

Visible Wellbeing: Building Positive Relationships in Schools

A students' sense of school belonging has emerged in education research as a core factor influencing learning and wellbeing. Meta-analysis research by Dr. Lea Waters and her colleagues shows that when a student feels that they have good relationships at school they have better psychological functioning, higher self-esteem, stronger self-identity and greater resilience – all of which support more effective learning. Sadly, the international PISA (Program for International Student Assessment) research shows that more and more students are reporting high levels of loneliness and disconnection from school. This is concerning given that medical research and social psychologist have shown that loneliness has damaging effects on both psychological and physical health. In fact, loneliness is experienced by the body in a similar way to physiological stress and has been shown to damage our immune responses.

Schools have always been both academic institutions *and* social institutions and can offer an antidote to the rising levels of youth loneliness. The field of positive psychology provides schools with simple and easy ways to help students meet their social needs and thus be ready for and engaged in learning.

After exploring the research evidence on relation to school belonging, this workshop will take teachers through an Appreciative Inquiry exercise that helps them to identify what is at the heart of positive relationships at school. Once these factors have been identified teachers will work in groups to find ways to more intentionally and strategically bring these factors into the social climate of their classroom. This workshop will introduce teachers to strategies such as active-constructive responding and the use of brain breaks to enhance a sense of connection amongst students.

Having helped schools to implement positive education in the United States, Australia, New Zealand, Denmark, Hong Kong, China, Canada, and the United Arab Emirates, Lea weaves together her science with concrete school examples and best practices to help teachers make wellbeing more visible in their classrooms.

CORE LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

- Research showing how and why school belonging is necessary for schools to build.
- Appreciative Inquiry exercise to help teachers identify the factors that create belonging in their schools.
- Practical methods and examples for how to create positive relationships.

FORMAT: Half-day workshop. (Can also form part of the two-day Visible Wellbeing Course).

IDEAL AUDIENCES: Teachers, Principals, School Administrators, Teaching Assistants, School Counselors, Psychologists, Schools Nurses, Mental Health Staff.

“To say that Lea Waters presentations sparked a strengths movement in our school would be an understatement! Having Lea Waters here at our school was absolutely the boost we needed to move our school further ahead in the field of positive education.”

— **Kirsten Johnston, Associate Director of Guidance, Lakefield College School**

ABOUT LEA:

[Lea Waters](#), PhD is a professor, published author, psychologist, internationally-celebrated speaker and one of the world's leading experts on Positive Education, Positive Organizations and Strength-Based Parenting and Teaching.

Professor Waters is the Founding Director and Inaugural Gerry Higgins Chair in Positive Psychology at the Centre for Positive Psychology, [University of Melbourne](#) where she has held an academic position for more than 23 years. Lea holds affiliate positions at Cambridge University and the University of Michigan and serves on the [Scientific Board at Berkeley University's](#) Greater Good Science Center. Lea is the 2017-2019 President of the International Positive Psychology Association, serves on the Council of Happiness and Education for the [World Happiness Council](#), is the Patron of Flourishing Education Japan and Ambassador for the Positive Education Schools Association.

As a researcher, she has published over 100 scientific articles and book chapters.

Her book, [The Strength Switch: How The New Science of Strength-Based Parenting Can Help Your Child and Your Teen to Flourish](#), was the top release on Amazon in the parenting category, was listed as one of the [top reads for 2017](#) by Berkeley University's Greater Good Center and was listed in the Top Five Books on Happiness for Children in the UK's Top Five site. It has been translated into Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Taiwanese, Hungarian, Arabic, Russian, French, and Spanish.

In 2015, Professor Waters was listed as one of Australia's [Top 100 Women of Influence](#) by the Financial Review and Westpac Bank. She has been listed in the Marques 'Who's Who in the World' since 2009 and was included in the 2017 edition of Who's Who of Australian Women.

Lea is committed to spreading the science of positive psychology as widely as possible and has been featured on *Morning Dose* (The CW, Dallas, TX, USA), *Revolution School* (ABC, Australia), *Matter of Fact* (ABC, Australia), *Destination Happiness* (Channel Nine, Australia), *Today Extra* (Channel Nine, Australia), *National Nightly News* (Channel Ten, Australia), *The Project* (TV3, New Zealand), *The Café* (NZTV, New Zealand), *Breakfast* (NZTV, New Zealand). Lea is also frequently featured in print media, including *The Wall Street Journal*, *TIME Magazine*, *The Washington Post*, *The Atlantic*, *The Globe* (Toronto), *The Guardian* (UK), and *The Age* (Australia). Lea's TEDx talk, [Warning: Being positive is not for the faint hearted!](#) explores how small positive steps can make a big impact on the wellbeing of ourselves and others, has been viewed more than 118,000 times.

Lea is the founder of [Visible Wellbeing](#), an initiative that brings the science of wellbeing and learning to schools. Visible Wellbeing is being used in schools across Australia, Asia, Canada, New Zealand and United Arab Emirates. Her newest program, [The Strengths Switch](#), offers parents and educators free resources, online courses, and facilitated courses to better build the strengths of families across the globe.

