

# THE STATE OF POSITIVE EDUCATION

2017



in coordination with



**The State of Positive Education:**  
A Review of History, Policy, Practice, and Research





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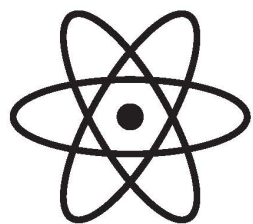


# THIS REPORT CALLS FOR...



## INCREASED AWARENESS

at the policy level of how governments  
can support positive education



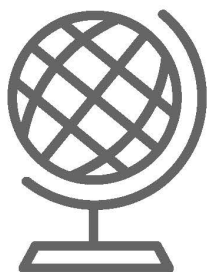
## FURTHER RESEARCH

and funding on the impact and  
sustainability of positive  
educational interventions



## MORE APPLICATION

from schools at all ages of informed  
and research-based approaches to  
positive education



## COLLABORATION

from universities, institutions,  
governments and individuals towards  
finding out what works well in positive  
education policy, research, and  
implementation

# ABSTRACT

Positive education views school as a place where students not only cultivate their intellectual minds, but also develop a broad set of character strengths, virtues, and competencies, which together support their well-being. What this looks like differs from country to country and school-to-school, but at its core is the 'character + academics' approach to education. The International Positive Education Network (IPEN) supports and drives such a change in education around the world.

Widespread support is necessary for the success of the positive education movement. We need to be demonstrably right too -- philosophically and scientifically. Unless we can show that the arguments for positive education are true in practice, policy, and research, then we will not change education in the way the IPEN is proposing. This report thus attempts to provide the strongest evidence from research, policy and practice from the past decade to support positive education.

This report is broken into five sections: one leader's perspective and introduction to positive education and its history; case studies from primary, secondary, and tertiary schools around the world that are actively implementing positive education; and policy perspectives on positive education. A glossary of key terms is included at the end.

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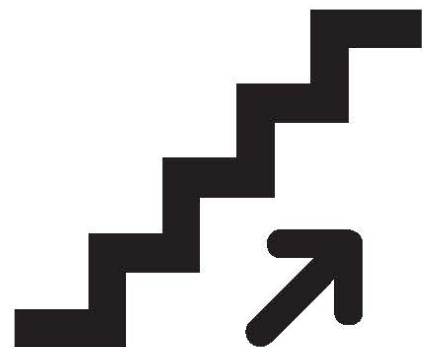
# BACKGROUND

THE NEED FOR A FOCUS ON  
WELL-BEING IN SCHOOLS

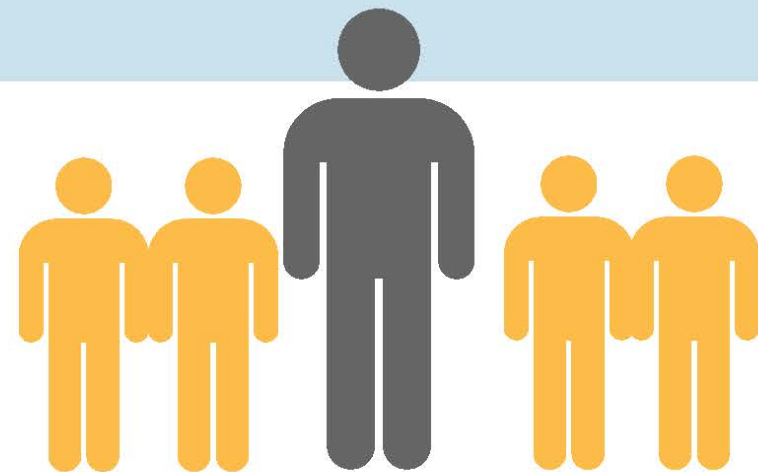
## ABOUT POSITIVE EDUCATION

Positive Education is an approach to education that blends academic learning with character & well-being. Preparing students with life skills such as: grit, optimism, resilience, growth mindset, engagement, and mindfulness amongst others.

Positive education is based on the science of well-being and happiness.



Depression has been on the rise since World War II despite increasing national wealth



Almost one in five will experience a major depressive episode before graduating from high school.

## THE GOOD NEWS IS THAT WE CAN CHANGE

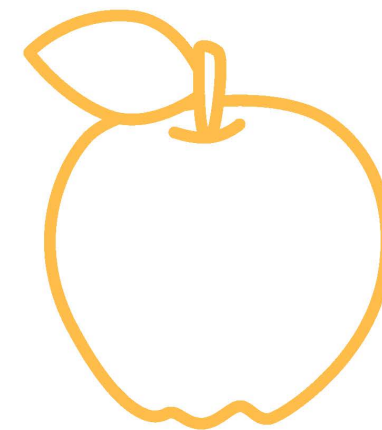


Research has show that character traits + well-being are malleable or 'skill-like' and can be improved with good teaching and practice

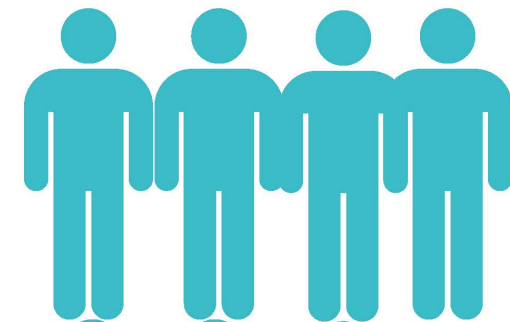
# WHY NOW?



Youth on average spend 30 hours a week in school



Some research has shown that character traits like grit can be just as important as IQ in academic performance



9 out of 10 parents in the UK want schools to offer this kind of education



2/3 of Parliament support teaching character education

While we should be cautious and continue to rigorously research positive education - we believe that our students need new skills to flourish in the 21st century. This report lays out what we know from research, policy and practice.



# SECTION 1

## One Leader's Account: Introduction & History of Positive Education

### Dr. Martin Seligman

*Dr. Martin Seligman is one of the founders of positive psychology and the Zellerbach Family Professor of Psychology at the University of Pennsylvania. Below is his account of the movement towards positive education and an overview of his projects in this emerging field.*

“In two words or fewer, what do you most want for your children?” Anthony Seldon asks the assembled gathering at the Lawrenceville School in New Jersey.

“Happiness, meaning, contentment, fulfillment, joy, health, enthusiasm, courage, stick-to-it-iveness,” we call out, the words cascading over each other. The occasion is a meeting of teachers from around the world in June 2007, and our theme is how to build non-cognitive strengths—meaning, engagement, optimism, and positive emotion—into schools. Anthony is the headmaster at the prestigious Wellington School in the UK, the biographer of John Major and Tony Blair, and a historian of the Tory party. He has launched a well-publicized program in his school, one that heavily features meditation, and he is a spell-binding orator.

“Now in two words or fewer, what do schools teach?” he asks us.

“Discipline, numeracy, hard work, science, literacy, conformity,” the words seep out with embarrassed hesitation.

“Notice,” he says, “there is no overlap between the two lists. Now imagine that well-being, joy, meaning, fulfillment, engagement...the whole first list could be taught without compromising the traditional goals of the school, the achievement list. Anthony has defined a new kind of education, and I think it must be named ‘positive education.’

### This is its history by my account

In the 1990’s, Susan Nolen-Hoeksema, Joan Girgus and I test whether pessimism predisposes young school-children to depression, just as it predisposes adults to depression. It sure does (Nolen-Hoeksema, Girgus & Seligman, 1992).

The belief that bad events are caused by personal, permanent, and pervasive factors robustly predicts depression and poor school achievement a year later among eight- to eleven-year-olds. Pessimism is a risk factor for depression in school-children in exactly the same sense that smoking is a risk factor for lung cancer, and may even be a bigger risk factor.

We think prevention, not therapy. The ambulance at the bottom of the hill, after the fall off the cliff, is a much worse strategy than preventing the fall in the first place. Can we teach children who are at risk for depression to argue against unrealistic pessimistic thoughts, just as Cognitive Therapy teaches adults already in therapy to become more optimistic?

Will this prevent depression? This question leads us to develop the first Penn Prevention Program for children and this is the moment, in the winter of 1990, when positive education begins for me.

### The Penn Resiliency Program

Jane Gillham, having completed her postdoc at the Yale Child Study Center after completing her PhD under my supervision, Lisa Jaycox, just finishing her PhD, and Karen Reivich devise a twelve-week, two-hour per week prevention program for middle school students. They write a minute-by-minute manual and we screen two hundred fifth- and sixth- graders to find the seventy kids most at risk for depression (Seligman, Reivich, Jaycox, & Gillham, 1995).

We then follow the kids for two years into puberty---when depression often first takes hold. Before the program begins, 25% of the kids in both the prevention group and the untreated control group have moderate to severe depressive symptoms. By the end of the program, twelve weeks later, the prevention group drops to 13%, but the control group stays at 23%. Two years later, only 22% of the prevention group has moderate to severe symptoms, but a whopping 44% of the control group does – twice the number in the prevention group. The principal cause is a change from pessimism to optimism in the prevention group, and this is exactly what we had taught the kids.

The key to learning optimism is learning how to recognize and then dispute unrealistic catastrophic thoughts. My graduate students and my staff are great teachers of optimism, but there are not enough of them to go around, so we begin to train schoolteachers, and then measure how well the teachers do at preventing depression. Based on the amount of depression prevented and the amount of optimism learned by their students, teachers do as well as my own people. By 2016, twenty years down the road, the Penn Prevention program will have been replicated many times across the globe, with rich kids, poor kids, White kids, Black kids, Asian kids, Latinos, and more, in English and other languages. The prevention of depression, as well as anxiety, is “small” to “moderate” in size, but is reliable (Horowitz & Garber, 2006).

The Penn Prevention Program teaches resilience and could be considered a forerunner of positive education, but it predates positive psychology and many of the tools of positive psychology are not available until after 2002. Disputing catastrophic thoughts is a major tool of psychotherapy—as-usual—getting rid of negatives to good effect. But it is not directly about building positive emotion or engagement or good relationships or meaning or achievement. Positive education—a discipline that would not be named for years to come—will aim to build these directly.

### Grit & Angela Duckworth

Our exploration of non-cognitive factors in school is given a giant boost by the arrival of Angela Duckworth. In September 2002, Angela joins as a first-year graduate student. She has been an erstwhile urban schoolteacher, McKinsey consultant, head of an NGO, and a Marshall Fellow at Oxford. She has an unfashionable take on why some talented kids do badly in school and others, less talented, shine. It is not about their intelligence, but rather the character of the kids.

Conventional wisdom and political correctness have for almost a century blamed the teachers, the schools, the classroom size, the textbooks, the funding, the politicians, and the parents for the failure of the students—putting the blame on anything or anyone but the students themselves. What? Blame the victim? Blame the character of the students?



Angela bites into this as soon as she enters Penn. She wants to find out how self-discipline compares with IQ in predicting who will be successful in school. She creates a new composite measure of self-discipline, gives it to all the kids, and she finds that self-disciplined eighth graders go on to earn higher grades, earn higher achievement test scores, spend more time on their homework, start it earlier, and watch less television. Self-discipline out-predicts IQ for academic outcomes by about a factor of two (Duckworth & Seligman, 2005).

This attracts the notice of two prominent American headmasters, from schools at the opposite ends of the economic spectrum. One is David Levin, the head of the KIPP (Knowledge is Power) schools. KIPP is a collection of more than one hundred college preparatory schools, made up of poor Black and Hispanic kids, with an impressive record of success: 8000 college alumni over the past years. Their motto is “work hard, be nice.” David’s partner is Dominic Randolph, the British-educated headmaster of the elite Riverdale School in Northern Manhattan.

Together they want to bring positive psychology into their schools and specifically programs of character education. They visit us at Penn and we begin a fruitful collaboration. We focus on creating the ‘right-hand side’ of the report card which stands alongside the traditional academic report, measuring the character strengths of zest, self-control, optimism, gratitude, and social intelligence (view the report card <https://characterlab.org/measures>).

Angela catches fire and she is launched on a glittering career studying self-discipline and its extreme cousin, grit, which involves passion and perseverance for long-term goals. As I write, Angela’s first book, GRIT, is number two on the New York Times bestseller list and she is now a major player in positive education and beyond.

## Geelong Grammar School

“Imagine positive education,” I intone, thinking of Anthony Seldon, as I conclude my speech to the donors at Geelong Grammar School (GGS), a leading private school in Australia a few years later. There I finally give voice to my vision of school children who have pleasure, engagement, good relationships, and meaning and are also high achievers, and give it the name of positive education. A few months later Karen Reivich and I agree with Geelong Grammar School to:

- Train all the two hundred teachers and staff in Positive Psychology, strengths, and resilience.
- Arrange visiting lectures from the major figures in Positive Psychology from across the globe.
- Appoint a full-time director of positive education.
- Have a curriculum designer lead the faculty in creating a K-12 syllabus in positive psychology.

January 2007: I arrive on the GGS campus with Karen Reivich and 15 of my Masters in Applied Positive Psychology (MAPP) students and assorted Penn faculty Ray Fowler, Barb Fredrickson, Roy Baumeister, Diane Tice, Kathleen Vohs, Kate Hays, Stephen Post, and a stream of distinguished positive psychologists come to Australia for a long visit. The GGS faculty, under the supervision of Randy Ernst, a Golden Apple high school teacher from Kansas City, devises the first K-12 positive education curriculum. When we depart in June 2007, Geelong Grammar School has become the foremost bastion of positive education in the world, which will be highlighted in more detail in section 2 of this report. Since then, their faculty under their full-time director of positive education teaches positive psychology to teachers from all over Australia, and the University of Melbourne now gives a Master’s degree in positive education (Norrish, 2015).

## The United Kingdom

In the Medieval monastery, the Abbot bridged the sacred and the secular, sorting out the monks as well as dealing with the crass interests of the state. Lord Richard Layard is a modern Abbot. Richard is a world-class economist, Professor at the London School of Economics, a major theorist of happiness, a Labour Party leader, and with his wife, Mollie, one of only two couples in the House of Lords. For the last two decades, Richard has made it his job to take promising ideas from psychology and to persuade the British body politic to act on them. With David Clark, Professor at Oxford, he persuaded Parliament to allocate more than one billion pounds sterling to train thousands of new cognitive therapists to treat depression (Layard & Clark, 2014).

“I am going to take the Penn Prevention Program to the schools of the UK,” Richard declares as we walk the back streets of Glasgow on a break from a meeting in which we share the podium.

“That would be great, Richard. I think we may have enough data to try a small pilot replication in Liverpool.”

“You don’t get it, do you, Marty?” says Richard in his affable way, “like most academics you believe that government adopts policy when the scientific data mount and mount to an irresistible point. In all my years in politics, I have never seen such a case. Government acts when the data are sufficient and the political will is there. Your data are sufficient and the political will is there. I am going to take your prevention program to the schools of the UK.”

He now begins to raise funding for training programs for UK teachers and these are launched in twenty schools in South Tyneside and Manchester in 2007. By this writing, thousands of British teachers have been trained and tens of thousands of kids have been taught resilience by these teachers.

## India

Many of these case studies have focused on schools with large budgets and willing staff. The question is is this replicable in lower income areas? A heartening development in positive education comes from India. Steve Leventhal has made the mission of his foundation, Corstone, the teaching of the very poorest of girls from the slums of India. They teach positive psychology to thousands of girls in Bihar and find increased emotional resilience, health knowledge, attitudes toward gender equality, and use of clean water (find more information on their website <http://corstone.org/girls-first-bihar-india/>).

## Mexico

Taking the concepts of positive education to higher education, Hector Escamilla, President of Tecmilenio University in Monterrey, Mexico, decided in 2013 to embrace positive education for the entire University. He founds a well-being institute, a well-being ecosystem, and all of the more than 40,000 students on thirty campuses throughout Mexico take courses in positive psychology. Again, this will be explored further in section 2 of this report.



## St. Peter's College - Adelaide, Australia

Founded in 1847 St. Peter's College-Adelaide (known as 'Saints') is one of the top Independent Schools of Australia. St. Peter's College has graduated three Nobel Laureates, ten Australian Premiers and 42 Rhodes Scholars. In 2011, Simon Murray, an energetic and visionary headmaster, and Mathew White, the Director of well-Being and Positive Education, bring me there to help re-invent an already great school around positive education. They recruit Karen Reivich and the Penn team to teach the teachers; they sponsor a star-studded lecture series open to the whole State of South Australia that is still ongoing six years later. In collaboration with Lea Waters, the current President-Elect of IPPA (International Positive Psychology Association), Simon and Mathew infuse a language of strengths rather than of pathology among the students, teachers and all employees, and they introduce David Cooperrider's Appreciative Inquiry as the vehicle of school-wide communication. See more detail on the study at St. Peter's College in Section 2.

Importantly, they measure well-being across the school from the outset and embark on a publication strategy to communicate the school's journey as widely as possible to and stimulate education debate. A few years later, Simon Murray founded the Positive Education Schools Association of Australia (PESA) with nine other leading Principals across Australia. PESA's vision is to lead and promote the science of wellbeing and positive psychology, enabling all students, schools and communities to flourish. It is now an association comprising more than well over sixty schools (White & Murray, 2016). Simon is the inaugural Chairman of PESA and is committed to spreading positive education to schools across the state, to teachers and principals throughout Australia.

During this time, the 45th Premier of South Australia, The Hon Jay Weatherill MP, decides to measure well-being regularly throughout the entire state and his administration introduces Positive Psychology interventions into the mental health services and the hospitals. Efforts continue through the Well-Being and Resilience Centre in the South Australian Health and Medical Research Institute (SAHMRI) to try and create the first flourishing state.

## Bhutan, Mexico & Peru

Back in Philadelphia, I tell my most promising senior and now PhD student, "I'm going to try to expand positive education internationally," I tell Alejandro Adler, "This may fit your ambitions." Alejandro goes off to Bhutan in 2011, beginning a graduate career in which he spends almost as much time on airplanes as at Penn. Bhutan is a small Himalayan country that is especially well suited to our first nationwide positive education program. The fourth King, Jigme Singye Wangchuck, declared in 1972, "Gross National Happiness is more important than Gross National Product." This idea drives public policy and the Bhutanese Ministry of Education defines its mission as educating for Gross National Happiness (GNH). The ministry invites us to co-develop a GNH curriculum, and Alejandro leads the project. The curriculum for grades 7 through 12 is fifteen months in duration and it targets ten life skills:

- 1) Mindfulness: calm awareness of thoughts, emotions, and surroundings
- 2) Empathy: identifying what others are feeling and thinking
- 3) Self-awareness: understanding of one's own strengths, talents, limitations and goals
- 4) Coping with emotions: identifying, understanding, and managing emotions
- 5) Communication: being active and constructive with others
- 6) Interpersonal relationships: healthy and loving interactions with friends and family
- 7) Creative thinking: developing ideas that are novel and useful
- 8) Critical thinking: analyzing, applying, synthesizing, and evaluating information as a guide to beliefs and actions
- 9) Decision making: choosing the best beliefs or action plans from available options.
- 10) Problem solving: learning shortcuts to solve theoretical and practical problems

Our Penn staff, using an extensive training manual, teaches thirty-five Mexican trainers each with a background in psychology and education how to teach teachers these life skills and how to teach teachers to infuse these skills into their academic courses. These thirty-five trainers go on to teach the principals and teachers of 35 of the schools, chosen at random. The same trainers teach the principals and teachers in 35 control schools about nutrition, psychology and human anatomy.

Fifteen months later the children from the well-being schools have higher well-being and significantly higher standardized test scores than the placebo schools. Again, greater engagement and perseverance seem to be the cause of the improved grades. The academic effect is somewhat smaller than in Bhutan, likely because there is now an additional layer of training between the experienced Penn trainers and the actual teachers (Adler, 2016).

To round out the most massive dissertation I have ever supervised, Alejandro, in partnership with the World Bank, now turns to Peru--this time with 694 schools and 694,153 students. The design is the same as in Mexico and Bhutan and the curriculum parallels that of Mexico. There is, however, one more layer to dilute the training. Our Penn trainers now teach 28 Peruvian trainers. These 28 Peruvian trainers now teach 590 local trainers, who in turn train the principals and teachers from the 694 schools.

The well-being curriculum increases both well-being and academic performance, as measured fifteen months later. Engagement and perseverance of the students is once again the mediator, and with yet another layer of dilution the effect on academic performance, while highly significant, is smaller (Adler, 2016).

Changing the educational system of the world is daunting. Teachers and principals are heavily invested in what they already teach and unions entrench policies that make transformation nearly impossible. The main objection that Alejandro and I hear time and again is that schools are about creating paths to higher education and to the workplace. Any program that teaches well-being to schoolchildren must replace some useful program that already exists. There are only so many hours in the school day and not enough money to support what already exists. Making kids happier might, therefore, subtract from traditional academic success. What Alejandro's data show convincingly is that young people who have higher well-being actually do better in their academic work. They become more engaged in school and grittier at school.

From my point of view, improved grades is a welcome by-product of positive education. But regardless of its influence on success, more well-being is every young person's birthright and we now know that it can and it should be taught.

For positive education to grow as a major paradigm shift in education, there needs to be a network that connects the global efforts from individual schools implementing positive education to national governments, researchers to policymakers, and educators to best resources. This is the very goal of the International Positive Education Network (IPEN).



# SECTION 2

## Case Studies in Positive Education

For many, positive education seems like an abstract construct. While the definition is loose and interpreted quite differently in each school and country, we have provided some case studies spanning different age groups and countries around the World. Due to space limitations we were not able to include all the work being done by places like Tsinghua University with schools in China, CorStone’s work with developing states in India, or many others groundbreaking work being done in positive education.

Despite this, we feel these few case studies offer a way to conceptualize what the theory of positive education looks like in practice.

Below you will hear from 3 schools

School Name	Type of School	Student Age	Location
Geelong Grammar School	Primary - Year 12	3-18	Victoria, Australia
St. Peter's College	Primary - Year 12	3-18	Adelaide, Australia
Universidad Tecmilenio	High School Unviersity + Graudate	16	40 Campuses Across Mexico
		18-40	

# SECTION 2.1

## Geelong Grammar School*Victoria, Australia*

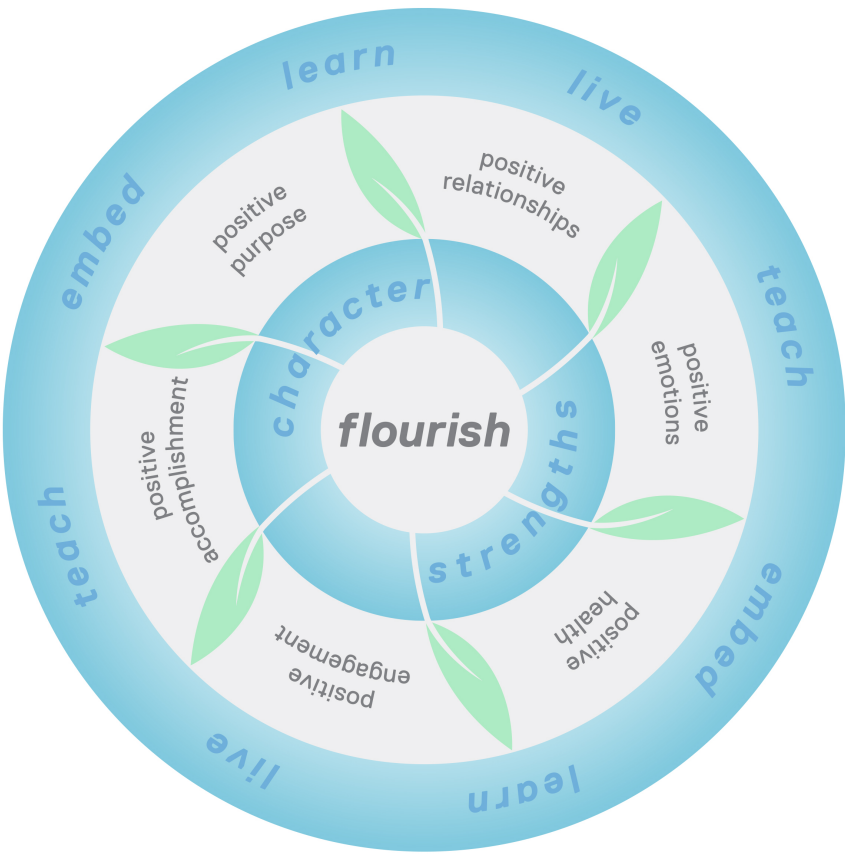
David Bott

### Introduction

It was in 2006 when Marty Seligman first visited Geelong Grammar School and provided the catalyst for what would become one of the most significant innovations in the School’s 150-year history. By 2008, the term ‘positive education’ had been coined at Geelong Grammar School (GGS), and the first large-scale training of GGS staff was under way. Eventually, these steps led to the creation of Geelong Grammar’s Institute of Positive Education, which today employs seven full-time staff and has trained over 10,000 educators from over 600 different schools and organisations around the world.

### The GGS Approach

Positive education is a whole-school approach to student and staff well-being: it brings together the science of positive psychology with best-practice teaching, encouraging and supporting individuals and communities to flourish.





In consultation with world experts in positive psychology and based on Seligman's PERMA approach, GGS developed its 'Model for Positive Education' to complement traditional learning – an applied framework comprising six domains: Positive Relationships, Positive Emotions, Positive Health, Positive Engagement, Positive Accomplishment, and Positive Purpose. This model has been augmented with four fundamental active processes that underpin successful and sustained implementation of positive education: *Learn It, Live It, Teach It, and Embed It*.

All new staff joining GGS, both teaching and non-teaching, complete a 4-day introductory course in positive education prior to commencing their employment and existing staff receive the equivalent of one day of training each year.

This ongoing training and upskilling of staff is indicative of the dual foci that the School has always held; the well-being benefits of positive education should be available equally to both staff and students. Parents of students are also offered regular opportunities to 'learn' about positive psychology and, like staff, are encouraged to 'live' its principles by modelling appropriate behaviours in their interactions with each other and with students. 'Teach it' refers to the delivery of positive education skills and knowledge to students via two distinct pathways: dedicated or 'explicit' positive education classes are taught to students from Grades 5 through 10 and are devoted to cultivating well-being, providing students with time to reflect meaningfully on the relevance of concepts to their lives. The 'implicit' teaching of positive education refers to the infusion of well-being concepts into pre-existing subject areas so that academic objectives are approached in ways that also support flourishing. 'Embed it' refers to the broader vision of creating a whole-school culture and community for well-being.

The Learn It, Live It, Teach It, and Embed It processes are additive, synergistic, and dynamic: they continually augment and inform each other over time. And they are grounded in, and continuously updated by GGS's extensive, unique experience in assisting schools around Australia and the world to implement sustainable change. Perhaps the defining feature of GGS's contribution is our pastoral approach to how mistake is managed. This pastoral approach is based upon care, finding a positive way forward and using kindness and forgiveness as the directing philosophic and practical approach. The Hippocratic Oath and The Golden Rule direct each and every behaviour and directs how the School is to deal with mistake, mis-judgement and error of students, staff and all associated with the School. We define this approach as a 'Relationship Reparation' approach and it has led to the School replacing its 'Discipline Policy' with a 'Kindness, Forgiveness & Reparation Policy'. The object is to repair all relationships harmed or impacted upon by the mistake, mis-judgement and error. This process is care based, is directly educative and involves parties working together to co-create a "way forward". The parties work cooperatively together within the context and accept the obligation to repair the relationships disturbed or harmed. This process employs all the positive education "tools" and intentions and overtly fits directly into "Meaning" as well as being based in care - for both the individual and the community.

This approach recognises that human beings live entirely within relationships and it is the quality of these relationships that determines each individual's well-being, peace of mind and the well-being and peace within communities and life contexts. To err is human and it is how we deal with error that promotes well-being. Geelong Grammar School has harnessed the science of positive psychology and taken the intentions and tools of Positive Education to ensure that error is managed in a relational sense; ethically and with the purpose of enhancing life for all. Ultimately, the realisation of optimal well-being allows students to flourish: emotionally, socially and psychologically. All of these aspects are used conjointly, to develop resilient and emotionally intelligent students, who emerge from their education having gained the skills to succeed, thrive, and make a meaningful contribution to their world.

Over the next ten years and beyond, as the science continues to develop and positive education schools share best practice around teaching and learning, we believe the enhanced mental health and well-being of our young people and our communities will show the benefits of this legitimate and necessary commitment to placing well-being at the heart of education.

## Measuring Success

Critical to the ongoing success and broader acceptance of positive psychology is the growing body of evidence indicating that carefully implemented positive education programmes reduce the incidence of mental illness and promote well-being among young people (Seligman, Ernst, Gillham, Reivich, & Linkins, 2009; Quinlan, Swain, Cameron, & Vella-Brodrick, 2015; Vella-Brodrick, Rickard & Chin, 2014; Frydenberg, 2010; Green & Norrish, 2013). The positive education programme at GGS is among those showing the most promising results, with decreases in GGS students' levels of anxiety and depressive symptoms as well as increases in their self-efficacy, life-satisfaction, and optimism. Different streams of ongoing research at GGS have provided invaluable data that continues to highlight the overall success of the programme and enables the strengthening of the programme through constant feedback and refinement.

A team of scholars, led by Professor Dianne Vella-Brodrick from the University of Melbourne, conducted a landmark independent three-year study (2014-2016) on the effectiveness of GGS's positive education programme. This Australian Research Council funded longitudinal study tracked the well-being of a cohort of GGS students across Years 9, 10 and 11 using a range of psychological, physiological and behavioural measures. Importantly, the study also tracked the well-being of a control group of matched students from comparison schools that do not have a positive education programme.

Key findings from Vella-Brodrick and colleagues' study included:

- Year 9 students within the GGS positive education programme, relative to comparison students, experienced significantly improved mental health (decreased depressive and anxiety symptoms) and well-being (e.g., life satisfaction, positive emotions, engagement, meaning), and described the positive education programme as a major contributor for feeling more resilient, confident, and self-accepting in their ability to achieve goals.
- Year 9 GGS students used specific well-being strategies taught through positive education programmes to help them respond effectively to everyday life events, including resilient thinking, taking personal action to handle challenging situations, using strengths, and expressing gratitude.
- Year 10 students within the GGS positive education programme showed a significant increase in levels of growth mindsets, meaning, and hope compared with control students.
- Year 10 GGS students reported significantly higher levels of well-being, social relationships, and physical health at the end of the school year relative to the control group.
- Year 10 GGS students' heart rate variability increased significantly from pre- to post-assessments, indicating greater adaptability to environmental cues and thus greater resilience.
- Over the three-year study, GGS students, relative to comparison students, reported significantly higher levels of life satisfaction, happiness, gratitude and perseverance.

Other important findings from the University of Melbourne evaluation of the GGS positive education programme included:

- Student-teacher connections matter to young people.
- Students value positive education most when they can see its relevance to their real-world experiences and are actively involved in the learning process.

The knowledge and skill of the teacher in delivering positive education lessons has a powerful impact on the perceived value of the programme by students. Professor Vella-Brodrick and colleagues have begun a follow up study that will examine the long-term sustained effectiveness of the GGS positive education programme. This research project has received significant funding from the Australian Research Council, the major national funding body in the country. Using a mixed method longitudinal design, this study will examine whether participating in school-based positive education assists young people during their post-secondary school transition.

The extent to which a new youth-led Positive Transition Program provides added benefits will also be examined using in-the-moment experience sampling and biological data. Findings will help determine the utility of positive education to improve the transition experience for young people. Deakin University are currently conducting another pioneering piece of research, which involves Year 10 students mentoring Year 8 students in developing and implementing their own prosocial project. The research will assess whether participating students' eudaimonic well-being (e.g., autonomy, self-acceptance, purpose in life, and genuine care for others, as opposed to hedonic pleasure) increases as a result of participating in the project. Internal evaluations and studies conducted at GGS include: measuring the effects of positive education booster sessions for teachers on classroom and student outcomes; determining what helps or hinders teacher engagement during the implementation of positive education initiatives; assessing the effectiveness of positive education training for parents; testing the impact of gratitude journaling on well-being and hosting focus groups to enhance student agency and ownership of the positive education programme.

Survey measures used at GGS have included:

- The Social and Emotional Well-being measure (SEWB), developed by the Australian Council for Educational Research;
- The Flourishing Index, developed by Dr Felicia Huppert, Director of the Well-Being Institute and Emeritus Professor of Psychology at the University of Cambridge;
- The Assessing Wellbeing in Education (AWE) Tool, developed by Dr Aaron Jarden, Senior Lecturer in Psychology at Auckland University of Technology's Human Potential Centre;
- The Well-being Profiler, developed by Centre for Positive Psychology at The University of Melbourne

## Expansion and Outreach

From the outset, GGS prioritised sharing positive education with the wider education community. Initially, the School hosted 'Visitor Days', shared details of curriculum content and processes and openly welcomed guests from other schools who wanted to learn about the GGS approach. Due to overwhelming external interest, in 2014 GGS established its own research, training, and development institute - the Institute of positive education - to further support the growth of the field. The Institute's vision is that all schools around the world should place well-being at the heart of education. Furthermore, its mission is to promote student and staff well-being through transformational educational programmes, and through innovation and research in the field of positive education.

The Institute of positive education was established to support GGS's ongoing commitment to developing a flourishing student and staff community and to maintain a leading role in the development of positive education philosophies and practices. It has since displayed leadership and innovation in helping to grow the positive education movement worldwide, particularly in the provision of effective and authentic training experiences for educators. It draws on Geelong Grammar's deep experience of implementing, developing, and sustaining the world's first positive education program, and the results of ongoing research. The Institute has become an important conduit for ideas and information on positive education to the world. The Institute has delivered its suite of training courses to over 10,000 educators from more than 600 schools. These educators have come from all Australian states and territories and from around the world. One particularly successful and exciting method of training delivery has been via centralised 'hubs', whereby schools from a particular region train as a group and then continue to support one another along their school's journey.

Perhaps the most exciting evolution of positive education that the Institute is driving is its commitment to partnering with students to advance the field. Whilst GGS has always focussed on including student voice in its programme, there is now a more dedicated focus to doing positive education with students – seeing them as equal partners as school communities continue to learn to flourish.

## Conclusion

As Geelong Grammar School approaches a decade of positive education 'in action' the anecdotal and scientific evidence of the success of the programme continues to grow. The ethos and culture of the school has been strengthened by the implementation of positive education and the school now looks to the future, excited about further innovative research and development in this vitally important field.

Positive education has transformed the way GGS approaches education, delivering a greater depth and breadth of education: in an ever-changing society, schools must adopt new roles that help support our students to embrace the complexities of next-generation learning and living. Mental illness and psychological distress continue to increase, with initial onset during formative years. Positive education has complemented and enhanced GGS's holistic approach to education by supporting, protecting, and empowering students to strengthen their relationships, build positive emotions, enhance resilience, and enable the exploration of meaning and purpose in one's life. Through committing to positive education, GGS has shown that schools can, and should, consider health, well-being, and flourishing to be as important as traditional academic learning.



## SECTION 2.2

# St. Peter's College, *Adelaide, Australia*

Associate Professor Mathew A. White PhD,  
Dr. Margaret L. Kern

### Introduction

Recognising the prevalence of mental ill-health is a community responsibility and requires a community responsible has been a defining element of the St Peter's College - Adelaide (SPSC) model. Under the Headmastership of Simon Murray (2010 – present), SPSC has integrated positive education into all aspects of school life. Beginning in 2011, well-being was added as a core part of the school's strategic plan in consultation with all employees. Teachers and staff received training in positive psychology and resilience through the University of Pennsylvania. St Peters College engaged Professor Lea Waters, President-Elect of IPPA (International Positive Psychology Association) to collaborate with Associate Professor Mathew White and the school's Executive Team to develop a well-being strategy for SPSC with clearly defined objectives and measurable goals. Over the past five years, the school has proactively worked to support and build student well-being.

From the outset, St Peter's College leadership and teachers have adopted an evidence-based and scientifically-informed approach to teaching positive education. In practice, what this means the decision process adopted to decided which positive education programs to teach at what level has been made using knowledge and understanding of scientific concepts and processes. Every student - 1,456 boys (aged 3-18 years) has now studied at least 5 to 6 of our positive education programs. An entire generation of boys has gained preventative skills for mental health and character development. St Peter's College has published widely on well-being, notably three books and journal articles. For greater detail about how St Peter's College has integrated well-being within the School refer:

- White, M. A. & Murray, A. S. (2015). Evidence-based Approaches to Positive Education in Schools: Implementing a Strategic Framework for Well-being in Schools. Springer, Netherlands. Series Editor Ilona Boniwell.
- White, M. A., Slep, G., & Murray, A. S. (2017). Future Directions in Wellbeing: Education, Organizations and Policy. Springer, Netherlands.
- Ambler, G., Anstey, A., McCall, T., & White, M. A. (2017). Flourishing in Faith: Theology and Positive Psychology. Cascade Books. Wipf and Stock Publishers, Eugene, Oregon.

St Peter's College operationalized wellbeing throughout the school for 1,456 students (aged 3-18 years) and all employees (n = 250) through the School's Strategic Plan with the following vision, mission, impact. Wellbeing was operationalized with the following Goals, Objective and various strategies.

St Peter's College vision is to be a world-class school where all boys flourish.

The School's mission is to provide an exceptional education that brings out the very best in every boy. We do this within an intellectually and spiritually rich environment that nurtures international-mindedness, intercultural understanding, respect, and a commitment to social justice.

The School's Wellbeing Goal objectives are to:

1. Commit to be a safe, inclusive, supportive, and respectful learning and working environment for all members of the School community.
2. Ensure all staff embrace wellbeing as central to their roles and responsibilities.
3. Teach, build, and embed personal and community competencies for wellbeing.
4. Advance St Peter's College as a centre of excellence for the world's best practice in wellbeing by leading educational debate and sharing our learnings with others.

### The SPSCA Approach

Aligned with our strong scientific tradition, the School has used a whole school, evidence-based approach towards positive education. This involves three targeted areas:

**1) Strategy.** The School has included well-being as a central part of its strategic plan since 2011. To provide structure to well-being initiatives, the school uses Martin Seligman's PERMA model of well-being, in which flourishing is defined by five pillars: positive emotion, engagement, relationship, meaning, and accomplishment, as a guiding framework. Flourishing arises from these five elements, which are underpinned by character strengths.

**2) Intervention.** The School aims to build an evidence-based culture of well-being, which specifically targets students, staff, and parents.

- Staff and leadership: All staff receive ongoing training in the science of Positive Psychology, and are encouraged to use it to support the well-being of themselves, the boys, and the entire SPSC community.
- Students: Specific positive education programs have been implemented into the curriculum, co-curricular activities, staff training, leadership, and other aspects of the school's culture. Programs specifically blend the science of positive psychology with the best practice of learning and teaching.
- Parents: Scientifically informed workshops for parents are now being offered, to further support the well-being of the community.

**3) Measurement.** A key component of SPSC's approach involves measuring and documenting the process and impact of positive education efforts. In 2011, measuring well-being was an emerging area in educational practice. Now it is increasingly considered an essential part of building and maintaining well-being in schools across the country. Best practice recommendations are still being developed, and St. Peter's College is playing a leading role in informing best practices.

# The Positive Education Curriculum

Programs have now been strategically aligned across the boys’ education journey. We now explicitly teach positive education classes once a week from early learning through Year 10, with a carefully designed developmental program, which is based upon research in Positive Psychology and continually updated to reflect best practice knowledge.

Aligned with best-practices, the positive education curriculum at the School includes one Timetabled lesson per week (50 min) that focuses on teaching a systematic set of well-being capabilities employing seven well-being programs and is reinforced in traditional pastoral models and student–mentor relationships throughout the school. In designing the curriculum, Mathew White consulted with Professor Lea Waters at the University of Melbourne’s Graduate School of Education, considered existing evidence-based programs that aligned with positive education programs, used contemporary well-being theory, and took a strength-based approach. The curriculum includes McGrath and Noble (2003) Bounce Back! For Reception – Year 5, Boniwell and Ryan (2012) Personal Wellbeing Lessons for Secondary Schools in Year 7, Gillham, Reivich, and Jaycox (2008) Penn Resilience Program in Year 8 and Reivich et al. (2007) Strath Haven Positive Psychology Curriculum in Year 10.

## Measuring Success

Saints has a long tradition of using evidence to inform decision-making. Thus, measuring and documenting the success of positive education is core business. Explicit measurement of well-being:

- Gives a message that well-being is an important part of the school’s culture. We treasure what we measure. Across the globe, significant focus is given to standardized tests scores. Measuring well-being and character says that they are just as important as academic outcomes.
- Provides a snapshot of students and staff to understand how well they are functioning across a variety of domains, including strengths and weaknesses.
- Indicates the extent to which students are learning well-being skills and mindsets, in the same way that grades and assignments indicate student learning.
- Allows programs and activities to be evaluated, identifying what works and what does not work. When needed, programs can be refined or changed.
- Can provide indication of return on investment for stakeholders.

Measurement efforts at Saints began in November 2011, when 516 year 8 through 11 students completed an extensive well-being survey. The survey was developed in collaboration with students, staff, and researchers at the University of Melbourne and the University of Pennsylvania. Analyses showed that students were doing well on most scales at the time (see Kern, Waters, Adeler, & White, 2015). Staff also completed a survey at the beginning of 2012 (Kern, Waters, White, & Adler, 2014). The baseline measure provided insight into the psychological function of the school, and provided guidance for pastoral care and well-being strategies that have been implemented over the next three years.

In August 2014, a second student well-being survey was completed by 709 year 5 through 12 students. The measure was greatly refined, building on growing knowledge around best practices in well-being measurement. Students continued to score highly in most areas.

The data were linked to objective and teacher-rated academic data. Engagement, perseverance, overall well-being, grit, and a sense of meaning/ purpose were significantly related to higher Grade Point Averages (GPA), suggesting that well-being and academic achievement are complementary outcomes that are supported through positive education.

In addition, the boys were asked several questions about their experiences with positive education. The boys demonstrated substantial increases in the knowledge, understanding, and appreciation for:

- The science of well-being and resilience in general
- The significance of their own well-being
- The significance of the well-being of their peers
- Their own character strengths
- The significance of the character strengths of others
- That positive education classes have taught skills to become better friends
- That positive education classes have taught skills to become better students

Notably, evidence suggested that the students who benefit the most were those who are otherwise at risk for poor learning outcomes.

A third assessment was recently conducted at the end of 2016, using further refined measures. Student continue to do well, but are also now more accepting of admitting when they are struggling. The findings point to a substantial cultural shift that has occurred over the past 5 years, which have allowed students to be more in touch and expressive about both their well-being and times that they struggle. One of the strongest impacts of positive education appears to be on improving peer relationships. Students have a better understanding of the significance of their friends’ well-being, resilience, and character strengths. Students further report a greater sense of acceptance and inclusion at the school.

## Conclusion

As a whole, through a strategic and systematic approach towards implemented positive education across the entire school community, it has shifted the culture of the school. Positive education appears to be playing an important role in shifting the Saints culture towards the vision to be a world-class school where all boys flourish, and in creating a safe, inclusive, supportive and respectful learning and working environment for all member of the school community. It has not been an overnight transformation, as building a positive educational community requires considerable time, dedication by school leadership, and commitment by teachers and staff. There is still much to learn and ways to grow, but the possibilities for helping all Saints boys to flourish both in school and beyond is well worth the effort.



Additional Tables

	Engagement	Perseverance	Optimism	Connected	Happiness	Overall Well-being
GPA 2012	+	+				
GPA 2013	++	++		+		++
GPA 2014		++				
ATAR Scores	+	++	+			

+ indicates a significant positive association; -- indicates a significant negative association; blank indicates a non-significant association. GPA = grade point average. Darker colours were more significant.

Table 2 summarises correlations between well-being and teacher rated classroom performance. From 2012 to 2014, well-being was increasingly related to teacher rated cooperation, effort, and organisation, suggesting a growing impact of the positive education programs on student behaviours. Perseverance again was relevant to classroom behaviour. Connectedness was also quite relevant. This demonstrates the importance of considering well-being as multidimensional (i.e., not just an overall well-being score, but including specific subdomains).

Table 2: Correlations Between 2014 Wellbeing & Teacher Related Classroom Behaviour

	Engagement	Perseverance	Optimism	Connected	Happiness	Overall Well-being
Cooperation 2012		++		+		+
Effort 2012		+				
Organisation 2012		+				
Cooperation 2013	+	++	+	++		++
Effort 2013	+	++		++		++
Organisation 2013		++	+	++		++
Cooperation 2014	+	++	++	++	++	++
Effort 2014		++	++	++	++	++
Organisation 2014	+	++	++	++	++	++

+ indicates a significant positive association; -- indicates a significant negative association; blank indicates a non-significant association. Darker colours were more significant.



Table 3. Strength-based approaches at St Peter's College - Adelaide. From White, M. A., & Waters, L. E. (2015). Strengths-Based Approaches in the Classroom and Staffroom. In White, M. A., Murray, A. S., & Seligman, M. P. (2015). Evidence-based approaches in positive education : implementing a strategic framework for well-being in schools. Dordrecht : Springer. p. 128.



## SECTION 2.3

### Universidad Tecmilenio, *Mexico*

Héctor Escamilla, PhD

Tecmilenio University was founded in 2002 as a private non-for-profit institution serving 52,000 students at 29 campuses across Mexico (High School, College and Masters Programs).

Inspired by Dr. Martin Seligman's PERMA model (positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning, accomplishment) that establishes that well-being and happiness are teachable and can be developed, we added two more elements: Physical Well-being and Mindfulness. Character strengths are also part of the Ecosystem. This model shapes the entire school ethos and culture that our students experience at our University.

In 2012 we reinvented ourselves and created a New University Model aimed at:

- Empowering students to customized their own college program (flexibility to choose 40% of their coursework).
- Introducing a learning by doing approach supported by a competency based education model, Coop semester, laboratories and faculty from industry.
- Providing tools for building wellbeing and happiness to our community based on the science of Positive Psychology.

Our Vision is "to prepare people with a purpose in life and competencies to achieve it. We define ourselves as a Positive University: "A learning community that cultivates the best of each person allowing them to flourish. To foster leadership within an ecosystem dedicated to wellbeing and happiness. To discover and expand the purpose of life for all and to benefit society" and focus our efforts on:

1. Students: Discovering and developing their purpose in life. Reaching high levels of well-being and happiness, having a memorable student experience and developing skills to be competent in a global economy.
2. Positive and empowered leaders: Managing and living coherently in our wellbeing and happiness ecosystem while continuously improving as individuals. Developing co-workers to lead the University in the future.
3. Alumni: Producing leaders with a purpose in life who continuously seek their best self and act as agents of positive business change.
4. Partners: Building long term relations with schools, industry, advisory boards and suppliers.
5. Self-sustainable: An institution with efficient and equivalent processes and committed to the environment.

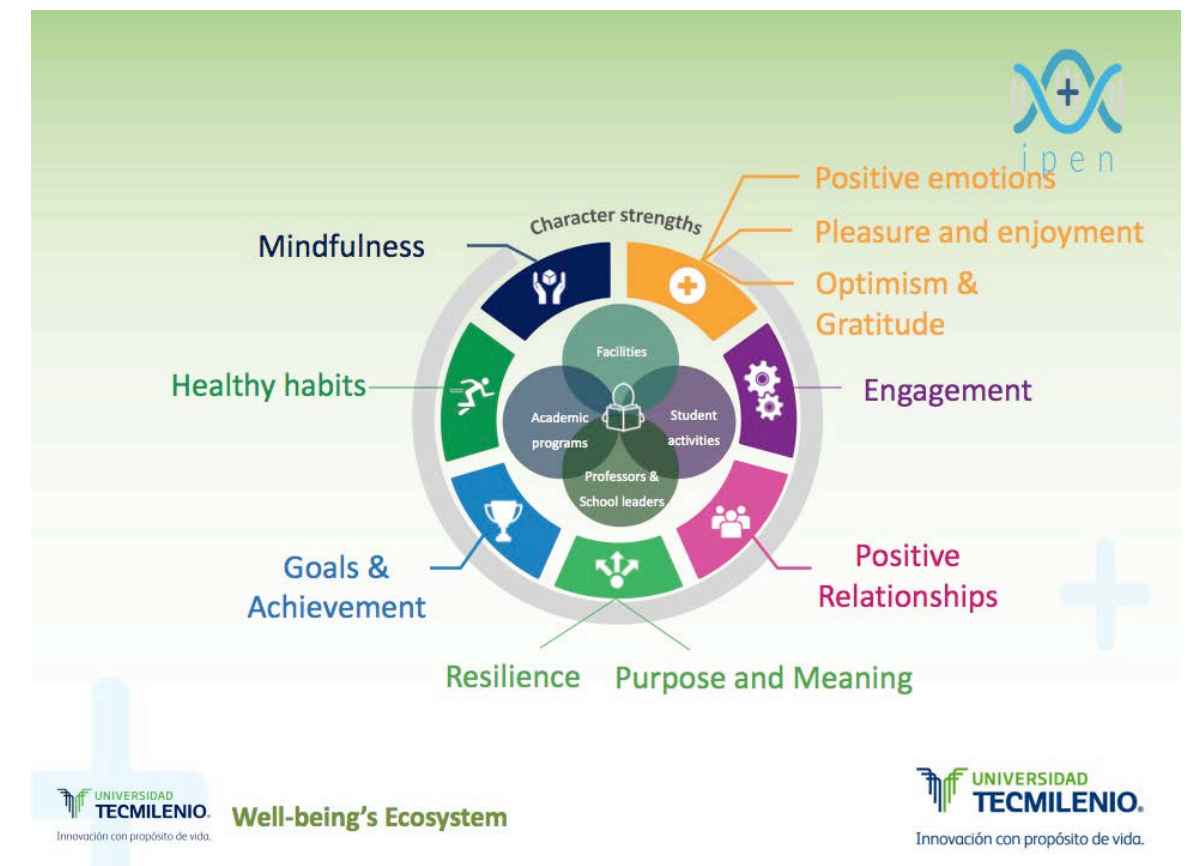


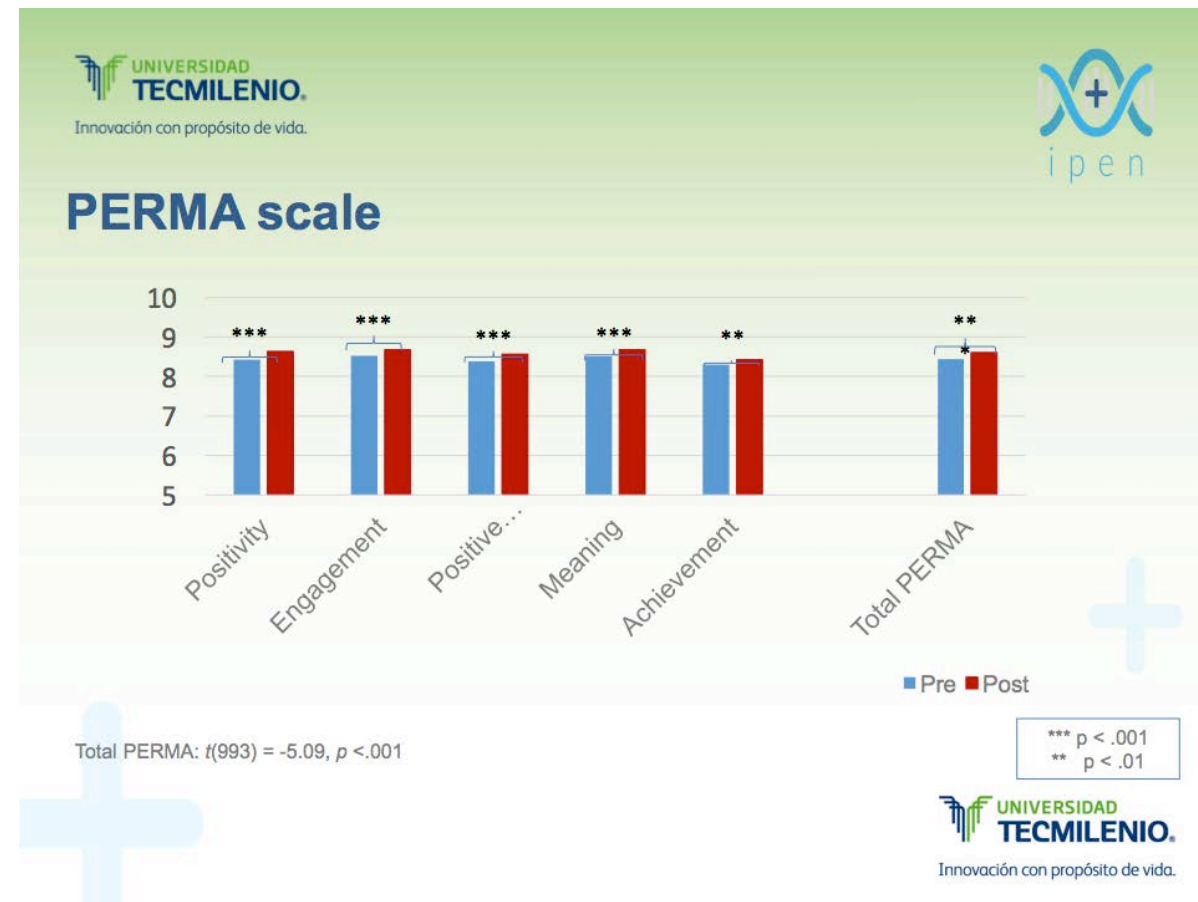
Figure 1. Well-being and Happiness Ecosystems

In 2013 we furthered our commitment to well-being by creating the first "Well-being and Happiness Institute" in Mexico to provide scientific support in all university activities. This Institute has organized since 2013 the "International Well-being and Happiness Summit" to raise the awareness of Positive Psychology as a basis for Positive Education and Positive Organizations. <http://cienciasdelafelicidad.mx/evento/foro-2013>

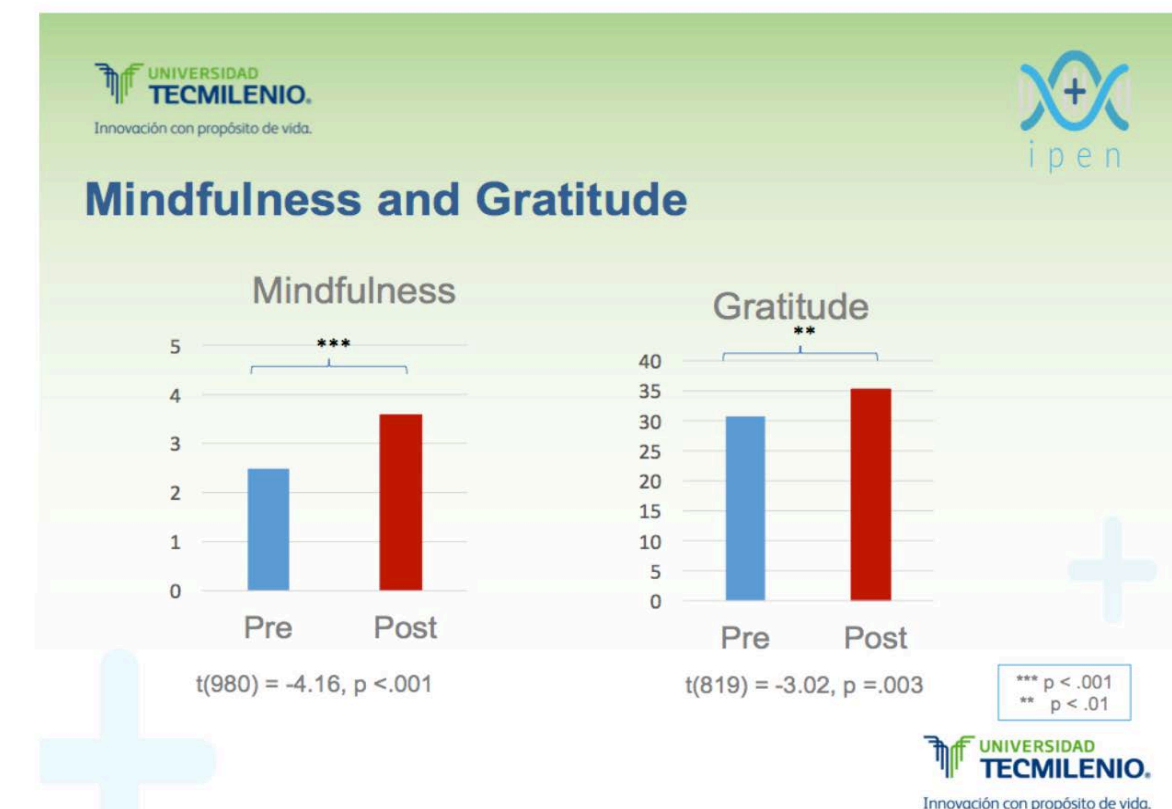
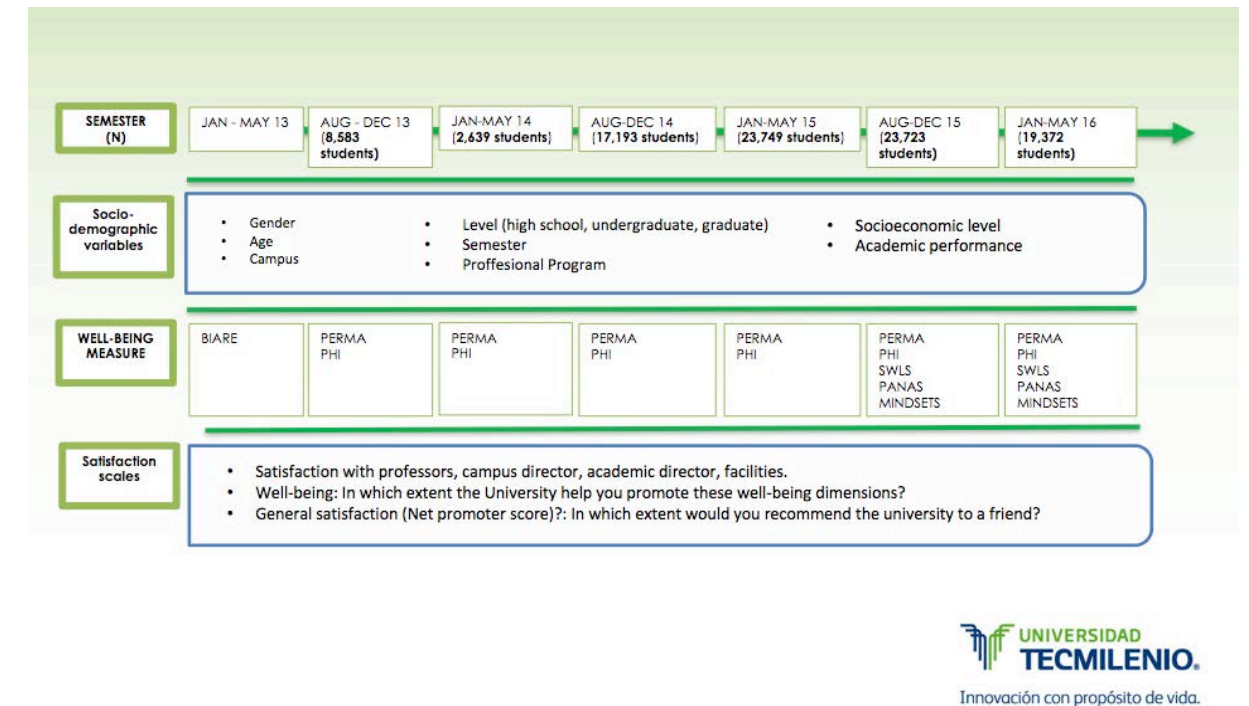
As part of our well-being ecosystem, we are dedicated to evaluating the impact positive psychology has had on our students. Below are the pre and post test results of students who took the required introduction to positive psychology course at the University level. Of the 1,396 students in this study 54% were male 46% female with a mean age of 21 years old.

From the graphs below, students had significant increases in their PERMA as well as mindfulness and gratitude post positive psychology course compared to their pre-test.





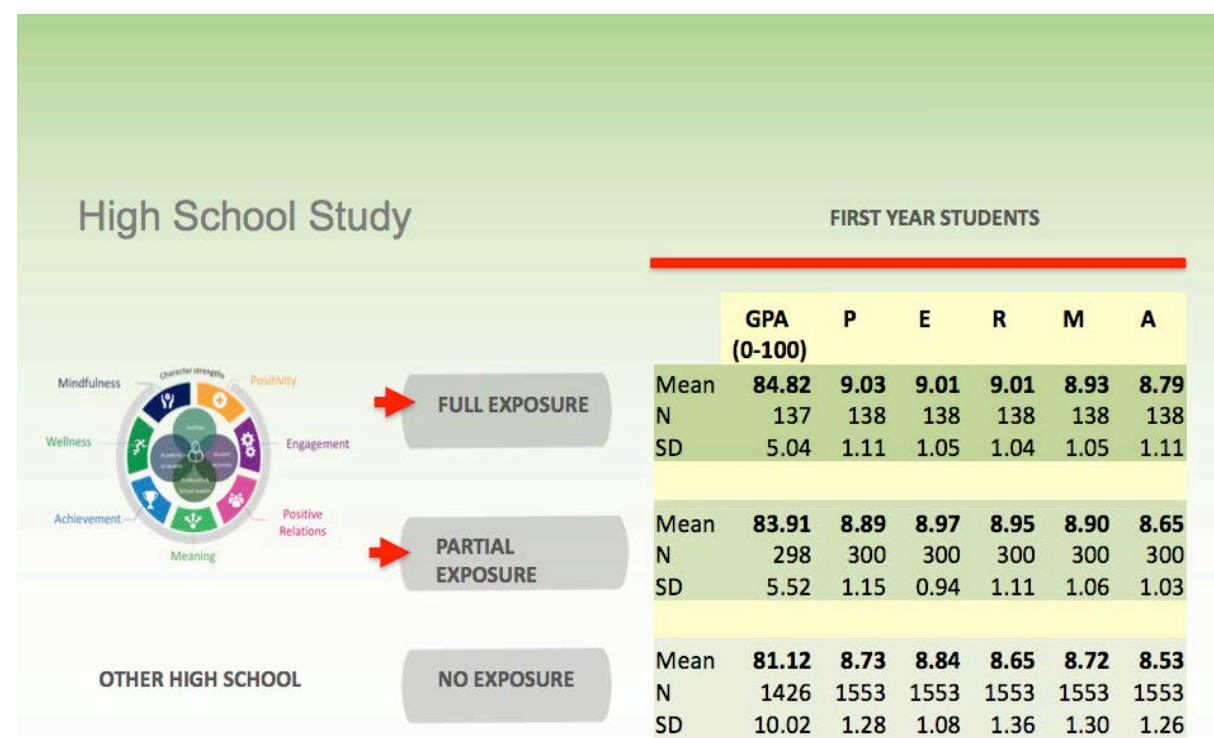
Since January of 2013 we have conducted a longitudinal study with our High School students to measure their well-being and life satisfaction.



We furthered this baseline measurement by comparing students from Tecmilenio High School to schools without exposure to positive education implementation.

From the graph below you can tell students with full exposure to Tecmilenio's well-being ecosystem outperform students in the partial and no-exposure group in GPA, positive emotions, engagement, relationships and accomplishment.





Encouraged by the empirical results and qualitative shift in school environment, we continue to live this Ecosystem of Wellbeing and Happiness in every aspect of our daily life. Everything we do and manage must be part of this Ecosystem: facilities and services, student activities, training and development and academic programs.





# SECTION 3

## Research in Positive Education

Dr. Margaret L. Kern

Dr. Scott Barry Kaufman

### Positive Education Research

While there is growing excitement and interest in applying the concepts of positive education in classrooms and educational communities around the world, this also brings the possibility of the movement being just another passing fad. On the one hand, topics that roughly align with positive education are very active areas of research by top academics across multiple domains, including psychology, education, public policy, and health, amongst others. Numerous schools are successfully implementing positive education, as illustrated through the case studies above. On the other hand, the educational context is complex, and simple claims coming from a laboratory about the value of different concepts, strategies, and interventions look very different within the school environment. Positive education can be sold as a “life changing program”, but research clearly indicates that even the best interventions only work for some students, some of the time. Overgeneralizations, taking findings out of context, and practice running far ahead of scientific inquiry and validation potentially not only will undermine the movement, but also could result in numerous unintentional harms. It is imperative that programs, activities, and strategies are subjected to scientific scrutiny, identifying what works best, for whom, when, and under what circumstances.

An open question is the boundaries of what positive education specifically refers to. While positive education has been conceptualized as educating for both traditional academic skills and well-being (Seligman et al., 2009), it is often presented as positive psychology applied to education, which ignores much of the existing scholarship and valuable experiences of many educators. Even the term “well-being” has been conceptualized in a myriad of ways by different researchers (e.g., Benson & Scales, 2009; Cooke, Melchert, & Connor, 2016; Diener, 1984; Forgeard et al., 2011; Huppert & So, 2013; Kern et al., 2016; Keyes, 2002; Ryff & Keyes, 1995; Rusk & Waters, 2015; Ryan & Deci, 2001; Scales et al., 2000; Seligman, 2011; Wong, 2011). Some definitions focus more on subjective feelings of well-being, others focus on psychological components such as optimism, meaning, authenticity and self acceptance, and still others focus on a holistic conceptualizations of the person and their lived experience in the world.

Further, the purview of the elements beyond academic skills— sometimes referred to as “non-cognitive skills” (Heckman, 2000)— that should be considered part of positive education remains an open question, especially if educators are to be held accountable for teaching such skills. Positive education includes a broad array of topics, and this is where studies that consider not only immediate changes but also processes, moderators, and longer term outcomes are needed to identify what are the key building blocks of holistic student education.

Activities that help students “feel good” can be an important enabler of self-confidence and learning, but if feeling good is the only criteria, then it can undermine learning (e.g., Baumeister et al., Friedman & Kern, 2014).

To organise the application of positive education, it appears to be useful for schools to select a framework to work within, structuring objectives, activities, and evaluation around these domains. Over the past five years, multiple schools, such as GGS and St. Peter’s described above, have used Seligman’s (2011) PERMA model, which structures well-being around the domains of positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment, with schools commonly adding a sixth health component (e.g., Kern et al., 2015; Norrish, 2015). Some have drawn on the Five Ways to Well-Being model developed in the UK, which focuses on taking notice, being active, learning, connecting with others, and giving to others (Aked et al., 2008). Others have taken a mental fitness approach (e.g., Clough & Strycharczyk, 2012). Still, others have followed a positive behavioral intervention approach, which uses a system of rewards to encourage desired behaviors (Sugai et al., 2000; Sugai & Horner, 2002). Numerous other models have been used. Studies have not compared these different models, and indeed the models often have overlapping components. The fit with the school community might be more important than the model itself, pointing back to the contextual nature of positive education that undermine possible universal claims.

A core topic of research is around the concept of resilience. Resilience is often conceptualized as the ability to bounce back through challenge. Programs such as the Penn Resiliency Program (Gilham et al., 1990; Gilham et al., 2013), Strathhaven (Seligman et al., 2009), and BounceBack! (McGrath & Noble, 2011) use techniques from cognitive behavioral therapy to give students skills to cope when challenge arises. At a deeper level, resiliency refers to the ability to thrive in the face of adversity (Masten, 2001; 2014). Resilience occurs within a context of threat, and when there is ongoing hardship, most children will succumb to adversity. Many young people today are at higher risk for social and emotional delays, poor academic outcomes, and behavioral problems due to the environment in which they live, with many experiencing one or more traumatic events by secondary school (Brunzell, Waters, & Stokes, 2015). Some research has begun to focus on trauma-informed approaches to positive education, with initial evidence of success in high-risk schools (Brunzell, Stokes, & Waters, 2016), but more work in this area is needed. Evidence suggests that it is the combination of individual characteristics and protective factors within social institutions and the surrounding community that enable young people to thrive (Luthar, 2006). Accordingly, research in positive education needs to identify and strengthen individual talents, capacities, and strengths, as well as the conditions and structures within the community that can help students flourish (Kaufman, 2013).

On the internal side, most positive education programs include strengths-based elements. Research has focused primarily on the VIA character strengths (Peterson & Seligman, 2004), with evidence pointing to the value of students learning to identify and use their own strengths and to recognize and appreciate strengths in others, with links to higher well-being, better academic performance, good social functioning, and fewer behavioral problems (e.g., Park & Peterson, 2009; Proctor et al., 2011; Shoshani & Slone, 2013; Toner et al., 2012; Weber & Ruch 2012).

Numerous strengths-based programs have been developed, including the:

- Happy Classrooms Program in Spain (Rey, Valero, Paniello, & Monge, 2012);
- Celebrating Strengths Programme in the UK (Fox Eades, 2008); and
- Strengths Gym (Proctor et al., 2011),
- Strong Planet (Fox, 2008), and
- SMART Strengths in the US (Yeager, Fisher, & Shearon, 2011).

Open questions remain around when students should focus on their top strengths versus their bottom strengths, the overuse of strengths, and situation specificity of the different strengths. Other research considers specific strengths and non-cognitive skills, such as gratitude (e.g., Froh, Yurkewicz, & Kashdan, 2009; Waters, 2011), kindness (e.g., Akinin et al., 2012; Dunn, Atkin, & Norton, 2008; Parks & Biswas-Diener, 2013); self-control (Duckworth & Gross, 2014; Dweck, Walton, & Cohen, 2014), and hope (e.g., Snyder, 1994; Valle, Huebner, & Suldo, 2006), among others.

Two areas that clearly are important, based on both short- and long-term studies, are emotion regulation (i.e., the ability to recognize and appropriately regulate and express emotions) and positive social skills (e.g., Blair & Diamond, 2008; Brackett, & Kremenitzer, 2011). These skills form the basis of many social and emotional learning programs, which have generally demonstrated success in building social and emotional skills and are correlated with better academic outcomes (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, 2003; Durlak et al., 2011).

Another individual aspect that is core to both learning and development is that of mindset. Dweck (2006) suggests the value of a growth mindset, seeing intelligence and other characteristics as malleable and developed through effort and learning, versus a fixed mindset, which sees intellect and other characteristics as innate and fixed. This is particularly important in learning both academic skills and in developing softer non-cognitive skills. Mindsets impact self-esteem, perceived competence, hope, and perseverance, ultimately impacting achievement and other desirable outcomes (Paunesku et al., 2015; Yeager & Dweck, 2012).

The broader field of positive psychology has developed various interventions to build positive outcomes (cf. Parks & Biswas-Diener, 2013). Controlled studies have found support for activities such as reflections on good things in life, envisioning one's best self, showing gratitude toward others (e.g., writing a gratitude letter), and identifying and using one's strengths (e.g., Lyubormirsky et al., 2005; Seligman et al., 2005). Similarly, there is growing area of interest in mindfulness and meditative practices, but multiple meta-analyses now indicate that the evidence for their efficacy is quite mixed, with the evidence based primarily on poorly designed studies (e.g., Bohlmeijer et al., 2010; Chiesa & Serretti, 2009; Goyal et al., 2014; Gu et al., 2015; Hoffman et al., 2010; Waters et al., 2015; Zenner et al., 2014). While such interventions are supported in laboratories and online studies, applying activities within schools is more challenging. In practice, educators have developed a range of variants of the core interventions, but these often lack empirical evidence supporting their use. A closer bridge between research and practice is needed.

Moving beyond individual characteristics that might support well-being and resilience, research is only beginning to consider how culture and contextual aspects influence how positive education is delivered, what aspects are most appropriate, and what outcomes realistically might be expected. Much of the existing evidence for both positive psychology interventions and positive education have occurred in better resourced schools, primarily western in nature, with most students middle to upper class. Limited research is available on the models, interventions, and approaches that are most appropriate in developing, non-westernized, economically under-resourced, and historically challenged backgrounds.

For instance, the country of Bhutan developed a positive education program, with evidence that the multi-pronged program improved both well-being and academic scores in students, compared to a control group (Adler & Seligman, 2016; see Introduction). Similar programs are being trialed in Asia and South America. Sensitivity towards diversity of all types is needed, with care taken about making untested, universal claims about best practice approaches.

In the US, Positive Youth Development (PYD) explicitly considers the influence that contextual factors play in determining how young people function and feel. PYD draws on multiple disciplines and perspectives to promote positive qualities in young people (Lerner et al., 2013; Lerner et al., 2009; Nakkula, & Toshalis, 2006). It focuses primarily on building five domains: Connection, Competence, Confidence, Caring, and Character (the 5 C's), with social Contribution (a 6th C) arising from the successful development of these areas (Lerner et al., 2000; Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2003). Each of the five areas are backed by longitudinal evidence of their impact and importance, and some evidence suggests that these characteristics together are linked to fewer harmful activities, better connections to family and school, positive educational outcomes, community involvement, and reductions in mental health problems (e.g., Arbeit et al., 2014; Hoyt et al., 2012; Hawkins et al., 2008; Lerner et al., 2009). Cost-benefit analyses of PYD programs have suggested a two-fold return on investment (Catalano et al., 2012). Positive education will benefit from closer integration with the PYD literature.

If an overarching goal of positive education is to bring out the best in each student—and this does appear to be a common theme among diverse conceptualizations of positive education — multiple components must be addressed simultaneously, and ongoing evaluation of growth must be assessed. Toward this aim, integration with other areas of psychology is critical, including research in developmental psychology and talent development (Blair & Diamond, 2008; Bloom, 1985; Bronfenbrenner, 2005; Bronfenbrenner & Ceci, 1994; Kaufman, 2013; Kaufman & Duckworth, 2015; Nakkula, & Toshalis, 2006; Subotnik, Olszewski-Kubukius, & Worrell, 2011). Also, the multiple components of positive education (engagement, relationships, purpose, etc.) must not be treated as independent of each other, but mutually reinforcing to influence the development of a “whole person”—a dynamic system of cognitive, emotional, motivational, and personality processes (Blair & Diamond, 2008; Kaufman, 2013; Kaufman & Duckworth, 2015; Molenaar & Campbell, 2009).

Relatedly, research is only beginning to consider questions around scalability and sustainability, but such questions are critical from a public policy perspective. Individual-based interventions have limited impact and scope, as the student sits within multiple systems of influence, including the school itself, their family, peer groups, the local community, policies at various levels, and broader cultural, historical, and temporal patterns (e.g., Bronfenbrenner & Ceci, 1994; Nakkula, & Toshalis, 2006). Some research has started to consider what are called “whole school approaches” to positive education, such that rather than focusing on a particular positive education program or specific intervention, efforts are made around shifting the culture of the school as a whole (e.g., Norris, 2015; Waters & Stokes, 2013). Longer term evidence for such approaches does not yet exist, but there are some early indicators that an approach that includes staff well-being, students, leadership, the school climate, and even the parent and local community will be more sustainable than disconnected, unstructured programs and activities.

Of the many thousands of youth development and positive education programs worldwide, at most several hundred have been evaluated, of which only a few dozen typically satisfy rigorous methodological standards, and most specifically focus on social and emotional skills (Durlak et al., 2011; Roth et al., 1998).



Reviews suggest that well designed and well executed programs can promote positive outcomes and reduce negative outcomes, but claims are limited by measurement issues, lack of long term follow up, and little consideration of program features or contextual factors (e.g., Kern et al., in press). As a whole, research in positive education points to the possibilities of evidence-informed practices, with a great need for greater intersections between research and practice to collectively determine best practice guidelines for the field. Only then can we truly refer to positive education as a scientifically rigorous paradigm in education. The work is worth it, however, as nothing less than the health, well-being, and flourishing of our children is at stake.





# SECTION 4

## Policy on Positive Education

Christian Krekel

### Why should governments take positive education seriously?

There is a clear need for governments to take positive education – education that conveys both traditional, technical skills necessary for labor market success and critical socio-emotional or life skills that enhance well-being – seriously. Rising rates of depression and mental health problems among youth and adolescents over the past two decades as well as stress and burnout among teachers make the case for well-being as an outcome in its own right. By 2030, depression and mental health problems will be among the most widespread and costly diseases, chronically straining national health systems in the developed world (WHO, 2011). Preventing them early should be a priority for governments.

Beyond preventing mental illness, well-being is also instrumental to achieving many other socially valued outcomes. Well-being relates to better learning outcomes, higher achievement, and greater labor productivity more generally (Oswald et al., 2015). Positive mood is associated with greater creativity and holistic thinking (Fredrickson, 2001), which are key skills in the 21st century workplace. Such non-cognitive skills have been shown to be at least as important for educational and labor market success as cognitive skills like numeracy or literacy (Heckman et al., 2006, 2010). To the extent that children from disadvantaged backgrounds are more likely to lack these skills, teaching them has the potential to close achievement gaps pertaining, for example, to gender or ethnicity, reduce educational inequalities, and enhance social mobility (Jubilee Centre for Character & Virtues, 2016).

Too often, leaders fear that there is a trade-off between teaching traditional, technical skills on the one side and skills that enhance well-being on the other. As is evident from the case studies above, the two are mutually reinforcing and should be taught together. Positive education does not compromise traditional goals of schooling, but supports them. There is potential that by cultivating skills that enhance well-being early, it will activate a positive cycle, as earlier investments into skills are more productive and they lay the necessary fundament to nurturing further skills – be them cognitive or non-cognitive (Cunha and Heckman, 2007, 2008). Schools provide a favorable setting to cultivate these skills in a cost-effective manner (Heckman et al., 2013; Kautz et al., 2014).

Interventions like the Penn Resilience Program or the Strath Haven Positive Psychology Curriculum have shown that promoting resilience can prevent depression, anxiety, and conduct problems in young people, and that promoting character strengths, relationships, and meaning can nurture curiosity, creativity, engagement in school, and social skills such as cooperation, assertiveness, and self-control (Seligman et al., 2009). St. Peter's College and Geelong Grammar School in Australia as well as Wellington College in the U.K. vividly show how entire school communities can meaningfully engage in making well-being an institutional priority, enabling students and teachers to flourish in school and beyond (Kern et al., 2014, 2015; Seligman et al., 2009).

### Where has positive education been taken seriously so far?

There is a growing evidence base on positive education and the favorable impact of teaching skills that enhance well-being on learning and achievement (Park, 2013). At the same time, there is rising interest on the side of policy-makers, educators, and parents worldwide to include elements of positive education, or mainstream it entirely, in school curricula. This trend is partly reflected by increased spending on research on positive education, both publicly and privately, and partly by various pilots conducted in different countries. Likewise, it is accompanied by a growing number of research centers focusing on positive education worldwide. Some countries like Australia, Singapore, and South Korea have already scaled up and integrated positive education into national curricula.

The U.S. Department of Education, for example, has just recently announced four research grant awards, totaling USD 2 million, under the new 'Skills for Success' grant competition, aimed at improving students' mindsets and learning skills. The awarded projects will involve more than 10,000 students in various school districts in the U.S. over a period of three years. It has also launched the 'Mentoring Mindsets Initiative' to enable mentors to teach these skills to their mentees (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). Mindsets and learning skills have been identified as key in President Obama's 'My Brother's Keeper' initiative, part of the administration's college and career readiness strategy (The White House, 2016). The administration identifies socio-emotional skills like grit, tenacity, or perseverance as critical for success in today's labor market (U.S. Department of Education, 2013).

In the U.K., the Department of Education is inviting schools to apply to be recognized as a leader in character education through 'Character Awards' – bestowed annually and encouraging submissions in diverse areas ranging from perseverance, resilience, and grit over conscientiousness, curiosity, and focus on honesty, integrity, and dignity (U.K. Department of Education, 2016). The Healthy Minds Project, aimed at evidencing the link between emotionally stable, self-efficacious students and improved behavior and academic attainment in school, and led by How to Thrive in partnership with the London School of Economics and Political Science, is currently being piloted for more than 10,000 secondary school students across 33 schools in the U.K. over a period of four years (Centre for Economic Performance, 2016).

Research centers focusing on positive education include, for example, the Project for Education Research That Scales (PERTS) at Stanford University, the Character Lab at the University of Pennsylvania, the Well-being Institute at the University of Cambridge, the Jubilee Centre for Character & Virtues at the University of Birmingham, or the Institute for Positive Psychology and Education at the Australian Catholic University.

Where positive education has already been mainstreamed in entire school curricula, it has mostly been grassroots initiatives that led the way: in the U.S., KIPP ('Knowledge is Power Program') is a non-profit network of around 200 publicly funded, college-preparatory charter schools in mostly deprived communities, covering more than 80,000 elementary, middle, and high school students across the country. As early as 1994, at its launch, the network has made character education a standing pillar of teaching, and today aims at cultivating seven character strengths that are highly correlated with well-being: vitality, grit, optimism, self-control, gratitude, social intelligence, and curiosity (KIPP, 2016). Estimates suggest that students attending these schools make significant achievement gains in terms of standardized test scores in math and English language, and that these gains are higher for students with lower achievement at baseline (Abdulkadiroglu et al., 2011; Angrist et al., 2010). Students also tend to show higher motivation and engagement, overall satisfaction with schooling, and higher goals and aspirations (Mathematica Policy Research, 2015).



In the U.K., the Floreat Education Academies Trust, established in 2014 and still in its infancy in terms of school coverage, currently maintains three primary schools, and is about to open two more, in and around London. It is similar to KIPP in that it aims at cultivating a core and balanced set of four virtues – curiosity, honesty, perseverance, and civic service – but broader in that it targets students of all socioeconomic backgrounds (Floreat Education Academies Trust, 2016). The Floreat Character Programme offers teachers of all schools a toolkit to foster character education in their classes (Floreat Character Programme, 2016).

In Australia, the government has taken matters into their own hands, and are pioneering education policy by integrating positive education into national curricula. The Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians states that “schools play a vital role in promoting the intellectual, physical, social, emotional, moral, spiritual and aesthetic development and well-being of young Australians” (Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs, 2008). In this spirit, the Australian National Safe Schools Framework adopts a whole-school approach to well-being, acknowledging the importance of student well-being as a prerequisite for learning and achievement. It defines guiding principles, including the promotion of positive student behavior, the provision of opportunities for students to develop a sense of meaning and purpose, and the nurturing of key socio-emotional skills such as listening, negotiation, sharing, and empathic responding (Department of Education and Training, 2010). The ‘Student Wellbeing Hub’ is a one-stop online shop for students, educators, and parents providing information and materials, for example, on how to foster student responsibility and resilience or respectful relationships (Student Wellbeing Hub, 2016). Resources are aligned with the Australian curriculum.

At the sub-national level, New South Wales has derived its own well-being framework, aimed at enabling students to be healthy, happy, engaged, and successful in life. It builds on three pillars: (i) connecting, that is, developing positive and respectful relationships at school and experiencing a sense of belonging; (ii) succeeding, that is, being encouraged, supported, and empowered to succeed at school; and (iii) thriving, that is, being enabled to flourish and grow personally. A cross-cutting theme is the cultivation of character strengths and key socio-emotional skills such as resilience, self-discipline, and the ability to set and pursue stretch goals, whereby schools are seen as enabling environments (NSW Department of Education, 2016a). For the period between 2016 and 2018, the government of New South Wales is providing a total of AUD 167 million to further promote student well-being (NSW Department of Education, 2016b). Likewise, in Victoria, well-being is considered a prerequisite for learning and development, and even as an indicator to measure successful education (Victoria Department for Education and Training, 2016a). In its ‘continuum of intervention for health and well-being’ model aimed at addressing health and well-being issues of children and young people, schools play a vital role, and building resilience and promoting well-being through social and emotional learning, especially among the most vulnerable and disadvantaged, are identified as key prevention strategies (Victoria Department of Education and Training, 2016b, 2016c). Similar frameworks as in New South Wales and Victoria have been put in place in Queensland and Tasmania (NSW Department of Education and Communities, 2015). South Australia, motivated by Martin Seligman’s ‘Thinker in Residence’ time in Adelaide from 2012 to 2013, is working on implementing a comprehensive well-being strategy – aimed not only at measuring and promoting whole-school well-being in a multifaceted manner, but also at making well-being a policy priority for society at large. Schools are seen as both enabling environments and multipliers for delivering well-being to the wider community (Seligman, 2013). The positive education Schools Association is a country-wide network of schools that use positive education in their curricula (positive education Schools Association, 2016).

In Singapore, character and citizenship education in primary school teaches students core values; social and emotional skills such as managing emotions, goal setting, and resilience; and skills related to citizenship competencies. The curriculum reserves between 60 and 75 instructional hours per year for teaching these skills, depending on lower or upper primary schooling (Singaporean Ministry of Education, 2014). South Korea has passed the ‘Character Education Promotion Act’ in 2014, requiring kindergarten, primary, and secondary schooling to teach character skills (Korean Federation of Teachers’ Associations, 2015). In New Zealand, the Prime Minister’s 2012 ‘Youth Mental Health Project’ aims at promoting, among others, the resilience and psychosocial well-being of young people (New Zealand Ministry of Health, 2016).

In line with it, the ‘New Zealand Curriculum’ provides guidance for schools on how to design their curricula in order to cultivate key competencies for life and lifelong learning like resilience or goal-setting (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2016). Likewise, Scotland’s ‘Curriculum for Excellence’ is driven by positive educational principles aimed at making students – besides successful learners – confident individuals, responsible citizens, and effective contributors (Education Scotland, 2016).

Not surprisingly, also Bhutan – the only country that employs the concept of ‘Gross National Happiness’ to measure societal progress – has experimented with a well-being curriculum: designed by researchers from University of Pennsylvania’s Positive Psychology Center, the experimental curriculum taught non-academic life skills like mindfulness, coping with emotions, or problem-solving to an experimental group of secondary-school students aged 7 to 12 over a 15-month period. The intervention – rigorously impact evaluated using a randomized controlled trial – showed large significant increases in academic performance for students in the experimental group, in both short-run and long-run, through higher connectedness, perseverance, and engagement (Adler, 2015).

Besides national governments, there is also a growing interest on side of international organizations to put positive education into practice. For example, in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, complementary to the existing life skills curriculum, the World Bank is running a large randomized controlled trial aimed at cultivating grit – passion and perseverance in the pursuit of long-term goals – among middle-school students (The World Bank, 2014). UNICEF has just recently introduced its ‘Happy Schools’ framework to improve learner well-being in the Asia-Pacific region (UNICEF, 2016). Teaching critical socio-emotional or life skills is seen as key to raising learning levels and reducing labor market skills mismatches in developing countries.

Finally, the international Positive Education Network launched in 2014 to bring together, policy practice and research in positive education. Their aim is to bring positive education to a global forefront and to promote the idea that teaching character + well-being alongside academics is the education of the future.

## SECTION 5

### Conclusion

Sir Anthony Seldon

This report attempts to give some of the most compelling evidence for positive education and also cautionary tales from the research. While there are many exemplary cases studies of positive education's implementation and impact, we need more research around what makes for a flourishing child, teacher, and educational experience. We also need more work on how this might impact our future citizens' well-being growth, and success in a changing world.

Across the globe, we are constantly looking for ways to improve our countries' academic performance. But there is a danger that educational reforms focus solely on increasing academic performance. We are missing the other core component of the child, their psychological and physical well-being and character. Evidence increasingly suggests that by focusing on the whole child, we will in fact increase academic performance in the process. While there is still a great deal to learn, this report suggests a new way forward on educational reform – namely positive education.

The emergence of positive education this century has enabled whole schools to move from a welfare model towards a well-being model (Alford and White, 2015; Brunzell, Stokes, and Waters, 2016; Lucas and Goodman, 2015). The need is pressing; as the evidence shows, the lives of our young people are filled with too much depression, too much suffering and too much mental ill-health (Kristjánsson, 2016; Keyes, 2009).

This concern about the rise of mental ill-health, depression and anxiety and its burden on society, is global (Alford and White, 2015). The response of governments, universities, schools and systems has often been criticised. In the face of these concerns many schools and teachers feel unprepared to manage whole school approaches to the well-being of the students they serve. Alongside concerns about students, there are equal concerns about the well-being of staff as they struggle to achieve the educational goals and objectives they are set (Kristjánsson, 2016; White, 2016).

The growth of positive education is an exciting development and one that is starting to receive greater global attention as we seek to strengthen the school improvement agenda. As Malala Yousafzai reminds us, "One child, one teacher, one book, one pen can change the world".

POSITIVE EDUCATION

*Because  
well-being  
is every  
child's  
birth right*

- MARTIN SELIGMAN



# SECTION 6

## Glossary

### Dr. Raphaela Schlicht-Schmälzle

According to the International Positive Education Network, positive education is the combination of “Academics + Character & Well-being”. Positive education thereby underlines the importance of skills that go beyond pure academic knowledge such as facts about mathematics, readings, science, languages, or historical events. Throughout this paper we have used many terms to describe the contents of positive education: resilience, empathy, creativity, grit/perseverance, character, growth mindsets etc. Many of these terms are related or even overlap with other movements and approaches of non-academic skill formation. This portion of the paper will explore their meanings so we can attempt to paint a clearer picture of the positive education movement and its relation to other fields.

When it comes to non-academic skill formation, the field encompasses a wide variety of concepts such as moral education, civic education, character education, 21st century skills, social emotional learning, or positive youth development. Definitions of the core terms, however, remain rather underdeveloped (Althof & Berkowitz 2006), and distinctions are often fuzzy. This is no surprise due to the highly interdisciplinary background of many constructs, which span across political science, sociology, business, communication, psychology, and philosophy. This glossary aims to clarify the meaning of the most common terms (cp. figure 1).

Figure 1: Terms of non-academic skill formation in education

Term	Short Definition	Key Skills Taught	Major Organizations
Positive Education	Combination of academics, character & well-being	PERMA, resilience, character strengths	International Positive Education Network (IPEN <a href="http://www.ipositive-education.net">www.ipositive-education.net</a> ), Positive education Schools Association (PESA - <a href="http://www.pesa.edu.au/">www.pesa.edu.au/</a> ), International Positive Psychology Association (IPPA - <a href="http://www.ippanetwork.org/">www.ippanetwork.org/</a> )
Civic Education	Preparing students for their role as citizens of a greater community	Knowledge about political institutions and processes; common common morality; participation in public discourse; media use; engagement for the community; service learning; communication skills	IEA (ICCS), <a href="http://www.civiced.org">www.civiced.org</a> (Center for Civic Education), <a href="http://Characterandcitizenship.org">Characterandcitizenship.org</a> (Center for Character and Citizenship)

Moral Education	Moral education circles around the question whether specific actions of individuals are evaluated as right or wrong.	Specific moral values e.g. courage, justice, humanity, temperance, transcendence, or wisdom; Strategies how to make rational moral decisions (e.g. Kant Categorical Imperative)	Center for Character and Citizenship at the University of Missouri, GSE Harvard Civic and Moral Education Initiative
Character Education	Character strengths are the psychological processes or mechanisms that display, practice, and cultivate moral virtues	Curiosity, love of learning, kindness, forgiveness, self-regulation, spirituality and explicitly addressed in this paper:  <b>Creativity</b> (also imagination and ingenuity): ability to bring both originality and meaningfulness into the world  <b>Grit</b> : perseverance and passion for long-term goals  <b>Growth mindset</b> : underlying belief about learning that people can get smarter over time and that effort makes stronger  <b>Resilience</b> : is the process of adapting to or recovering from difficult and stressful experiences	Character.org, Jubilee Center for Character & Virtues, Mayerson Academy  The Imagination Institute  The Character Lab (Angela Duckworth)  Mindset Works, College Transition Collaborative  How to Thrive, Penn Resilience Program
Social Emotional Learning & Positive Youth Development	Foster specific traits and behaviors to achieve a specific goal such as better academic performance, “better” behavior, or better health.	Empathy, self-regulation, communication, conflict solving, community life, or anger-management etc.	CASEL

**Civic Education** (citizenship education). Civic education aims to teach people the knowledge and skills required in their future roles as citizens. Beyond building basic knowledge about existing societal institutions and the processes of political decision making (cognitive skills), civic education also shapes common norms and values (attitudes and moral judgement), and promotes active engagement: the way to use of social media, involvement in organizations and groups, and participating in public discourse and elections (behavioral skills) (Schulz, Ainley et al. 2016). By shaping common moral norms and values, governments use civic education to guarantee cohesion and inclusion within a (mostly national) society and the obedience to the laws (cp. Althof, & Berkowitz, 2006; Berkowitz, Althof, & Jones, 2008; Halstead, & Pike, 2006; Oser, & Veugelers, 2008; Haidt, J. 2006: 158). Similar to the TIMSS and PISA studies, the International Education Association (IEA) conducts regular comparative studies (ICCS 2016) to compare the learning assessment in civic education across countries (Schulz, Ainley et al. 2016). The Center for Character and Citizenship Education (2017) at the University of Missouri engages in research, education and advocacy to foster the development of character, democratic citizenship and civil society.

**Moral Education.** Morality refers to evaluations of actions as right or wrong (Haidt 2006: 163): Should a teacher in a public school wear a burqa or a nun's habit? Should the US accommodate refugees? Is a police officer justified to risk the death of one person to rescue many people? Moral education always refers to the actions of an individual in relation to a greater social community. In this way morality forces individuals to maximize the public good rather than their private goals, complying with rules that are normative and not always overlapping with the individual preferences (cp. Haidt 2006: 164; Letki 2006). In accordance with Durkheim (1973) many scholars argue that a society without any specific virtues and values "breeds feelings of rootlessness and anxiety and leads to an increase in amoral and antisocial behavior" (Haidt 2006: 176, also cp. Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy 2016). People and countries differ in what kinds of morality should be taught in schools: peace, military service, patriotism, economic freedom, border protection, social ethics, or how to weigh the rights of individuals opposed to the needs of the community (cp. Durkheim 1973, Dill 2007, Westheimer 2008: 17). Moral education also differs in the degree to which it teaches specific norms, virtues, and values or rather instills how to achieve moral judgements based on rationality (Haidt 2006, Piaget 1965, Kohlberg 1976). The GSE Harvard Civic and Moral Education Initiative (2017) and the Center for Character and Citizenship (2017) at the University of Missouri develop research based curricula for moral education.

**Character Education.** The term character refers to the personality traits that define an individual (cp. Haidt 2006: 164). Classic educators such as von Humboldt (1964) or Dewey (1922) emphasize character education as an essential component of public education. Up to the present days, character education models have a strongly normative moral perspective that emphasizes societal norms, habits and expectations combinations and paths of character strengths and the composition of character strengths is unique to every individual (Linkins, Niemic, et al. 2015: 64). The goal of character education depending on positive psychology is thus more to evoke and cultivate individual character strengths rather than enforcing students to acquire specific traits that are deemed desirable by prevailing norms in given society. And in this way strongly overlap with moral education (cp. Linkins, Niemic, et al. 2015: 64 Lickona 1991, Berkowitz and Bier 2005 Lickona and Davidson 2005). Most approaches have "endorsed particular subsets of character strengths" founded on "cultural, religious, and/or political bias" (Linkins, Niemic, et al. 2015: 64, cp. also Peterson & Seligman 2004: 33). In practice, character education, moral education, and civic education are indeed intimately interwoven in school mission statements as well as in governmental documents (Althof and Berkowitz 2006: 507-508, also cp. for examples Westheimer 2008: 22).

Peterson and Seligman (2004) however make a precise distinction between moral virtues and character strengths: While "[v]irtues are the core values of moral philosophers and religious thinkers", character strengths are the psychological processes or mechanisms that display, practice, and cultivate these virtues (Haidt 2006 168, Peterson and Seligman 2004:13).

Peterson & Seligman (2004: 36 & 50) go further and derive six virtues that are ubiquitous across cultures and history: courage, justice, humanity, temperance, transcendence, and wisdom. Depending on these virtues they define character strengths that display and cultivate these virtues. "For example, the virtue of wisdom can be achieved through ... creativity, curiosity, love of learning, open-mindedness, and what we call perspective—having a "big picture on life." (Peterson & Seligman 2004: 36 & 50). This classification of character strengths assumes that good character can be achieved by very different combinations and paths of character strengths and the composition of character strengths is unique to every individual (Linkins, Niemic, et al. 2015: 64). The goal of character education depending on positive psychology is thus more to evoke and cultivate individual character strengths rather than enforcing students to acquire specific traits that are deemed desirable by prevailing norms in given society. The Jubilee Center for Character and Virtues (2017) at University of Birmingham advances interdisciplinary research on character, virtues, and human flourishing. Character.org (2017) is an organization that advocates the insertion of integrity, honesty, respect, and other core ethical values into education.

**Social Emotional Learning & Positive Youth development.** Social emotional learning and positive youth development are both related to character education but differ in their theoretical origin. Both usually start with the goal to solve a current need or problem such as aggressive behavior or drug abuse. While positive psychology nurtures those character strengths in each individual that are already inherent in its personality and thus aims at cultivating the best character in each individual with regard to universal moral virtues, social emotional learning and youth development programs often actively foster specific traits and behaviors to achieve a specific goal such as better academic performance, "better" behavior, or better health (Durlak, Weissberg et al. 2011). Social Emotional Learning is an umbrella term for a variety of interventions that shape kids' social behavior and their way to address their own emotions. The interventions include programs focused on very specific social and emotional competences such as empathy, communication, conflict solving, community life, or anger-management. As the intervention themselves, their aims are manifold as well and range from advancing academic performance (Zins et al., 2004), reducing antisocial and aggressive behavior (Wilson & Lipsey, 2007), preventing depressive symptoms (Horowitz & Garber, 2006) and drug use (Tobler et al., 2000), promoting mental health (Durlak & Wells, 1997; Greenberg, Domitrovich, & Bumbarger, 2001), or decreasing problem behaviors (Wilson, Gottfredson, & Najaka, 2001). Positive youth development programs are often seen as a part of social emotional learning and foster strengths that reduce negative outcomes such as substance abuse, violence, teen pregnancy, and academic failure (Gillham Reivich, Shatte 2002). It is not clear for most of the interventions how universally relevant the outcomes are across cultures. The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL 2017) is a leading organization advancing the practice of promoting social, and emotional learning for all children.

**21st century skills.** Another concept frequently used in the context of non-academic skill formation in schools is 21st century skills. This concept has a less strong theoretical and historical background and can rather be seen as a buzzword that points at current needs in the education system. For instance, 21st century skills refers to the notion that a specific, currently underdeveloped skillset – consisting of academic as well as non-academic skills - will become economically more important in the future (National Commission on the Excellence in Education 1983). A variety of governmental and non-governmental agencies have identified skills such as critical thinking and problem solving, or communication as important for the 21st century (Partnership for 21st century skills 2006, OECD 2005, SCANS 1991, Martinez and McGrath 2014). In contrast to character education and social emotional learning, these skills neither aim at moral virtues nor individual growth but on fulfilling clear economic requirements on the labor market. The Partnership for 21st century skills (2017) builds collaborative partnerships between actors in education, business, community, and government to identify new skill and knowledge requirements in a constantly changing world and promotes their inclusion in education curricula.



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## Background

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