

**The more a class is a
flourishing class, the more
they are a class who loves
to learn for life.**



Resources to help your classroom flourish

Positive Schools

Positive Schools mental health and wellbeing conferences provide an opportunity for teachers to learn up-to-date knowledge, ideas and strategies about positive education and wellbeing.

www.positiveschools.com.au

The Positive Times

Is a new online newspaper offering an array of articles, strategies and information about wellbeing and positive education in Australian schools and colleges.

Positive Times is free for all educators to access.

www.positivetimes.com.au

KidsMatter and MindMatters

KidsMatter (for primary schools) and *MindMatters* (for secondary schools) offer free support and services to develop an up-to-date whole-school approach to wellbeing in your school. They will help you build on the programs and initiatives you have and offer additional strategies and initiatives to support a flourishing school community.

www.kidsmatter.edu.au and www.mindmatters.edu.au



For information on mental health and wellbeing programs available to schools, visit **www.waamh.org.au**.

The Flourishing Class

**A guide to help teachers help their
students to flourish at school, and beyond.**



Dr Helen Street is an applied social psychologist working towards improved wellbeing in Australian education. She works as an academic, presenter and writer.



Representing the community-managed mental health sector in Western Australia

One of the most important aims of education

is to help students flourish in the classroom.

Students who flourish at school are more likely to feel happy in themselves, in their relationships and in their ongoing studies and careers.

Flourishing students develop a love of lifelong learning along with competent social, emotional and academic skills. They are more likely to develop high levels of wellbeing, become self-directed, and socially and emotionally competent. They are also more likely to leave school with a sense of purpose, positive values and a healthy curiosity about life ahead. As such, to flourish at school is the best way to flourish beyond school. Flourishing students are more likely to become flourishing adults who successfully pursue personal and professional goals throughout life.

Students of all ages and all abilities have the potential to flourish if given the right opportunities, the right environment and the right support.

It is certainly true that not every student will excel academically, but they can all flourish. They can all learn to value themselves and those around them; and strive to become valued members of their community.

No matter what happens in the exam room, life success comes from the acquisition of positive life skills more than it comes from grades.

Supporting flourishing involves creating and maintaining an environment where children feel physically and emotionally safe; where they have a voice of their own and where they are encouraged to engage with the process of learning.

Here are some of the ways in which flourishing can be enhanced and supported in your classroom

Supporting flourishing: Encourage and maximise

1. Maximise positive relationships – get to know students as individuals –ask them ‘how they are doing’ not simply ‘what they are doing’. Provide opportunities for students to build positive relationships with all members of their class. Celebrate birthdays and class successes. Make time for students to share ideas, wishes and feelings in an informal way (e.g. in a circle at the start of the day).
2. Encourage a nurturing environment – Create an environment where students feel able to express themselves freely, have a sense of belonging and have the opportunity to form close bonds with others. Mix up seating and work groups. Involve everyone in learning tasks and activities.
3. Maximise opportunities for collaboration – Students work optimally in groups. Encourage students to help and support each other in all aspects of learning.
4. Encourage autonomy (choice) – Students need to have a voice in their classroom to develop a sense of ownership over their learning. Let them decide the rules for class behaviour (with your guidance). Let them make decisions about the order of the timetable and what homework they do and how they do it.
5. Maximise task engagement (interesting and relevant content). Content needs to be engaging to be enjoyable. This means providing ongoing feedback and structure, defined goals and relevance to everyday life. Ask your students ‘Why do you think we are learning this?’

Discourage and minimise

1. Minimise or eliminate the use of extrinsic rewards and punishments. These may lead to short-term compliance but they lead to long-term disengagement with learning. Ask children to reflect on the intrinsic (personal) rewards of a task. Ask ‘What is great about doing this?’
2. Minimise controlling behavior that leads to resentment and resistance. Rather than telling students what to do, offer choices and options (e.g. provide homework options). Let students have a say as owners of their own learning.
3. Minimise inflexible rules and instructions. Students differ from each other in terms of how and when they learn. Be prepared to allow flexibility. If a child is always late to class, they may benefit from a kind word more than a harsh consequence.
4. Minimise hard work! Ideas of hard work conjure up ideas of doing lots of things we do not want to do. Focus on creating a positive and engaging learning experience rather than one that is seen as ‘difficult’.
5. Minimise a focus on outcomes, and maximise a focus on process. A focus on the process and engagement of learning leads to a more sustained love of learning and to better outcomes.