

First Australian Positive Psychology in Education Symposium  
Hosted by the Coaching Psychology Unit, School of Psychology, University of  
Sydney, Australia  
Saturday 9 May 2009



## **Celebrating Strengths – A whole school coaching programme (UK)**

***Alyson Groom***

### **Celebrating Strengths combines:**

- Oral story telling
- Positive psychology and a focus on  
Strengths
- Community celebrations

*In association with Positive Workplace International and  
The Centre for Applied Positive Psychology*

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Developed with students aged  
4-11 in areas of urban deprivation  
in the UK

Now also being used by students  
aged 11-18 and their teachers

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## ORAL STORY TELLING SUPPORTS...



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# Teacher development



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A collage of several photographs showing children in a classroom engaged in various activities. The photos are arranged in a grid-like fashion, with some overlapping. The children are seen sitting on the floor, working with materials, and interacting with each other. The classroom environment is visible in the background of the photos.

- Social and emotional development
- Pupil autonomy
- Creativity
- Pupil engagement
- Pupil success and confidence

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## Speaking and listening

Students in schools using Celebrating Strengths have been described as making 'exceptional progress in speaking and listening' (Ofsted)

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## Literacy

Schools using Celebrating Strengths report improvements in literacy. Learning to *tell* stories helps students to write stories more fluently.

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## A FOCUS ON STRENGTHS

Strengths Builders are activities designed to focus on and build strengths such as teamwork, self control and love of learning. Together, the stories and Strengths Builders are known as **Strengths Gym**



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## Pearls



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‘Moral and social development are also exceptionally well developed particularly because of the celebration of pupils’ strengths that generates ‘can do’ attitudes across the school.’ (Ofsted)

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## COMMUNITY CELEBRATIONS



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Community celebrations provide additional opportunities to focus on strengths and to embed them in the life of the school. They also enrich spiritual and moral development and deepen enjoyment of school life.

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The following celebrations are some examples, showing the strengths, stories and Strengths Builders used by schools in Scunthorpe. Schools can develop their own unique celebrations with the help of their coach.

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# Thanksgiving



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# Thanksgiving

Gratitude

Generosity

Fairness

The Spirit of the Corn

Anansi

Fairy Cakes

Thank you letters, Invitations, Baking

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# Easter



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# Easter

Love

Kindness

Friendship

The Road to Jerusalem

One of My Geese is Missing

The Queen Bee

Kindness catcher, Speakers and Listeners

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# Benefits

‘The celebration of strengths extends to staff as well and has been embraced by them so that it is at the core of all the school does.’ (Ofsted)

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## Results?

The evaluation by Professor Alex Linley and Reena Govindji found:

- Positive benefits to children, to school staff teams, and to the overall school environment
- Improvements in literacy
- Improvements in behaviour and confidence
- Improved staff retention

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## Implementation

Celebrating Strengths uses a coaching model to support growth and development.

There are three elements to this model:

- The support of a Celebrating Strengths Coach
- The materials and ideas provided by the coach
- The enthusiasm and commitment of the school

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