

Positive Graduate Education:

The Benefits of Infusing Formal Study in Positive Psychology
into a Graduate Degree program in Counseling Psychology

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I.

II. Statement of Professional Purpose

Professional Goals

I believe I was very fortunate to have attended small public schools throughout my childhood. This allowed me to receive additional attention and support from teachers and professionals in the classroom and school environments, thus enhancing my interest in school and learning. My high school offered a robust guidance program, which was introduced in the freshman years and reinforced throughout the high school experience. However, in my ten years of work history with students, I have encountered few who have had this same advantage. School counseling and advising professionals are spread far too thin across often overcrowded and underfunded educational institutions. A core motivator for me to pursue the Ed.S. in mental health practices in schools (MHPS) was to bring greater scope and depth of knowledge and understanding surrounding educational, school, and counseling psychology to my work as a career coach and college instructor.

I routinely work with high school and college students who are seeking support for college and career planning, key life transitions. However, they are also trying to simultaneously navigate an array of life issues surrounding family relationships, peer engagement, community and social engagement, dating and sex, employment, and academic requirements. They are on the path to becoming whole beings. As a candidate for the Ed.S. (MHPS) program, I believe I am well equipped to make valuable, ongoing contributions to the growing movement of student success, as a coach, mentor, and classroom instructor.

Major Interests as You Currently See Them

I am very grateful to the program leadership for the opportunity to blend in several courses of interest into my Ed.S. program. Positive psychology (PPsy) is an area that I started seriously exploring in 2009, when I had the privilege of completing an 8 week professional development program with the late Christopher Peterson, Ph.D. I was given the ability to complete formal graduate courses in PPsy at the onset of my Ed.S. studies (*ESCP 7200: Positive Psychology and ESCP 8087: Applied Positive Psychology*). My strong level of interest and success in these courses motivated me to further engage in the program. Theories and practices surrounding core concepts such as resilience, well-being, gratitude, and the ability to thrive have proven to be common threads of PPsy woven throughout the courses that followed, such as *Proactive Behavior Management and Wellness Management*.

Transfer courses from the University of Laverne (*EDU712C: Psychology of Exercise and Eating* and *EDUC713C: Psychology of Exceptional Children*) also allowed me to dive deeper into intriguing topics influencing the classroom environment.

I must also add that by completing *ESCP 8450: Diversity Issues in School Mental Health*, I was able to fuel a growing passion for awareness and inclusion surrounding minority populations. African, Asian and Hispanic Americans, along with members of the LGBTQI community, are several of the groups of students who continue to be in need of more focused services and support from a field of primarily Caucasian education professionals.

Your Progress in the Program

What originally attracted me to Mizzou Online was the ability to complete graduate coursework in positive psychology. The early success that I achieved with the completion of two PPsy courses served as a realization, a bit of an *ah-ha* moment, that I was neither too old or too far removed from the university mindset to be prosper at additional graduate study (I completed my M.S. in 2008, at the age of 43). It has taken me 2.5 years of dedicated part-time study, and I am quite proud to say that I am entering the final phase of my Ed.S. program with a 4.0 GPA.

Strengths and Weaknesses

With respect to my personality and academic pursuits, I have always gravitated to more abstract, theoretical coursework in the social sciences. I enjoy exploring possibilities and experimenting with techniques and resources that may have a positive influence on well-being. I believe I'm at my best when I can engage in critical thinking, draw upon a sound base of knowledge and research, and take an eclectic approach to action planning and problem solving. As a professional coach and educator, I find that whenever I can focus my strengths on providing others with concrete, action oriented service and support; I experience a level of fulfillment and continued growth.

I can honestly say that I looked upon the program requirement of *ESCP 8020: Overview of Research Methods* with a bit of dread. Mathematics and statistical analysis have never been areas of particular strength, in my work or during my previous degree programs. To my surprise, the course offered what I found to be a successful blend of both theoretical content and data analysis. At the end of the course, I realized that the material and assignments challenged and enhanced my skills surrounding inquiry, analysis and reporting.

Career Goals and Plans for the Future

At the age of 51, I maintain strong career goals. I strive to enhance my coaching skills and grow my coaching practice. This summer I will introduce a new professional development/training program in applied positive psychology. In the higher education sector, it's my desire to expand the scope of courses I teach in the areas of career development and psychology, as well as first-year and transition studies. This will include continued roles as an online instructor and classroom lecturer. Eventually I would like to serve in a lead role, perhaps as a program coordinator, in the areas of positive psychology or student success.

This past May, I was fortunate to have my culminating project from *ESCP 8450: Diversity Issues in School Mental Health* published in *Career Convergence*, an online magazine from the National Career Development Association (NCDA). This project was an APA formatted paper providing a review of the book *We Can't Teach What We Don't Know* by Gary Howard. This summer I am among the slate of candidates participating in an election of trustees to the board of NCDA. I'm not sure I would have had the confidence to run for this office if I had not enjoyed ongoing success in my Ed.S. program. I also plan to seek publication of my final project from *ESCP 8020: Overview of Research Methods*, a literature review focused on the use of positive psychology in career development. Two professional journals, *Career Development Quarterly* and *The Journal of Career Development*, would serve as an excellent platform for this paper.

III. Listing of Completed Courses

Courses Completed in Education Specialist (MHPS) Program
ESCP 7200: Positive Psychology
ESCP 8087: Seminar - Applied Positive Psychology
ESCP 8087: Seminar - Proactive Behavior Management
ESCP 8087: Seminar – Communication & Collaboration with Children and Families
ESCP 8087: Seminar - Wellness Management for School Personnel
ESCP 8450: Diversity Issues in School Mental Health
ESCP 8020: Overview of Research Methods
EDU 712C: Psychology of Exercise and Eating (<i>Transfer credit from University of LaVerne</i>)
EDU 713C: Psychology of Exceptional Children (<i>Transfer credit from University of LaVerne</i>)
ESCP 7160: Developmental Aspects of Learning

IV. Knowledge and Skills Matrix

	<i>Knowledge and Skills</i>	Assessment	Change Agent	Comm: Building Trust & Rapport	Conflict Resolution	Culture and Diversity	Inquiry and Development	Intervention and Prevention	Mindfulness and Well-being	Engagement via Strengths and Values	Action Planning
Courses											
Positive Psychology		X	X	X			X		X	X	
Applied Positive Psychology		X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X
Pro-active Behavior Management		X	X	X	X		X	X		X	X
Comm & Collab w/Child. & Fam.		X	X	X	X	X	X	X			X
Diversity Issues for School Personnel		X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	
Wellness Mgt. for School Personnel		X	X	X			X	X	X		X
Devel. Aspect of Human Learning						X	X				
Overview of Research Methods		X		X			X				X
Psychology of Exercise and Eating		X	X				X	X	X		X
Psychology of Exceptional Children		X	X	X		X	X	X		X	X

V. Knowledge and Skills Explanation

The definitions I provide throughout this section are formed from my learning, understanding, and utilization of strengths, rather than the stereotypical meanings extracted from a dictionary or scholarly resource.

Assessment

For me, assessment is the process of gathering and analyzing information. This can be both quantitative and qualitative data and through either formal or informal methods.

As a professional coach I will often incorporate assessment into my coaching sessions with clients, high school age to pre-retirement, who are exploring career paths or a career transition. I will provide clients with learning and resource material containing definitions and examples of skills, strengths and values. I challenge the client to review the material and then brainstorm a list of transferable skills (things they believe they can do and do well). From this initial list, a higher order list of motivated skills (things they do well, they enjoy doing, and they wish to enhance) must then be crafted. The client will also develop a list of values based information surrounding their ideas for the type of environment they believe would be a good fit [sector, type (profit, for-profit, government, academic), size, management style, structure, physical environment, commute, opportunities for growth, etc.].

It is common to also gather formal psychometric data for clients in exploration or transition mode. I administer and interpret instruments such as the *Myers Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI)* and the *Strong Interest Inventory*. Being fully qualified in both these assessment tools, I enjoy discussing the literal content, as well as making creative connections between the data and my knowledge of the client's interests (hobbies, advocacy, community/social, academic, and

career). By combining formal and informal assessment methods, I gather a significant amount of data to use in coaching conversations and action planning with my clients.

Change Agent

To be an agent of change, an individual must embrace and engage a belief system and then act in a manner to advance these beliefs.

As an instructor of education at the third largest university in the state of Georgia [Kennesaw State University (KSU)], I see my role in the department of First-Year and Transition Studies as that of a change agent. I am part of a network of professionals charged with the critical task of delivering student success initiatives. KSU offers award winning first year seminars and a robust scope of advising and counseling services to students. In addition to developing an array of programs focused on student success, such as *Student Leadership, Orientation and Transition, THRIVE, Honors, Learning Communities, Advising, Senior Seminar*, KSU's leadership and staff are highly focused on outreach, delivery and outcomes for all programs. I am quite proud to be part of an academic community of change agents living a mission of student success.

Communication: Building Trust and Rapport

This level of communication requires the individual to engage another through empathy and elicit a strong level of confidence to foster an affinity or bond with that person.

With each student that enters my classroom and each client that enters my coaching practice, I am charged with the crucial task of communicating in a mode that builds trust and rapport. Each time that I engage in communication with a student or client; whether in verbal, non-verbal, written, or digital form; my goal is to do so in a professional, nonthreatening,

respectful, and encouraging manner. On any given day, I may be serving as an instructor, coach, mentor, or facilitator. Regardless of the role, my desire is to successfully advance the connection with student or client through a consistent focus on active listening and a deferential exchange of information.

Conflict Resolution

This represents the ability to engage one's knowledge and skills to gain confidence (from an individual or group) and mitigate anxiety and disagreement.

During the fall semester of 2014, I had two freshman students in my first year seminar course who were assigned to complete a team project. They were having trouble synching their schedules to allow for face to face meetings to work on their project. The project proposal became due and then the annotated bibliography followed in another two weeks. A few days before the bibliography was due, Ben spoke with me after class and was complaining that Sarah was not communicating with him and not doing her fair share of the project. He felt that he needed to complete the work to get it submitted on time, rather than wait for her input. I asked Ben to try reaching out to her one more time, via phone and email, to calmly communicate his concerns without assigning blame or passing judgment.

Right before the next class, Sarah came to me and stated that she had heard that Ben came to me complaining about her lack of effort on the project. She was quite angry at Ben and felt he was not interested in collaborating with her. I met with both students after class and explained that this situation was common with team projects. I pointed out that they were maintaining excellent grades in the class, had superb class participation, and asked that they try one more time to collaborate. I reinforced my expectation that they would likely craft a very engaging presentation. My message to them was that they were both adults and needed to set

aside this miscommunication and clash and demonstrate what their combined strengths could accomplish. This approach was quite successful. Ben and Sarah made a fresh start and completed a stellar project and presentation on global challenges. My approach to conflict resolution, as illustrated in this scenario, is to engage active listening, acknowledge concerns and perspectives, ask the parties to calmly and respectfully discuss the action plan and goals, and seek understanding, reconciliation and collaboration.

Culture and Diversity

My culture represents my way of life, the beliefs and practice that have surrounded me and I have assimilated since childhood. At its core, I believe diversity represents the spectrum of what we experience as human beings. This can manifest as people of different heritage and nationality, foods with flavors from different parts of the world, languages spoken across the globe, and religions practiced by communities, just to name a few.

For the past 14 years I have lived and worked in Atlanta, Georgia, one of the most diverse cities in the United States. I came to Atlanta in 2001, after 4 years in Naples, Florida and 33 years in central New York. Both these previous communities had a primarily Caucasian and conservative population base. I found myself overwhelmed by the scope of what Atlanta offered. Dr. Dhaliwal, my professor for *ESCP8450: Diversity Issues in School Mental Health*, reminded the class of a wonderful acronym from Pamela Hays at the University of Alaska-Anchorage. It is the **ADRESSING model of multicultural sensitivity**: A-Age, D- Disability (congenital or acquired), R- Religion, E- Ethnicity, S- Socio economic status, S- Sexual Orientation, I- Indigenous Heritage, N- Nationality, and G-Gender. I now use this acronym in all my classes. I

am so very thankful that I moved to Atlanta to experience this rich array of culture and diversity in my coaching practice, classrooms and personal experiences.

Inquiry and Development

The act of seeking out additional information or meaning, prompted by one's abilities and desire, represents my definition of inquiry. Development can be viewed as actively engaging in an activity that challenges one's knowledge and skills and results in learning and growth.

I engage in a robust exploration exercise with many of my coaching clients who are seeking a college major or better fit career role. This exercise involves an interpretation of the *Strong Interest Inventory*. I give clients the resources to investigate 8-12 occupational titles, resulting from an assessment phase which includes the *Strong*. I ask them to gather credible information to further discuss the practicality of each occupation. We work to narrow down the list to two or three career paths that truly seem viable and then we delve into the preparation for each role. We must seriously consider the preparation and development (education, technical skills, internship, professional certifications, licensure, etc.) necessary to become truly competitive in specific roles in the current job market. This process of inquiry and development represents a journey of discovery, one that often yields a greater depth of understanding of self and enhanced skills surrounding research and decision making.

Intervention and Prevention

Intervention involves a deliberate act to intercede in or disrupt a course of action. Prevention can be considered the intention to keep something from occurring, such as an accident, disease or error.

My responsibilities, as an instructor of education at Kennesaw State University (GA), include engaging in student outreach and retention. I take this responsibility very seriously and willingly collaborate with the Director of First-Year Retention Initiatives. If a student has increased absences from class, if their work is consistently late, if they are not responding to my requests for a meeting, I will then contact the Director to initiate outreach efforts. She will then call and email the student to request a conversation regarding my concerns. The focus of the retention initiative is to build rapport with the student and offer support from the array of student services on campus. By participating in retention activities, I can intervene to prompt positive action, with the goal to prevent a student from failing a course or dropping out of college all together.

Mindfulness and Well-being

Mindfulness is a deliberate mental immersion in an activity resulting in an enhanced experience for the individual. It is a heightened level of consciousness to more fully experience and appreciate the activity, such as eating, walking, meditating, etc. Well-being also represents a heightened state of being, whereby one's physical and psychological health are elevated as the result of purposeful attention and effort. Mindfulness is a key contributor to a state of well-being.

I often engage in walking meditation as an expression of mindfulness. In the years prior to my decision to embrace mindfulness, I approached something as simple as walking the dog in the park as a mundane task to be checked off a list. I would walk through the park and tug on the leash to prompt the dog to hurry up and do his business. During the entire walk, my mind was on other things, such as emails to be returned, calls to be made, paperwork to be completed, appointments to be scheduled. My body was begrudgingly present for the walk while my mind was far, far away.

Once I embraced and practiced mindfulness, my walks with the dog became a calm, restorative activity. I silenced my cell phone, or left it home, and actually interacted with Howie, my amazing Boston Terrier. Walking meditation allowed me to feel the ground beneath my feet, breathe in the fresh air, see the vivid colors in the flower beds, feel the sun and breeze on my face, hear birds chirping and children playing, and smell the fresh cut grass. Walks are no longer a chore. Walks are now an exercise in mindfulness which heightened stress reduction, gratitude, and well-being.

Engagement via Strengths and Values

To engage in a pursuit or activity via one's strengths and values means to participate with deeper personal meaning while exercising one's assets or gifts. I believe that by utilizing our gifts while seeking a match with our distinctive belief system, experiences are more profound and success more attainable.

It is my belief that human beings consistently evolve through reflection, exploration, learning, and engagement. As a professional career coach, I have made it my mission to help people evolve. I recognize and leverage my strengths surrounding assessment, communication, coaching, guidance, and action planning during the course of each client's unique coaching process. I employ *my strengths* to guide clients through targeted exercises whereby they can better define and exercise *their strengths*. I place an extremely high importance on the need to find a work environment that is employee centric (promotes development with an engaging, respectful and motivating culture). Using resources such as the *Atlanta Books of Lists*, *Best Places to Work*, directories from *Forbes, Inc.*, *Fortune*, and the *Human Rights Campaign*, I work with my clients to investigate organizations representing a solid values match.

Action Planning

SMART goals, those that are specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and timely, are within our grasp when we can work a viable plan. A stepping stone approach, one that is supported by credible information and sound, determined effort, offers a greater opportunity for success.

As I work with students and clients on career exploration, I am guided by the overarching goal of helping the individual craft a viable action plan. This process often spans assessment, investigation and information research, narrowing the list of options, and defining goals. The final stages include identifying the stepping stones comprising a realistic plan of action, engaging tools and resources to advance the plan, and consistently evaluating effort and progress to reach stated goals. Action planning is core to the coaching process and it is a strength that I engage and enhance with each client session. My email signature for my professional coaching practice offers one of my quotes - *Action is the spark that ignites potential.*

VI. Knowledge and Skills Summary and Integration

In the fall of 2012, I had a very straight forward goal, which was to pursue a formal online graduate course in positive psychology (PPsy). After engaging in Internet searches, I

came across *ESCP 7200: Positive Psychology* at University of Missouri-Columbia. It was at that point that I enthusiastically became a Mizzou Tiger, which was received with lukewarm enthusiasm by my nephew Zachary, who was a thriving Auburn Tiger.

My motivation to pursue graduate study in PPsy stemmed from the completion of a professional development course in 2009 (*Positive Psychology Immersion Masterclass*) with PPsy pioneer Christopher Peterson, Ph.D. Throughout the eight weeks of the course, I became increasingly aware of the potential benefits of PPsy and completed the experience needing to go deeper and learn more about the science and application of PPsy. So I began to read such books as *A Primer in Positive Psychology* by Dr. Peterson, *Authentic Happiness: Using the New Positive Psychology to Realize Your Potential for Lasting Fulfillment* by Martin E.P. Seligman, Ph.D., *Positive Psychology Coaching - Putting the Science of Happiness to Work for Your Clients* by Robert Biswas-Diener, Ph.D. and Ben Dean, Ph.D. and *The How of Happiness – A Scientific Approach to Getting the Life You Want* by Sonja Lyubomirsky, Ph.D. I was thoroughly enjoying the process of reading and digesting this material and I needed more substance; I needed to learn how I might best apply this compelling material to my life and work. Upon my successful completion of *ESCP 7160: Positive Psychology*, I decided to challenge myself further by enrolling in *ESCP 8087: Seminar - Applied Positive Psychology*.

At the same time that I was advancing my understanding and knowledge base surrounding PPsy, I was continuing to grow my private practice in career coaching as well as becoming a college instructor for undergraduate courses in healthcare management and career development in the online environment. I was engaging in professional development surrounding pedagogy, rubrics and outcomes, student success, and applications of learning theories. These activities piqued my interest in educational and school psychology and I started to consider the potential benefits of pursuing formal graduate studies in these areas, for further career

development.

In my private coaching practice in Atlanta, GA, I was starting to see an increasing number of public school teachers (primary and secondary school) who were dissatisfied, disillusioned, and experiencing burnout in their career roles. Many of these talented educators sought me out because they wanted leave the education sector and they wanted my assistance. I felt well equipped to provide them with coaching support to help them assess their situation and explore options for related roles and environments within education, as well as transition to other career paths that might capitalize on their background. However, I kept asking myself why these seemingly intelligent, dedicated professionals were becoming so disheartened with roles they had not so long ago embraced with inspiration and enthusiasm. Once again, the idea of pursuing graduate coursework in educational and school psychology, as a viable means to feed my interest in education and psychology, seemed quite appealing.

Integration stemming from knowledge and skills development:

As I was wrapping up my studies in *ESCP 8087: Seminar - Applied Positive Psychology* in the spring of 2013, I started investigating post-master's degree options at University of Missouri-Columbia. When I came across the education specialist (Ed.S.) program with a focus on mental health practices in schools (MHPS), I was hooked and immediately submitted my application. I was excited to be accepted and very grateful for the opportunity to engage in critical inquiry, while advancing my skills and knowledge within this specialized Ed.S. program. I believe that the scope of coursework I selected, for the mental health practices in schools plan of study, created a synergy among my growing passions for PPsy, the art and science of coaching, and pedagogy. This synergy is clearly evidenced in the action learning and core projects I generated in my MHPS curriculum, such as:

1. ESCP 7200: Positive Psychology: Presented my refined definition of positive psychology with my positive psychology resume, a very creative way of summarizing key positive psychology concepts such as: *Subjective Well-being, Work Experience, Relationships, Strengths/Activities, Meaning, and Accomplishments*.
2. ESCP 8087: Seminar - Applied Positive Psychology: Crafted a personal wellness project surrounding mindfulness and meditation. I was so pleased to see that the book, *The How of Happiness* was the core text for this course.
3. ESCP 8087: Seminar - Proactive Behavior Management: Developed a formal student workshop incorporating distinct proactive classroom management plans. My workshop was entitled, *Teaching Myers-Briggs Personality Type to Teenagers*.
4. ESCP 8087: Seminar – Communication & Collaboration with Children and Families: Assuming the role of a high school counselor, I constructed a formal memo to a school superintendent detailing a recommended collaboration process with a community based agency (*Collaboration with CHRIS Kids for Anti-bullying and LGBTQ Support*).
5. ESCP 8087: Seminar - Wellness Management for School Personnel: Produced a PowerPoint presentation based on Lyubomirsky's *The How of Happiness: A Scientific Approach to Getting the Life You Want*. This PPT focused on empowering education professionals to engage Dr. Lyubomirsky's *12 Happiness Exercises* to combat stress and model applied positive psychology to their friends, family, peers, and students. I envisioned this PPT being used as a training and development tool (seminar, workshop, lecture, lunch-n-learn, etc.) for teachers, administrators, counselors, and para-professionals in the education sector.
6. ESCP 8450: Diversity Issues in School Mental Health: Prepared an APA formatted book review on *We Can't Teach What We Don't Know* (2nd Ed.) by Gary R. Howard. This

review presented Howard's perspectives on what he believes is a good knowledge base for effective teachers, their practices, and the manner in which they embrace and promote their role as a culturally responsive educator. The core premise of the book is Mr. Howard's contention that there is a compelling need to prepare an educational work force of predominantly White teachers to more effectively teach to a student population that is becoming more and more diverse. He contends that, in our classrooms, there is a striking disconnect between White teachers and a diverse student body. A revised version of this paper, as practical guidance for career counselors and coaches, was published in the May 1, 2015, edition of the web magazine, [*Career Convergence*](#), from the *National Career Development Association (NCDA)*.

7. ESCP 8020: Overview of Research Method: Researched and prepared an APA formatted literature review and literature map entitled, *Applying Positive Psychology to Career Coaching and Counseling: A Review of the Literature*. This fall, I plan to submit this paper to be considered for publication in the *Journal of Career Development*.
8. EDU 712C: Psychology of Exercise and Eating (Transfer credit from University of LaVerne): I prepared a log (spanning several weeks) and detailed reflection surrounding my natural energy/tension circadian cycle so that the optimal times, both mental and physical, for exercise could be targeted in my daily routine. The premise being that if I, as an educator, can better recognize the psychological factors and practices surrounding exercise and eating, I will be better equipped to model and coach healthy behavior with my students. I truly enjoyed the text used for this course, *Calm Energy – how people regulate mood with food and exercise* by Robert E. Thayer, Ph.D.
9. EDU 713C: Psychology of Exceptional Children (Transfer credit from University of LaVerne): I modified and refined one of my favorite original lesson plans for a student

with a distinct exceptionality. My modified lesson plan presented well-defined accommodations for hearing impaired students. The text for this course was *Special Education in Contemporary Society* by Richard M. Gargiulo, Ph.D.

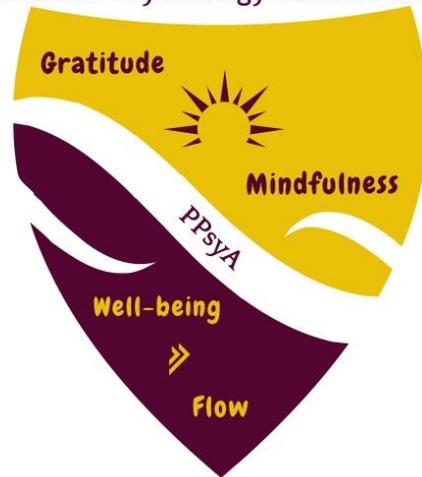
10. ESCP 7160: Developmental Aspects of Learning: I prepared an APA formatted paper entitled, *Positive Education - Infusing Positive Psychology into the Classroom*. This paper speaks to the blending of positive psychology interventions and coaching psychology practices to create positive education as an affirming experience that can permanently transform a student's mindset toward learning and life.

Integration – Work product culminating from MHPS Program

As a concrete example of what I have been able to accomplish as a result of my participation in the Ed.S. MHPS program, I present the **Positive Psychology Ambassador :: PPsyA**. Participating in the *Applied Positive Psychology* course served as the impetus for my *Positivity* presentation at the 2014 Global Career Development Conference of the NCDA in Long Beach, CA.. This further evolved into a focused PowerPoint presentation for the *Wellness Management for School Personnel*, course.

As a result of my learning experiences throughout the MHPS curriculum, I concentrated my efforts on developing this solid base of material into what is now the PPsyA website and training program. The following is the PPsyA logo I designed and created using the *GraphicSprings* web design tool. I personally submitted a formal trademark application (serial number [86646933](#)) to the United States Patent and Trademark Office to protect this logo and branding.

Positive Psychology Ambassador



The following are excerpts from content presented on the [Positive Psychology Ambassador](#) website, which I created and launched this past April using the *VIRB* website development platform:

1. **What is a Positive Psychology Ambassador :: PPSyA?** Most forms of psychology have traditionally focused on illness and disease (what is WRONG with the individual). Positive Psychology, in contrast, takes a developmental view to explore what is RIGHT with the individual. Using empirical data and double blind studies, researchers around the country and around the world analyze the techniques and thought processes that can help others obtain a positive state of mind. In the application, Positive Psychology uses tools like gratitude, mindfulness, savoring, and appreciative inquiry to cultivate a more joyful state of being. For most people, learning a few simple tools can move us from surviving to thriving! Positive Psychology uses strengths to improve our well-being, and a Positive Psychology Ambassador (PPSyA) uses these tools for the good of others, in whichever environment we find ourselves. By embracing and practicing several core techniques, we can move from surviving to thriving, and also help others to experience more meaning in their lives.

2. **Change Starts with You!** For anyone who works with people, it's important to not only be positive for your own mental health, but also to foster positivity in others. As a Positive Psychology Ambassador, you will learn simple and fun ways to turn conversations, classes, and interactions into positive experiences for all involved. Through proven techniques, you will learn how to turn doubt and negativity into an opportunity for positivity!
3. **Why Become a Positive Psychology Ambassador :: PsyA?** The science reports that being happier and more optimistic has many benefits, both for ourselves and others. Even with just a few exercises from positive psychology, many people report feeling less sadness and increased levels of optimism and joy. And, when we learn to find meaning in our own lives, we can help others to do the same. It's not about just *fixing what's wrong*; we learn how to *build on the strong*.
4. **Who Should Be A Positive Psychology Ambassador :: PPsyA?** Positive Psychology Ambassadors can come from all walks of life, including: Doctors and Nurses, School Counselors and Administrators, Teachers and Professors, Mental Health Counselors/Professionals, Sports Coaches; Nutrition and Wellness experts; Career and Life Coaches; Business Leaders and Managers; Customer Service Employees; Salespeople; Parents/Caregivers; Troop Leaders; Spiritual Leaders, and anybody who wants to embrace and promote a positive mindset.
5. **How can I Become a PPsyA?** Engage in a robust three hour training experience to embrace and promote positive psychology (PPsy). Through immersion in scientifically validated material and techniques, you can adopt a mindset of positivity. You will delve into resources and techniques allowing you to confidently combat negativity - to embody and advance applied positive psychology within *your* community (family, friends,

peers, colleagues, patients, students, clients...). Create a joyous ripple effect as you focus your energy and efforts *to bring positive psychology to LIFE and THRIVE as a PPsyA*. Training is offered in the following three formats: (a) in-person training workshops in metro Atlanta, GA, (b) virtual training workshop (two 90 minute sessions) via *iMeet*, a user friendly web conferencing platform, and (c) live, work based group workshops hosted at the employer's setting.

In designing and launching the Positive Psychology Ambassador (PPsyA) initiative, I believe that I was quite successful in leveraging the knowledge and skills I've advanced through my completed work in the Ed.S. MHPS program. The following are concrete examples of how I have linked these areas of knowledge and key skills to desired outcomes for the individual completing PPsyA training.

1. **Assessment:** I've incorporated several [questionnaires](#) from the Penn Positive Psychology Center, such as *Gratitude Questionnaire*, the *Hope Scale*, and *Satisfaction with Life Scale*, into my tool box for teaching and coaching, as well as my PPsyA training program.
2. **Change Agent:** By its very nature, a PPsyA workshop invites the learner to change their mindset and work to combat common sources of negativity, such as the daily news feeds on the Internet and television, skyrocketing feelings of career dissatisfaction among Americans, as well as sarcasm and social comparison coming from our peers. A PPsyA becomes an agent of change by embracing and engaging PPsy as a belief system and then acting to create a ripple of positivity in her/her daily activities.
3. **Communication - Building Trust and Rapport:** A PPsyA learning opportunity can only be successful if the participant feels a strong sense of trust and rapport with fellow

students and with me as the facilitator. This fall, I will be incorporating the PPsyA training into my undergraduate seminar for transfer students. Approximately 100 students will participate in a PPsyA workshop and then be asked to act upon what they have learned, via community engagement, and submit a written reflection.

4. **Conflict Resolution:** The PPsyA program content educates and empowers participants to head off conflict and lesson disagreement and anxiety via positive psychology interventions. These actions are focused on cultivating optimism, developing coping strategies, avoiding over-thinking and social comparison, and learning to forgive,
5. **Culture and Diversity:** To inform and inspire others from a mindset of positive psychology, one must be open to the spectrum of beliefs and practices they are surrounded by in their community, as well as the gamut of what we experience as human beings. A PPsyA must strive to embody this spirit of openness and inclusion.
6. **Inquiry and Development:** The study of positive psychology and use of PPsy interventions challenges the practitioner to consistently inquire, assimilate, practice, and refine the use of theory and data. As the field of positive psychology further evolves, the PPsyA remains a lifelong student of this compelling discipline.
7. **Intervention and Prevention:** A PPsyA's motivation is on shifting people's mindset from a focus on negativity (fear and worry) to positivity (inspiring possibilities and hope). Through such techniques as negative thought stopping and positive psychology interventions, the PPsyA intervenes to inform, educate and empower others on the benefits of positive psychology.
8. **Mindfulness and Well-being:** These states of being are at the very core of positive psychology. A PPsyA models and teachers others to consistently embrace mindfulness (a

deliberate mental immersion in an activity resulting in an enhanced experience for the individual), thereby fueling a state of well-being.

9. Engagement via Strengths and Values: The PPsyA should approach people and situations with authenticity, which results from a steady focus on refining and then employing one's strengths and values. A PPsyA models this approach and helps others to strive for sincerity as they navigate their day.

10. Action Planning: Positive psychology is about fruitful development and the opportunity to thrive. A PPsyA affects this process by (a.) creating small, positive ripples in people's lives and by (b.) helping others identify stepping stones supported by credible information and sound, determined effort to achieve viable goals.

I trust that this capstone paper successfully demonstrates a commitment to the mission of the Ed.S. MHPS program, as well as my dedication to synthesizing knowledge through innovative and beneficial methods. I believe I have demonstrated how positive psychology can add value to an education specialist program. I would like to serve as an example to the program leadership and propose that future students be afforded the opportunity to formally add a depth of study in positive psychology or positive education to their curriculum.

Participating in this program, as a Mizzou Tiger, has been profoundly enriching. My sincere thanks for this outstanding opportunity to learn and grow! I will be quite proud to add the Ed.S. credential and the University of Missouri-Columbia to my C.V.