FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

International Positive Education Network: New global campaign group challenges narrow, exam-driven approach to education

A new global organisation, the International Positive Education Network (IPEN), has launched to campaign for a radical shift in how young people are educated.

IPEN's campaign is built around evidence showing that developing pupils' character strengths and wellbeing is as important as academic achievement to their future success and happiness. With a rising epidemic of young mental health problems and a narrowing of the school experience, the need for a new approach to education is urgent.

We believe that positive education – which values the development of character strengths and wellbeing as much academic achievement – is the only way to help young people flourish and contribute to the flourishing of others.

IPEN is calling on like-minded individuals and organisations to sign our Manifesto for Positive Education and demonstrate the strong desire for change we believe exists around the world.

Commenting on the launch, James O'Shaughnessy, chair of IPEN and former director of policy to UK Prime Minister David Cameron, said:

“Young people are crying out for a new approach to education, one that prepares them to live a good, meaningful life that is full of purpose.

“That is where positive education comes in. It supports intellectual development and the cultivation of the mind by introducing young people to the best that's been thought and known. But it places equal value on the development of character strengths to help young people flourish.

“Academics plus character – not one, or the other, but both.

“We are calling on everyone who supports this broader approach to education to sign our Manifesto and make their voices heard.”
Martin Seligman, Senior Adviser to IPEN and the Zellerbach Professor of Psychology at the University of Pennsylvania, said:

“The high prevalence worldwide of depression among young people, the small rise in life satisfaction, and the synergy between learning and positive emotion all argue that the skills for flourishing should be taught in school.

“There is substantial evidence that students can be taught good character, resilience, positive emotion, engagement and meaning, in such a way that also supports and amplifies their academic studies.

“By taking this broader approach – which I call positive education – we can give our young people the skills and knowledge they need to thrive.”

Simon Murray, IPEN steering committee member and Headmaster of St Peter’s College in Adelaide, Australia:

“Our country’s greatest asset is our young people. However, more young Australians die each year from suicide than from car accidents, and among Australians aged 12-25 years depression is the most common mental health problem. This must change.

“Positive education is a preventative approach to mental health and a proactive approach to character development. It is a blend of the science of wellbeing with best practice in learning and teaching.

“I believe it is every young person’s right to have the keys to flourish in the same way it is their right to reading, writing and numeracy. IPEN will play a pivotal role to make this vision a reality.”

IPEN would like to thank Live Happy (www.livehappy.com) for its ongoing financial support and providing many of the financial and human resources for its establishment.

For further information, please contact James O’Shaughnessy at james@floreat.org.uk
www.ipositive-education.net

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Further information:
Full list of the international steering committee members:

James O'Shaughnessy
Chair of the Steering Committee of IPEN
Founder of Floreat Education
UK

Martin Seligman
Co-Chair of the Steering Committee of IPEN
Zellerbach Family Professor of Psychology
Director, Positive Psychology Center, University of Pennsylvania
USA

Ilona Boniwell
Director, Positran and Visiting Principal Lecturer
Anglia Ruskin University
UK

Angela Duckworth
Associate Professor
Department of Psychology, University of Pennsylvania
USA

Hector Escamilla
Rector
Universidad TecMilenio
Mexico

Kristján Kristjánsson
Deputy Director
Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues, University of Birmingham
UK

Lim Lai Cheng
Senior Advisor & Fellow
School of Social Sciences, Singapore Management University
Singapore

Simon Murray
Headmaster
St Peter's College, Adelaide
Australia
James Pawelski
Director of Education and Senior Scholar
Positive Psychology Center, University of Pennsylvania
USA

Kaiping Peng
Chair, Department of Psychology
Tsinghua University
China

Dominic Randolph
Head of School
Riverdale Country School, New York
USA

Christopher Stawski
Director for Strategic Program Initiatives
John Templeton Foundation
USA

LiveHappy & Success Partners
Jeff Olsen
CEO
Deborah K. Heisz
COO and Co-Founder of LiveHappy
Stuart Johnson
CEO Success Magazine