

## **Positive Education at Genazzano**

Genazzano has long placed an importance on the growth and development of the whole person through the educational experience. Along with the pioneering work of Dr. Martin Seligman on increasing optimism and positive emotions, research in the fields of coping and resilience in the 90s and early 2000s, pointed to mounting significant mental health issues in young people. It was suggested that schools and parents can take a proactive and protective approach by teaching adaptive thinking skills that increase optimism and resilience.

In 2004, the College began a planned promotion of resilience through explicit and implicit teaching and learning using Grotberg's (1995) model. This model increases awareness of external supports, internal strengths and personal industry and initiative through the simple framework of: "I Have, I Am, I Can." A few years later Genazzano implemented a strategic approach to wellbeing education with a school-wide program. Dedicated time at each year level was seen as a priority for the purpose of delivering a high quality and comprehensive wellbeing education. The program is underpinned by the vision, mission and Spirituality of the Sisters FCJ, who founded Genazzano. The program is called 'GenSTAR' and the emphasis is to promote wellbeing together with achievement.

The GenSTAR program is grounded in psychological theory and research from fields of performance psychology, positive psychology, resilience and coping. The Positive Education model, PERMA, (Seligman 2011) provides a valuable template to guide the teaching of skills to increase positive emotions and wellbeing. It also gives a framework to highlight the many connections with other aspects of the curriculum and College life that promote, complement and support the development of positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning and achievement: Religious and Faith values and curriculum, creative arts, sports, music, student leadership, community outreach and co-curricular opportunities.

The College has chosen to feature 'performance psychology' in education, which is about promoting the thinking and behaviours that assist students to increase confidence and personal wellness to optimize their achievement in academic and other life pursuits. The benefits of performance psychology skills training have been well researched and documented in many fields including sports, music and business. In 2012, Genazzano worked with the University of Melbourne's Centre for Music and Mind to evaluate the performance psychology skills program delivered at the College. 63 music students participated in the study. Results indicated a significant increase in confidence, optimism and resilience as well as reduced anxiety.

Genazzano FCJ College is structured in Stages of Learning rather than a Primary/Secondary construct and the GenSTAR program is designed to be appropriate for each age and stage of

learning and to sequentially build upon skills and knowledge over a student's time at the College.

Some of the key areas of focus include:

- Growth Mindset
- Confidence
- Mindfulness
- Utilizing Feedback
- Reflection
- Resilience
- Emotional Regulation
- Optimistic Thinking Skills
- Positive Relationships
- Gratitude
- Empathy and forgiveness
- Leadership and Service
- Character Strengths
- Goals & Motivation
- Preparation
- Focus
- Mental Rehearsal
- Skills Training and Practise
- Coping
- Flow
- Relaxation
- Health and wellness
- Cultivating Humour

Genazzano is pleased to have had many staff embrace training and practice in the principles of Positive Education, promoting resilience and teaching performance psychology skills. The College has regularly engaged speakers, delivered in-house training and provided opportunities for staff to attend training, conferences and courses to enhance staff knowledge and enthusiasm for wellbeing education. The College will be further promoting staff education in Positive Education with the support of the University of Melbourne in 2014 and 2015.

The College is currently commencing work on research in the areas of:

- Promoting flow in teaching and learning in the Early Years
- The use of positive coaching and growth mindset to increase engagement and motivation in mathematics
- Performance psychology skills training to reduce anxiety in public speaking.

Genazzano's GenSTAR program is one that will continue to evolve and grow. The College welcomes the opportunity to collaborate with other schools and educational institutions and to learn from their work, practices and research. Genazzano hopes to contribute to this important area of education through continued research and sharing of experiences and resources.

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