Creating a wellbeing culture in a school context

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What does a good day at school look like?
The plan

• Start with a tangible tool.
• My perspective and your perspective.
• Positive psychology and wellbeing science.
• Some essential ingredients to a successful wellbeing program.
• Case studies and examples.

A copy of these slides at: www.aaronjarden.com
The Geelong three breaths exercise

• **Breath One.** Take a deep breath. Notice *your physical body* and any points of pain or tension. Breath out slowly and release any tension away.

• **Breath Two.** Take a deep breath. As you breathe out think about what you are grateful for right at this very moment. Say to yourself “Right now I am grateful for...”.

• **Breath Three.** Take a deep breath. As you breathe out think what intentional state you want to be in right now. Say to yourself “My intention right now is to be (kind, open minded, relaxed, critical, curious etc)...”.

Developed by Justin Robinson at Geelong Grammar.
My perspective & your perspective

My goal

• “My goal is simple. It is complete understanding of human wellbeing, why it is as it is and how it can be improved.”

Within an organisational setting, it’s to enable organisations to invest in creating more rewarding, happier jobs for their people. To create positive workplaces where people are able to do meaningful and enjoyable work that taps into their greatest strengths and their most important goals. To capitalise on the unique intellectual and personal strengths of each employee by focusing less on getting employees to do their work and fixing problems and into promoting excellence by enabling them to do good work; their best work.

Wellbeing ⇔ Engagement ⇔ Productivity ⇔ Business success (academic success)

Wellness ⇔

Your goal

• What’s your goal? Do you need to focus more on what success looks like for your school at a student or staff level?
Positive psychology & wellbeing science

• Positive psychology is a branch of psychology that conducts scientific inquiry into the factors that help individuals, communities and organisations thrive by building on their strengths and virtues.

• Positive psychology aims to expand psychology from its focus on repairing the negatives in life to also promoting the positives in life: From what is wrong with individuals to what is right with them.

• Positive psychology is the study of topics as diverse as happiness, optimism, hope, flow, strengths, meaning, subjective wellbeing and personal growth...

• Positive education is “an umbrella term used to describe empirically validated interventions and programs from positive psychology that have impact on student wellbeing” (White & Murray, 2015).
Where is positive psychology going?

What is optimal human functioning?
My perspective

Aaron on wellbeing science

• The good life is best construed as a matrix that includes happiness, occasional sadness, a sense of purpose, playfulness, and psychological flexibility, as well autonomy, mastery, and belonging/connection.

• For me it’s not just about learning to be more positive – it’s about using scientifically-informed tools and strategies to make my thinking more flexible, accurate, clear, and expansive. This thinking (I hope) leads to greater happiness and more healthy behaviours.
Progress to date

Wellbeing science to date

• Progress:
  • Positive neuroscience
  • Positive education
  • Positive health
  • Military
  • Positive organisations
  • National accounts of wellbeing
  • Culture and wellbeing
  • Wellbeing assessment

• New areas emerging:
  • Discomfort
  • Strategic laziness
  • Positive failure
  • Play
  • Slowness/simplifying
  • Nature
  • Wellbeing technology
  • The most disadvantaged (little samples)
  • Physical health and wellbeing
  • Risk and free range kids
Let’s taste it

First up, let’s taste it

- **Step 1**: Pair up.

- **Step 2**: In 2 minutes (1 minute each), tell a story – a thoughtful narrative with a beginning, middle and end – that illustrates *when you are at your best* at school.

- Note: Swap when you hear the bell the first time after 1 minute, stop completely when you hear the bell the second time after 2 minutes.
Positive introduction

Key point:

• Wield your strengths at school – they are paths to engagement and enjoyment.

• It’s almost impossible to be at your best while not using your strengths...
Essential ingredients

A recipe of essential ingredients to a successful wellbeing program:

• Beautiful questions.
• Wellbeing assessment and evaluation.
• A wellbeing framework and models.
• Positive leadership and champions.
• Tools and programs.
• Managing risk, but also taking risks.
• A whole bunch of other stuff, like:
  • Onboarding and communications and simplifying messages.
  • Stakeholder engagement.
  • Resources - time and money.
  • Timing and readiness (receptivity) for change – wellbeing is hard work and takes time.
  • Program scope and focus, and evolution of initiatives.
Essential ingredients

Beautiful questions
“Answer not important, unless ask the right question”

1. What’s working?
   • What has already been embedded within the school?
   • Why is it working?
     – What (or more likely who) has sustained this embedding?
     – What are the positive processes? How did they happen?

2. What has failed?
   • Why?
   • Disengaged health and safety?

3. How will you know wellbeing has worked?
   • Types of evidence and triangulating information.
   • Pre – post and longer term assessment.

4. Is the school ready and willing for wellbeing?
   • Or more likely ‘who’ in the school is ready?

5. Is the school connected to wellbeing people, expertise and knowledge? (support)

6. Why are the staff working there? What do they want out of work? What does a good day at school look like?

7. Is there much point increasing wellbeing, when illbeing is bad or getting worse?

8. How will the school capitalise on other opportunities during the wellbeing change?

9. How do you celebrate success?
Essential ingredients

Wellbeing assessment and evaluation

• Assessments create opportunities for conversations, conversations improve wellbeing (also use existing events, and create new wellbeing events to do so).
• Assessments can help unpick cultural and contextual considerations.
• Assessments allow data-driven decision making (esp if capture IV’s).
• Specific organisations:
  • Work on Wellbeing: www.workonwellbeing.com (declaration of conflict)
  • Happiness Works: www.happinessatworksurvey.com
• Specific schools:
  • Wellbeing Profiler: www.wbprofiler.com.au
  • Flourishing at School: www.flourishingatschool.com
  • Assessing Wellbeing in Education: www.awesomeschools.com
Essential ingredients

A wellbeing framework and various models
Essential ingredients

A wellbeing framework and various models

• Me, we, us

• All organizations are complex and dynamic systems; not simple and linear. As a result, a simple cause-and-effect approach to embedding change will not work.
Novel PPI’s

Another framework to locate PPI’s

• The Cognitive Model.
Essential ingredients

Frameworks and models

PERMA+

5 ways to wellbeing

Ten keys to happier living

5 domains of functioning (Rusk and Waters)

Positive Emotion
Engagement
Relationships
Meaning
Accomplishment

Optimism
Physical Activity
Nutrition
Sleep

Ten keys to happier living

Giving
- Do things for others

Relating
- Connect with people

Exercising
- Take care of your body

Appreciating
- Notice the world around

Trying out
- Keep learning new things

Direction
- Have goals to look forward to

Resilience
- Find ways to bounce back

Emotion
- Take a positive approach

Acceptance
- Be comfortable with who you are

Meaning
- Be part of something bigger
Essential ingredients

A wellbeing framework and various models

- Comparing models.

Flourishing

- Positive emotion
- Engagement
- Positive relationships
- Meaning and purpose
- Accomplishment/competence
Essential ingredients

Positive leadership and champions

- Champions start wellbeing programs and keep them going. You want them championing the change from the bottom up and inside out. (diff between supporter and champion)
- Positive leaders have a simple clear co-developed vision that is idealist, visual, long-term, challenging and realistic.
- Change must have a clear strategic mandate and be linked to a compelling rationale.
- Positive leadership is crucial:
  - Leadership involvement was cited as the most effective factor for a successful wellbeing program by 59 percent of employer respondents (State of Workplace Wellbeing Survey).
Essential ingredients

Wellbeing tools: Apps and e-learning

• Make a distinction between “wellbeing skill building tools” and tools that “increase wellbeing”.

Essential ingredients

Risks

• Overpromise, under deliver – selling false hope. Hard to come back from.
• Bad advice, poor program logic.
• Low ROI, look bad to those above.
• Influence of the bad apples and win-lose power struggles.
• Expecting fast change – wellbeing is hard work and takes time.
• A vision alone is not sufficient to capture the hearts and minds of everyone but it is a good start. People must be able to make the link with what is important to them personally.
• Be prepared to ‘course correct’. Very few change initiatives end up exactly where they predicted at the outset, for many reasons. Ensure you have checkpoints.
• A lack of leadership and top level support is the main reason for the failure to sustain wellbeing changes in an organisation.
Essential ingredients

Other stuff:

• Clear, minimal, transparent, communication (no long docs, less email) – builds trust.
• Sense of meaning, being autonomy supportive, and job-crafting.
• Endorse things officially.
• No one-size model – scientifically informed practice, trial and error.
• Create time and space for wellbeing (if add, take away also), and timing important (when to introduce, when to embed).
• Play is much underrated. As is simplification.
• Use of strengths usually not realised.
• Have an implementation plan. Implementation science has a lot to offer…
• Linking wellbeing metrics to KPI’s for long term sustainability.
• Pull people into a better future, rather than push them from the past.
Essential ingredients

Create your own checklist, it might look like this:

- The workplace has to ‘feel’ good. ✓
- Play to everyone's strengths. ✓
- Encourage risk and failure. ✓
- Build social capital. ✓
- Be grateful, authentic and appreciative at all levels. ✓
- Create the conditions for change. ✓
- Create positive practices. ✓
Case studies & examples
Examples

Some good examples:

• CEO Friday lunch.
• 10/2 rule - Ritz-Carlton.
• Cape of awesomeness.
• Gratitude walls.
• Entrance door activities and messaging.
• Team meetings – start with ‘what went well?’ walking meetings.
• Gamification (leader boards, points, etc.).
• Visual artefacts
Examples

David Mezinec – Principal Tenison Woods College, South Australia

- In essence, a critical question to be asked in relation to Positive Education in Schools on scale and over time, is what makes it stick?

- What are the learnings of schools that have embraced Positive Education in relation to success of their programs over the long term measured by the success of their students?

- How have their improved whole school environments informed by Positive Education increased student productivity, pro-social skills, academic outcomes and life satisfaction?

- What measurable and sustained impacts have the application of Positive Education had on teacher, student and parent wellbeing behaviours?

- How and why did schools select their Positive Education Approach?

- What outcomes were achieved?

- Did the outcomes generate a change in behaviour in staff, students and parents?
Recap

Some key points

• When you are at your best, you’re deploying your strengths.
• Geelong three breaths is portable.
• Select tools wisely, and place them in a framework / model.
• Evaluation and leadership are crucial to sustainable change.
• Experiment with and build your own wellbeing skills first.
What does a good day at school look like?
Nothing GREAT was ever achieved without enthusiasm

Emerson
Shout out - Dr Debra Perich Perth College
Questions?
(or applause)