



Success and Wellbeing: The Holy Grail of Schools

by Michael Herbert

The **PERMA** model for Wellbeing in Schools is based upon the Positive Psychology work of Martin Seligman *et alia*:

Positive Emotions, **E**ngagement, **R**elationships, **M**eaning, **A**ccomplishment

A couple of years ago I received a phone call from a principal doing a referee check for a friend applying for a key position in a secondary school. I remember one specific question: Is this person a pastoral care person or a teaching and learning person?

It seemed a strange question, implying an educator could only be one or the other but not both. Perhaps we have labelled ourselves and our colleagues along traditional pastoral care/teaching-learning lines for too long.

According to Martin Seligman, schools are happy, healthy and educationally successful when they have good PERMA because this will lead to good educational outcomes.

This is a critical wellbeing insight that not only applies to students but also to members of staff. Let's look at it this way:

When a member of staff or a student can tick each of the five boxes of the PERMA model, they are far more likely to be enthusiastic, committed and willing to achieve their very best as either educators (staff) or learners (students). Therefore, good PERMA forms the basis for good educational outcomes.

But Seligman takes this one step further, emphasising that good educational outcomes will also lead to good PERMA. He sees the flow of PERMA and educational outcomes as bi-directional with each leading to the other.

I do not know of any staff members or students who achieve excellent educational outcomes but have 'bad' PERMA.

Wellbeing and success are intrinsically linked. Can you think of anyone who says or feels they are a failure and is able to say their wellbeing is excellent? Almost certainly not.

School communities thrive and flourish when they make a committed effort to protect the wellbeing of all members. This is a responsibility of all staff. It is also a responsibility we should be explicitly teaching our students.

Whether you are a staff member or a student, it is much easier to get out of bed every morning and go to a school where;

- you experience **p**ositive emotions that enable you to enjoy and cherish the present in a way that is contagious,
- you are **e**ngaged in experiences and activities that help you feel confident, productive and valuable,
- you treasure your **r**elationships which allow for give and take, to share as well as listen, to make connections for the benefit of self and others
- you can apply **m**eaning to your gifts and talents, why you have been blessed with them, and the opportunity to express them.
- you can define your day in terms of **a**ccomplishment: "I am doing it, and I am doing it very well. I leave school each day with a sense of wellbeing, success and satisfaction".

Wellbeing and successful educational are intertwined. They are certainly a responsibility of the Principal and Senior Leaders. They are **MOST DEFINITELY** the responsibility of every person (student or staff member) who walks through the front gate of a school each day. Schools that build a culture of "We are all responsible for our wellbeing and success" will thrive and flourish.

gratitude
sentence starter

I am grateful for the kindness
shown to me

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HAPPY SILLY THOUGHTS ...



**Everything is
ten times
funnier when
you are not
supposed to
laugh**

Life is **LIKE** a camera.

FOCUS ON WHAT IS IMPORTANT,

**CAPTURE THE GOOD
TIMES,**

**DEVELOP FROM THE
NEGATIVES,**

and if things don't work out,

**TAKE
ANOTHER
SHOT.**

