



Con Madden – Learning Curve Education Consultant

Having spent years in educational and leadership roles Con knows how schools function at an optimal level. As a school and wellbeing leader he has lead by example, in both articulating and implementing Positive Education Programs with outstanding success; setting a benchmark in supporting and building social-emotional resilience in his students, teachers and parents.

In a natural progression, Con is now a leading Positive Education presenter across Australasia. Joining forces with Mick Walsh, the author of the Learning Curve Positive Education Program, he presents to School Leadership Teams and their staff on how to initiate the process of cultivating and implementing a Positive Education culture in their schools. Con is keenly sought after to present in schools and at conferences on the importance of boosting school communities' wellbeing through the Learning Curve Program.

Con is passionate about increasing the wellbeing of staff and students alike in order to create school cultures that flourish and develop young people who are happy in themselves and who are prepared for the future. Such school cultures exhibit a greater state of student wellbeing.

Educating staff and parents on the natural trajectory of building social-emotional resilience, which the Learning Curve facilitates, is what he focuses on. The sequential stages to accomplishing this are self-regulation, self-awareness, understanding of others and the capacity to influence those around them.

Teacher wellbeing and professional development is paramount to Con. How can students flourish when their teachers aren't flourishing? At teacher wellbeing forums, he shares practical positive psychology strategies teachers can use to enhance their own state of wellbeing. In collaboration with Mick Walsh, Con introduces teachers to the practical online activities available on the website www.learningcurve.com.au

Con empowers students and teachers to:

- welcome challenges and enjoy positive emotions to flourish
- look to the future with optimism and hope
- show in their every thought, word and action that other people matter
- understand neuroplasticity that their brains rewire themselves after every experience they have
- possess growth mindsets to believe and accept that by lifting their efforts to learn new processes and approaches they will grow their abilities in all areas of their lives
- believe learning is all about improving their abilities, not proving them
- manage and overcome hardships and adversity facing them in the 21st century.

Con has presented Keynotes and Workshops

- Positive Schools Conferences throughout Australia and Singapore
- Presented to schools in Hong Kong over the past two years
- Full day Professional Development Programs at schools throughout Australia
- PESA Conferences
- Tasmanian Principals Association Conference
- Tasmanian ACHPER Conference
- School Wellbeing Practicums throughout Australia
- Skype Practicums to International Schools
- Various Professional Development sessions to Independent, Catholic and Government Schools across Australia

Con's collaborative and leadership experience:

- College Leader of a Victorian Secondary College
- Committee member of Victorian Association of Secondary School Principals
- Member of the Australian Principals Federation
- Attendee at ASPA International Principals Conference
- Attendee at Canberra Principal think tanks.
- Accounting Network Leader
- Mentor for other school leaders
- Member of Well Being Network
- Leader of Assistant Principals Network at a regional level
- Liaison and collaboration with Michael Walsh (author of the Learning Curve Program)

Con stresses that for students to flourish, accurate language needs be adopted and used consistently across the school when talking about Positive Education, including gratitude, emotions, neuroscience, flow, grit and active constructive responding; in time, doing this builds a strengths culture.

Following are examples of Positive Education strategies and activities Con has created and implements:

- *Weekly Wellbeing Builders* – develop one of the elements of wellbeing and students record two positive things they will start doing.
- *Weekly Wellbeing Builder (Visible) Reflections* – opportunities for students to grow, explore, extend, engage and enjoy seeing themselves building their wellbeing (website).
- *Are You Becoming Your Best Possible You?* – students discover their best possible self and then strive to become that person through the program's activities.
- *Mindfulness Activities* – students share how they felt when they are connected with themselves and the present moment to watch their thoughts coming and going.
- *Resilience Builders* – explore the emotions they felt, strengths and positive self-talk they used and positive personal descriptors to describe themselves; building emotional literacy.
- *Wellbeing Fitness Challenges* – students and teachers use their strengths to meet the weekly challenge to boost their wellbeing and develop their self-regulation and self-awareness.
- *What Went Well this week and why?* – hunt and record the good stuff; cultivating gratitude.
- *Weekly Character Strength* – what can they do to use this strength to make a positive difference at home, at school and in the community to experience positive emotions.
- *Thinking Traps* – look at different emotional hijacking traps to be aware of in their thinking (website).
- *Rate Your Wellbeing this week* – rate how their wellbeing was for the week.
- *Wellbeing Tip* – little things to do that matter in building their wellbeing.
- *Thinking Tools* – build new, logical and strong neural pathways for their thinking to follow (website).
- *Quote/Saying* – discuss what it means and what strengths and emotions could be involved.
- *Parent Newsletter Articles* – include parents in developing their children's wellbeing by emailing them home or posting on school website.
- *Goal Setting* - set short term process self-expectations; little steps to reach their goals.
- *Acts of Kindness* – jot down positive things they did for others or others did for them.
- *Positive Expectations* – at the start of the day write down three things they are most looking forward to.
- *Positive Self-talk* – noting when they use “I can and I will” statements to push through.
- *Strengths Wheel* – write their top strengths in the wheel and look at it often to reinforce a strengths' based approach.
- *Spotting Strengths* – note when they observe themselves or others using a particular character strength.
- *Growth Mindsets* – record times they lifted their efforts and tried new ways to overcome a challenge.

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