

APRIL NEWSLETTER

PESA National Conference 2019



Dr. Lea Waters and I with her amazing strength-based parenting book.

CHARACTER STRENGTH HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE POSITIVE EDUCATION SCHOOLS ASSOCIATION (PESA) NATIONAL CONFERENCE

This month I attended PESA's 5th National Conference, which showcases the latest research and practise in Positive Education - wellbeing in schools. Over 400 people attended from 15 countries.

As always, character strengths were strongly advocated. Here I will share some highlights.

Professor Lea Waters - Strength-Based Teaching: Bringing Out the Best in Students and Teachers. Dr Waters highlighted that character strengths are an approach not a curriculum. It is about focusing first on what's working before weaknesses. This does not mean that we ignore problems, but we start with looking at what is right in the classroom, staffroom etc. We can focus on sustaining character strength development by *seeing* and *building* strengths. This becomes a reinforcing upward spiral - the more you see the more you build and visa versa.

There is extensive research supporting strengths, including that they increase students': **academic results, engagement in school, satisfaction with school, sense of belonging, hope, self-efficacy and pro-social behaviour.**

In terms of teachers, a strength-based approach increases teachers': **professional engagement, work enjoyment, resilience, sense of purpose, hope, life satisfaction and subjective wellbeing**

Key points:

1. Strengths can be taught and it is not an effort-able process. Strengths are already there, within all of us.
2. Strengths apply to any age groups
3. Strengths can be used to help support the curriculum explicitly and implicitly. Implicit education can occur in parent-teacher interviews, parent newsletters, strength spotting in plays and sport and strength awards.

Joanne Alford- Using a Strengths Focus Classroom Climate and Behaviour Support Plans. Ms Alford is the Principal of Berry Street, a specialist independent secondary school spread across 4 campuses in Victoria. Berry Street specialises in working with students who have experienced trauma.

Ms Alford states that the benefits of developing a character strength language for teaching and to manage behaviour are:

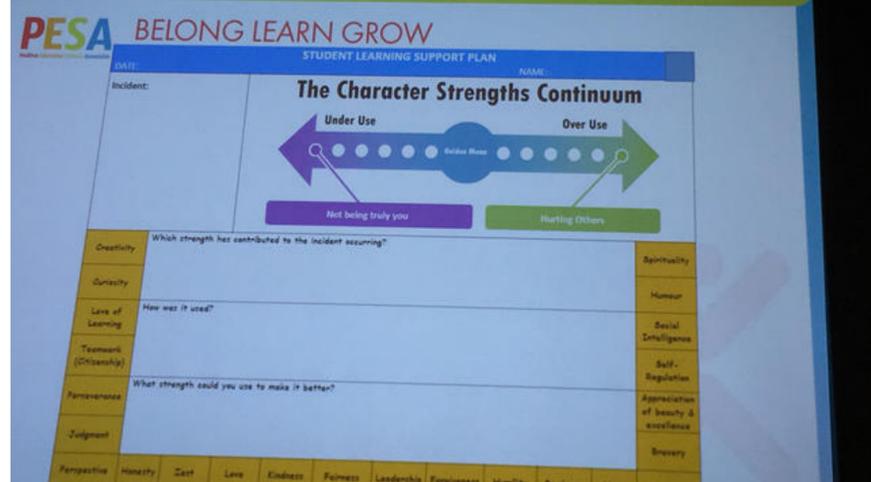
- Positive learning behaviours are a prerequisite for academic success
- Increases inclusivity
- Increases resilience - strengths are internal resources that can be cultivated
- Improves relationships - strengths encourage you to appreciate others.

She states that before we use strengths with problems we need to understand strengths. This can be done by: strength spotting, talking about under and overuse of strengths, discussing stories of strengths in action and developing strengths.

Conversation starters: "What does an overuse of gratitude look like?" False/insincere. "Overuse of kindness?" Taken advantage of. "What would I like look with no kindness?"

Restorative Justice suggestion: "You have the character strengths of... Today was not your day. Let's talk about what we need to do to restore the relationship that has been challenged today. How do you think she felt when you said that? What can we do to make the relationship right again?"

Ms Alford describes character strengths as "24 ways to like a person".



Berry Street's Student Learning Support Plan



EXPLORING CHARACTER STRENGTHS

We are excited to announce that we have recently had NESA approval for a 3 hour workshop - Exploring Character Strengths. This is recommended for all Strong Minds schools as a means to embed character strengths post workshop 1.

Get in touch ASAP for further information or to make a booking

[Book Now](#)

GROWING MENTALLY TOUGH TEENS

Do you know any secondary schools interested in promoting wellbeing? We can highly recommend the recently published 'Growing Mentally Tough Teens' Mental Toughness Curriculum for 14-16 year olds.

It was created by Senior PI Associate, Daniela Falecki and CEO of The Positivity Institute, Dr Suzy Green, and was a sell out at the PESA Conference.

[Learn More](#)



Need to enhance the wellbeing of your school? After an evidence-based approach that enhances wellbeing for all staff, students and families? Then check our our Strong Minds whole school wellbeing package.

[More Info](#)

Warmest wishes,
Nicole and the team at
Growing Strong Minds

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