

## WHAT IS POSITIVE EDUCATION?

**P**ositive Education is the application of empirical findings of Positive Psychology to all aspects of teaching and learning, from classrooms to boardrooms, to faculty rooms and living rooms.

Positive Education seeks both higher academic achievement (with test score increases to back it up) and increased character strengths and virtues, self-awareness and emotional literacy, self-efficacy (not self-esteem), resilience, flexible and accurate thinking skills, strategies for high quality connections, and learned optimism.

**“Storybook happiness involves every form of pleasant thumbtwiddling; true happiness involves the full use of one’s powers and talents.”**

~John W. Gardner, Ph.D

Researchers from top universities like Harvard, Princeton, Stanford, Columbia, UCLA, Pennsylvania, Michigan, Florida, Virginia, and North



Carolina have shown that students with these positive core qualities are academically more motivated, well-rounded, and successful. Importantly, all of these positive core qualities are malleable and can be built. They can be taught

and learned through tested, proven approaches being published in the scientific literature, and often without requiring wholesale changes or expense in curriculum development.

psychology

**We use a “systems” approach to encompass whole school communities, integrating academic, wellness/athletic, fine arts, and leadership programs through the education of students, teachers, staff, parents, administrators and community leaders.**



**RESEARCH SHOWS OVER AND OVER THAT HAPPIER PEOPLE HAVE BETTER RELATIONSHIPS, EARN MORE MONEY, AND LIVE LONGER THAN UNHAPPIER PEOPLE. IF WE’RE FINDING WAYS THAT MAKE PEOPLE BOTH HAPPIER AND MORE PRODUCTIVE, DOESN’T IT MAKE SENSE WE TEACH THIS IN SCHOOLS?**

**A** New Take on ‘No Child Left Behind.’ Positive Psychology gives us evidenced-based tools which yield a common language for talking about strengths and

character. Taken into the classroom, this has huge ramifications for student success.

Remember the story of optimistic child and the starfish? There may be thousands of starfish littered on the beach, but each one thrown back in is one that is not lost. All of us, adults and kids alike, can learn the skills to be sure that no one is left behind.



**Flourishing Schools**

Positive Psychology for Education

**We make professional development a resource for transforming schools into thriving cultures of engagement and success!**

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# Well-being matters.



Positive psychology is the science of human success. Today we can assess and develop those habits of thinking, feeling, and relating that consistently create the best opportunity for success, we can help those engaged in the enterprise of education learn and practice these habits, and we can develop cultures in schools and school systems that foster and sustain these habits.

See the white paper “Positive Education” at [www.flourishingschools.org/page](http://www.flourishingschools.org/page) for complete citations to these and other references.

**Increase achievement, collaboration, self-discipline, engagement and well-being.**

**Prevent depression.**

**Increase high-quality interpersonal connections and flexibility.**

**Decrease teacher attrition and burnout.**

- Positive school climate predicts teacher and student satisfaction, lower stress levels, and better school results (Sangsue & Vorpe, 2000).
- Positive Psychology exercises can inoculate students against depression (Reivich, et al., 2005; Seligman, et al., 1999).
- Learning optimism skills at ages 10-12 halves the rate of depression as these

schoolchildren go through puberty (Reivich & Gillham, 2008).

- Teacher collective efficacy significantly influences not only the ways in which teachers approach their work, it also has a direct impact on students’ verbal, math, and science achievement (Goddard, et al, 2004).
- Happy people show less burnout (Iverson et al., 1998), less

emotional exhaustion (Wright & Cropanzano, 1998), and less absenteeism (George, 1989; Gil et al., 2004), and they are less likely to quit their jobs (Van Katwyk et al., 2000)

- Building high-quality connections with colleagues and supervisors strengthens employee attachment, quality of service, and adaptability (Dutton, et al., 2004).

- Students with learning goals take necessary risks and don’t worry about failure because each mistake becomes a chance to learn. Training students to adopt a growth mindset about intelligence has a catalytic effect on motivation and grades (Dweck, 2006).
- Both highly successful people and their leaders do not succeed by working hard on weak areas; they succeed by working hard

on strong areas. Weaknesses are not ignored--they are dealt with--but the emphasis is on using strengths (Gallup, 2007, 2009).

- Self-discipline is twice as good a predictor of high school grades as IQ. Gritty people are more likely to achieve success in school, work and other pursuits—perhaps because their passion and commitment help them endure the inevitable setbacks that

occur in any long-term undertaking. In other words, it’s not just talent that matters but also strengths of character (Duckworth, 2008).

- Students who are successful by traditional measures of grades, test scores, and years of education are not equally successful in life. Those with positive core self-evaluation will out earn their less positive peers by as much as 100% (Judge, 2007).