning
- Open-mindedness, judgment
- Creativity, originality, ingenuity
- Perspective

2. Courage

- Bravery, valour
- Persistence, industry, perseverance
- Honesty, integrity, authenticity
- Zest, enthusiasm

3. Love

- Capacity to love and be loved
- Kindness, generosity
- Social intelligence, friendship

4. Justice

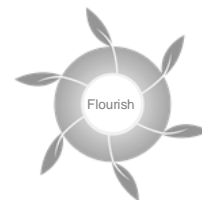
- Teamwork, citizenship, loyalty
- Fairness equity
- Leadership

5. Temperance

- Forgiveness, mercy
- Modesty, humility
- Self-control, self-regulation
- Prudence, caution, discretion

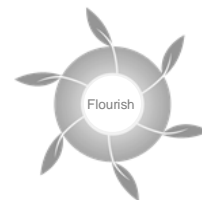
6. Transcendence

- Appreciation of beauty and excellence
- Gratitude
- Hope, optimism
- Humour, playfulness
- Spirituality, faith, sense of purpose



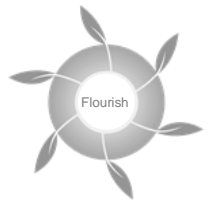
Character Strength Definitions (Peterson & Seligman, 2004)

- **Appreciation of excellence and beauty** [awe, wonder, elevation]: Noticing and appreciating beauty, excellence, and/or skilled performance in all domains of life, from nature to art to mathematics to science to everyday experience
- **Bravery** [valor]: *Not* shrinking from threat, challenge, difficulty, or pain; speaking up for what is right even if there is opposition; acting on convictions even if unpopular; includes physical bravery but is not limited to it
- **Citizenship** [social responsibility, loyalty, teamwork]: Working well as a member of a group or team; being loyal to the group; doing one's share
- **Creativity** [originality, ingenuity]: Thinking of novel and productive ways to do things; includes artistic achievement but is not limited to it
- **Curiosity** [interest, novelty-seeking, openness to experience]: Taking an interest in all of ongoing experience; finding all subjects and topics fascinating; exploring and discovering
- **Fairness**: Treating all people the same according to notions of fairness and justice; *not* letting personal feelings bias decisions about others; giving everyone a fair chance
- **Forgiveness and mercy**: Forgiving those who have done wrong; giving people a second chance; *not* being vengeful
- **Gratitude**: Being aware of and thankful for the good things that happen; taking time to express thanks
- **Hope** [optimism, future-mindedness, future orientation]: Expecting the best in the future and working to achieve it; believing that a good future is something that can be brought about
- **Humor** [playfulness]: Liking to laugh and joke; bringing smiles to other people; seeing the light side; making (not necessarily telling) jokes
- **Integrity** [authenticity, honesty]: Speaking the truth but more broadly presenting oneself in a genuine way; being without pretense; taking responsibility for one's feelings and actions
- **Judgment** [open-mindedness, critical thinking]: Thinking things through and examining them from all sides; *not* jumping to conclusions; being able to change one's mind in light of evidence; weighing all evidence fairly



Character Strength Definitions (Peterson & Seligman, 2004)

- **Kindness** [generosity, nurturance, care, compassion, altruistic love, “niceness”]: Doing favors and good deeds for others; helping them; taking care of them
- **Leadership**: Encouraging a group of which one is a member to get things done and at the same time maintaining good relations within the group; organizing group activities and seeing that they happen
- **Love**: Valuing close relations with others, in particular those in which sharing and caring are reciprocated; being close to people
- **Love of learning**: Mastering new skills, topics, and bodies of knowledge, whether on one’s own or formally. Obviously related to the strength of curiosity but goes beyond it to describe the tendency to add *systematically* to what one knows
- **Modesty and humility**: Letting one’s accomplishments speak for themselves; *not* seeking the spotlight; *not* regarding oneself as more special than one is
- **Persistence** [perseverance, industriousness]: Finishing what one starts; persisting in a course of action in spite of obstacles; “getting it out the door”; taking pleasure in completing tasks
- **Perspective** [wisdom]: Being able to provide wise counsel to others; having ways of looking at the world that make sense to oneself and to other people
- **Prudence**: Being careful about one’s choices; *not* taking undue risks; *not* saying or doing things that might later be regretted
- **Self-regulation** [self-control]: Regulating what one feels and does; being disciplined; controlling one’s appetites and emotions
- **Social intelligence** [emotional intelligence, personal intelligence]: Being aware of the motives and feelings of other people and oneself; knowing what to do to fit in to different social situations; knowing what makes other people tick
- **Spirituality** [religiousness, faith, purpose]: Having coherent beliefs about the higher purpose and meaning of the universe; knowing where one fits within the larger scheme; having beliefs about the meaning of life that shape conduct and provide comfort
- **Zest** [vitality, enthusiasm, vigor, energy]: Approaching life with excitement and energy; not doing things halfway or halfheartedly, living life as an adventure, feeling alive and activated



Positive Relationships Activity: Strength spotting

Ponder the following questions and write your answers in the spaces provided.

1. Think of a family member whom you admire for their use of a particular strength.

2. Think of a colleague whom you admire for their use of a particular strength.

3. Think of a friend whom you admire for their use of a particular strength.

4. Think of a person whom you have had difficulties with, suggest one or more of their signature strengths.



Positive Accomplishment Activity: Mindset Reflections

Reflection 1:

Who is someone you know who dramatically improved their performance?
What did they do that enabled them to improve?

Reflection 2:

What is an area in which you once had low ability but can now perform quite well?
How were you able to make this change?

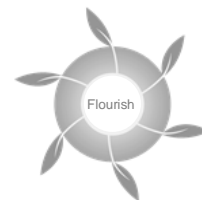
Reflection 3:

In what areas of your life do you have a fixed or growth mindset?

Fixed	Growth

Tips for Fostering a Growth Mindset

- Know that a growth mindset is supported by science.
- Recognize that you can choose your mindset.
- Learn and teach others about how to grow.
- Understand learning is difficult.
- Recognize your own growth and development.



Implementing Positive Education - *Suggestions from GGS*

- Ensure buy-in from School leadership team
- Take an Appreciative Inquiry approach to current School culture
- Carry out an audit of existing wellbeing programmes/structures and map against Model for Positive Education
- Obtain baseline wellbeing measures for students and staff
- Develop a strategic plan outlining short, medium and long term goals
- Engage the whole school community by clearly articulating goals and objectives
- Adopt an inclusive, non-threatening, drip-feed approach to introducing Pos Ed
- Read widely around the topic
- Invite 'expert' guest speakers to address community and raise wellbeing profile
- Review pastoral care policies in light of Positive Education
- Establish a Positive Education department, or a Head of Positive Education or a committee of 'champions'
- Establish a student wellbeing committee
- Ensure you have the resources (human and financial) to sustain (and grow) your wellbeing initiatives
- Go for it! Trial new initiatives. Experiment with different ideas.
 - Consider staff training
 - Consider explicitly teaching Positive Education
 - Consider Positive Education focus days
 - Consider various school-wide wellbeing practices



Some “HIGH IMPACT, LOW EFFORT” Wellbeing Initiatives

- Start to “Hunt the Good Stuff”
- Engage all staff in learning about their Character Strengths
- Introduce and embed the language of Character Strengths into your school culture
- Introduce a new staff wellbeing initiative (Yoga, Massage, GCC)
- Host a guest wellbeing expert each term
- Report on baseline staff and student wellbeing levels
- Engage parent community – harness their skills and enthusiasm
- Focus on Positive Education concepts and initiatives in School newsletters
- Provide and promote opportunities for students to Make a Difference
- Encourage student involvement in wellbeing discussions and initiatives
- Introduce staff and students to Dweck’s work on Growth Mindsets
- Investigate the fascinating research supporting neuroplasticity
- Emphasise the Losada ratio of 3:1 for experiencing positive:negative emotions
- Establish a Senior student wellbeing book club
- Introduce a Pos Ed School-wide practice – RAOK, Gratitude, Strengths
- On an individual level - simply, but powerfully, endeavour to increase the wellbeing of all people you interact with



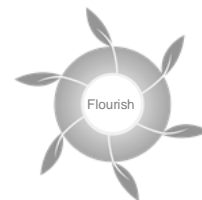
Helpful General Positive Psychology resources

Books:

- *Flourish: A new understanding of happiness and wellbeing*
Martin Seligman , 2011
- *Flourishing: How to achieve a deeper sense of wellbeing, meaning and purpose*
Maureen Gaffney, 2011
- *Happier*
Tal Ben-Shahar, 2007
- *Positive Psychology in a Nutshell, 3rd edition*
Ilona Boniwell, 2012
- *Positive Psychology: The science of happiness and human strengths, 2nd edition*
Alan Carr, 2011
- *Primer in Positive Psychology*
Chris Peterson, 2006
- *Pursuing the Good Life: 100 Reflections on Positive Psychology*
Chris Peterson, 2013

Websites:

- www.positivepsychology.org
- www.ippanetwork.org
- www.positivepsychology.org.uk
- www.authentichappiness.org



Topic Specific Positive Psychology Books

Character Strengths:

- *Character Strengths and Virtues*, Christopher Peterson and Martin Seligman, 2004
- *Average to A+, Realising strengths in yourself and others*, Alex Linley, 2008
- *Smart Strengths: Building Character, Resilience and Relationships in Youth* John Yeager, Sherri Fisher and Dave Shearon, 2011

Positive Relationships:

- *How Full is Your Bucket?*, Tom Rath & Donald Clifton, 2004
- *Dignity*, Donna Hicks, 2013
- *The Relationship Cure: Strengthening your marriage, family and friendships* John Gottman, 2002

Positive Emotions:

- *Positivity*, Barbara Fredrickson, 2009
- *The Book of Awesome; The Book of Even More Awesome*, Neil Pasricha, 2010,2011
- *Gratitude in Education*, Kerry Howells, 2012

Positive Health: Mindfulness

- *The Mindful Child*, Susan Kaiser-Greenland, 2010
- *The Essence of Health*, Craig Hassad, 2008
- *Meditation Capsules*, Janet Ety-Leal, 2010

Positive Health: Resilience

- *The Resilience Factor: 7 keys to finding your inner strength*, Karen Reivich & Andrew Shatté, 2003
- *Change Your Thinking*, Sarah Edelman, 2007
- *What Doesn't Kill Us: The New Psychology of Posttraumatic Growth*, Stephen Joseph, 2010

Positive Engagement:

- *Flow: The psychology of optimal experience*, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, 2008
- *The Element: How finding your passion changes everything*, Ken Robinson, 2009
- *The Power of Full Engagement: Managing energy not time*, Jim Loehr & Tony Schwartz, 2004

Positive Accomplishment:

- *Mindset: The new psychology of success*, Carol Dweck, 2006
- *How children succeed: Grit, curiosity and the hidden power of character*, Paul Tough, 2012
- *Bounce: The myth of talent and the power of practice*, Matthew Syed, 2010

Positive Purpose:

- *The Path to Purpose*, William Damon, 2009
- *The Human Quest for Meaning*, Paul Wong, 2012
- *Man's Search for Meaning*, Viktor Frankl, 2006