



POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY INSTITUTE

21st Century Positive Education Australia leads the way

The **Positive Psychology Institute** is proud to announce, in conjunction with **Knox Grammar School, Sydney Australia** and the **University of Wollongong**, the launch of a **world-first scientifically evaluated, Positive Education Program**. The design and delivery of the **Knox Positive Education Program** will be the most comprehensive of its kind combining the science of Positive Psychology, Positive Organisational Scholarship and Appreciative Inquiry, supported by the methodology of evidence based coaching for sustainability.

The **Knox Positive Education Program** provides a proactive, multi-level approach to creating a positive school climate to support academic performance, mental fitness and the well-being of staff and students. The 3-year Program includes the development of explicit and implicit integrated components (including curriculum) aimed at teaching staff, students and key stakeholders specific strengths-based, solution focused knowledge and skills to apply in their school work and life.

The Positive Psychology Institute is excited to be working with Knox Grammar School, leaders in education, having just launched their innovative 21st Century Boarding Program. Whilst "Positive Education" may be an innovative approach, Knox recognizes the historic school ethos of "**creating purposeful lives**" articulated by the founding Headmaster, Neil McNeil in 1924. More than eighty years later, scientific research from the field of Positive Psychology supports McNeil with a growing body of research providing evidence that those living with meaning and purpose in their lives report higher levels of well-being.

In the words of John W. Weeks, Headmaster, Knox Grammar School, "While all schools will have 'pastoral care' systems, the question for all of us is to determine if they are appropriate for the needs of our students in the 21st Century. For me, the well-being of our young people is essential for an active and optimistic future. Schools must decide how to do this but at the heart of any effective pastoral care program are the teachers who deliver it. There needs to be focus in training and up-skilling teachers as mentor coaches of this nation's most precious asset....its youth".

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Whilst research grows in the field of Positive Psychology, scientific studies on multi-initiative large-scale Positive Education Programs is required. Schools have often missed out on vital training and development that is now commonplace in organisations around the globe. Dr. Lindsay Oades recognises this gap and has agreed to independently evaluate the Knox Positive Education Program as Director of the Australian Institute of Business Well-being (AIWB), Sydney Business School, University of Wollongong. Dr. Oades will be supported by several PhD students from the areas of psychology and business. The AIWB will also be hosting the 3rd Australian Positive Psychology and Well-being Conference in 2012 where Positive Education will be a formal stream.

Why Positive Education?

Across the globe educators, parents and concerned citizens are asking how we can best prepare our youth for successful adulthood in the twenty-first century (Huitt, 2010). Whilst this has been an age-old question, given the alarming increases in mental illness, youth suicide and societal breakdown, the need has become even greater for learning experiences that allow youth to flourish, lead purposeful lives and contribute to society as virtuous citizens. Schools are now seen as institutions whose role extends beyond academic competence in preparing the whole child (Huitt, 2010). In fact, the focus on schools as a means for preparing young people for adulthood is one of the hallmarks of developed countries (The National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983).

The quotes below highlight many of the reasons why schools in the 21st Century need to go beyond a narrow focus on academic performance, to a more holistic approach. Initiatives that support student, teacher, staff & leader well-being need to be included to create a positive school climate and culture that allows students and staff to flourish.

“Schools...are valued purely by exam results: although these are important, there needs to be balance... There is no space in the curriculum in which to explore and value students as whole people” (Anthony Seldon, Wellington College, UK).

In a national survey investigating a range of mental health issues in a stratified, random sample of 4,500 Australian youths (aged 4–17), 14.0% of those surveyed were found to have mental health problems (Sawyer et al, 2000).

“Teachers are taking five weeks of stress-related leave each year while thousands more are undergoing counseling (Daily Telegraph, 2009).



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"School climate can be a positive influence on the health of the learning environment or a significant barrier to learning" (Freiberg, 1988).

"There is substantial evidence from well controlled studies that skills that increase resilience, positive emotion, engagement and meaning can be taught to schoolchildren" (Seligman et al 2009).

"Our research at Sydney University has shown that evidence-based coaching methodologies can be used to enhance both student and teacher goal striving, resilience and well-being" (Green, 2010).

Better ways of leading change are spreading throughout the world (Cooperrider et al, 2008). Sir Ken Robinson states it is time for an "Education Revolution". The Positive Psychology Institute, Knox Grammar School and the University of Wollongong are proud to play a role.

Leading the design and delivery of the Knox Positive Education Program are Dr Suzy Green and Paula Robinson, supported by their team at Positive Psychology Institute, their Global Advisory Board and the inspiring leaders and staff at Knox Grammar School.

Stage 1 is now underway; further details will be released as the Program progresses.

*For further information please contact the Positive Psychology Institute
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