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Positive education

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What is positive education?

It sounds great. But what is it? Positive education is actually a combination of traditional education principles with the study of happiness and wellbeing based on Martin Seligman's PERMA model.

PERMA is an acronym for a model of well-being. According to Seligman, there are five important building blocks of well-being, five ingredients for happiness:

Positive emotions

Positive emotions are good for children because they stimulate imagination. When children do something they enjoy or find interesting, they are more likely to face challenges, and feel encouraged to search for more creative solutions and opportunities.

Engagement

If a child is completely absorbed in an activity the child's intellectual and emotional limits will stretch. Activities that require concentration and effort are important as they foster learning.

Relationships

Being really connected to others and building social networks spreads happiness, cheer and laughter. Having healthy teacher-to-student and student-to-student relationships is an effective way to help children learn in an effective manner because they need to feel comfortable, loved and accepted in their learning environment.

Meaning

True happiness, comes from creating and having meaning in life, having a purposeful existence. Altruism and philanthropy are good methods to establishing a meaningful life.

Achievement

Having explicit goals in life, even small ones like reading before bed or doing exercise 15 minutes a day, and making efforts to achieve them are important to well-being and happiness. Achievement helps to build self-esteem and provides a sense of accomplishment and success.

Having spent time learning about the Finnish education system it seems that it presents as fertile ground for positive education to grow. Positive education focuses on building what is strong as opposed to fixing what is wrong. It will be interesting to learn more about how positive education complements the many strengths of the Finnish education system.

Teachers and schools that incorporate wellbeing into their everyday practice and build on their students' strengths will ideally increase students' life satisfaction, encourage social responsibility, promote creativity, foster learning, and even enhance academic achievement.