



# Resilience Strategies for Grades 9 & 10

by Dr Andrew Wicking

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The work of Resilient Youth Australia in over 1,300 schools with nearly 400,000 school students has identified the three main components of resilience: to be Connected Protected Respected™ (CPR).

<https://resiliencyouth.org/survey>

Grade 9 and 10 is where the lowest levels of resilience occur. It coincides with increased feelings of alienation and disconnection. While the origins of this low point may occur earlier through not establishing close positive relationships or having a sense of success at school, Grade 10 is the pinch point. If we can make a difference in Grades 9 and 10, we will substantially improve overall resilience levels.

## **Suggested strategies:**

By Grades 9-10 we have a group of students who feel disengaged from school and are relatively impervious to classroom-based interventions. This means that while building resilience curricula should still be implemented, it will only go so far. Instead, provide the opportunity for schools to offer life immersive, experiential challenge-based learning, providing a balance to traditional classroom learning.

Students brains grow quickly when they are challenged to be curious and creative. Challenges also build dopamine – the foundation of motivation. One of the best ways to accomplish this is to involve young people in projects that make a difference in the world. It is also highly desirable that parents see themselves as powerful participants in their teen's school success and brain development. For this reason, Grades 9-10 appears to be the ideal time to incorporate project-learning and entrepreneurial skills into student-led businesses and initiatives.

This is the time to shift the balance of learning away from classrooms towards real-life immersive, experiential challenge-based learning. This would help build positive identity through living values in action. A number of areas can contribute to this: coding, podcasting, entrepreneurial skills, drama, community arts.

## **Case study:**

A large K-12 girls' school has developed a Grade 9 dedicated camp where girls take it in turns to spend one whole term away from school, with no mobiles and limited access to their 'outside world'. The school requested that we survey their students at a time when some students have completed camp, and when others are yet to attend, in such a way as to be able to assess the impact of the term away. For 4 years now the data presents the same picture. Overall, the camp has an overwhelmingly positive impact.

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[www.linkedin.com/in/andrew-wicking-52354b28](http://www.linkedin.com/in/andrew-wicking-52354b28)

*Dr Andrew Wicking is the Founding Director of Resilient Youth Australia Pty Ltd, Adjunct Research Associate at the University of South Australia and alumnus of the Stanford Business School Executive Non-profit Leaders Course.*

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