Think POSITIVE

Schools around the world are embracing the science of 'positive psychology' as part of their drive to create school cultures that exercise students to be confident learners. Yet many still believe that this trend towards 'positive education' is simply a matter of 'thinking positively'.

Dr Suzy Green, Clinical and Coaching Psychologist and Founder of The Positivity Institute, debunks the myths that exist around this expectation to 'think positive' most of the time.

**MYTH 1 Positive education is about being happy all the time!**

Positive Education is often misunderstood. It is not actually about 'being happy' or 'thinking positively' all of the time. Positive Education's overall aim is to increase the flourishing of whole-school communities through adopting a multi-level approach to wellbeing that involves both the explicit teaching of wellbeing and implicit approaches aimed at creating positive school cultures that support wellbeing.

'Thinking positively' is not a magical solution to life's problems. In fact, studies show this can backfire and have a negative impact when thinking is not based on reality. Instead, it is important that we help our children develop skills that equip them to approach life challenges. This means helping them to make the most of situations; trying always to see the best in other people; and viewing themselves and their abilities in a positive and productive light.

**MYTH 2 Positive psychology is a positive thinking movement**

The positive thinking movement that began in the US in the 19th century is not the same as 'Positive Psychology', which is a clearly defined scientific field of study with a significant and growing body of research to support its application in schools.

Positive Education involves a range of evidence-based approaches aimed at enhancing resilience, wellbeing and achievement. Students and staff are encouraged to learn and apply 'performance thinking' (not positive thinking) techniques and turn automatic negative thoughts (ANTS) into performance-enhancing thoughts (PETS). These shifts in thinking can significantly affect student learning outcomes. ANTS can become self-fulfilling prophecies and actually create the feared outcome, such as failing a test. Whereas PETS help create a growth mindset where students learn that practice and effort lead to performance and results. Other topics that fall under the 'Positive Education' umbrella include character strengths, mindfulness and coaching.

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The Sydney Catholic school community is mourning the death of the former Archbishop of Sydney, Cardinal Edward Clancy, who died at the age of 90 years on 3 August.

**CARDINAL CLANCY**

led the Archdiocese of Sydney from 1983 to 2001. He was a gifted pastor who undertook many projects including the expansion of Catholic schools into the new and expanding south and south-west areas of Sydney – particularly Liverpool, Fairfield and Sutherland.

Sixteen new schools were opened during his period as the Archbishop of Sydney. He had a special involvement with Clancy Catholic College West Hoxton, the school named in his honour.

Dan White, Executive Director of Sydney Catholic schools, paid tribute to the generous and dedicated Catholic leader for his service to Church and community.

"I have very fond memories of him as a man who made an extraordinary contribution to the success of Catholic schools in the greater Sydney area," Dr White said.

"We give thanks to God for the life of a wonderful Catholic leader, and a man of great vision.

"He was a man of courage, integrity and deep faith.

"He will be remembered as a great friend of Catholic schools. We are very proud of the system of schools that he helped build and grow. School communities and the staff of the Catholic Education Office owe Cardinal Clancy a debt of gratitude for his support and wise leadership, and in particular, for the contribution he made to the lives of the many thousands of young Australians who have been the beneficiaries of a wonderful Catholic education."

**CARDINAL CLANCY AT THE BLESSING OF THE SCHOOL NAMED IN HIS HONOUR, CLANCY CATHOLIC COLLEGE WEST HOXTON, IN 2006.**