POSITIVE LEADERSHIP AS A CATALYST FOR FLOURISHING

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Positive Leadership for Flourishing Schools
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Rationale

• Sustaining and fostering well-being has garnered attention in numerous organizational contexts with surprisingly minimal focus in educational settings.

• Our examination of flourishing in schools has highlighted the need for deliberate focus on positive school leadership and its effect on thriving and well-being of others in schools.
Why study wellbeing in schools?

Engaged, Purposeful, Adventurous, Resilient & Collaborative Educators

Preparing students for social and economic landscapes that prioritize interconnection and interdependency

Providing student opportunities to develop social and emotional capacities that will enable them to live and work well with others

Developing and sustaining habits of mind and heart to grow capacity for learning new pedagogy and promote new learning needs of students

Engaging students in the co-creation of equitable, healthy, vibrant and democratic learning environments
Researching from a Positive Organizational Perspective

We believe “positive institutions not only elevate and connect human strengths (internally), but serve to refract and magnify our highest human strengths into society. Positive institutions are the vehicles for bringing more humanity, courage, wisdom, love and value into the world” (Cooperrider & Godwin, 2012)

| Learning | Positive emotions – feeling good |
| Creativity | Engagement – being completely absorbed in activities |
| Connectivity | Relationship – being authentically connected |
| Productivity | Meaning – purposeful existence |
| Risk-Taking | Achievement – a sense of accomplishment and success |
| Health | (Seligman, 2011) |
Flourishing in Schools: A Conceptual Model

Leaderful Mindsets

Trust

Compassion

Hope

Adaptive Community

Subjective Well-being

Flourishing
Books from 2015-2017

Flourishing Together at Waldheim School

A Preliminary Look at Flourishing Congregations in Canada: What Church Leaders are Saying
Edited by Joel Thomas, Jack Watts, Bill McIntyre, and Kieran Wilton

Sharon Roset
Keith D. Walker
Sabre Cherkowski (Editors)

Rostern High School: A Partnership for Success

Reflections on Facilitating Learning in Prairie Spirit School Division

Keith D. Walker
Bob Bayles (Editors)

Langham Elementary School: Growing, Learning, Sharing, Caring

Sharon Roset
Keith Walker
Sabre Cherkowski (Editors)

The Bliss and Blisters of Early Career Teaching

The Overcomers: Success Stories of Immigrant Sub-Saharan African University Students

School District 83: Stories of Flourishing

Dr. Sabre Cherkowski
Dr. Keith Walker
Jennifer Kelly
Kelly Hanson (Editors)

Sun West Empowering 21st Century Learners

Teddy A. Bandima: BA, MPA, PhD

Sharon Roset
Keith Walker
Sabre Cherkowski
Jay Wilson
In Flourishing Schools.....

A sense of belonging to a “group with purpose” from which we can derive meaning for our work and lives;
There is a strong sense of teamship

What we do matters;
We feel seen and valued, we contribute to making the group better in some way.

We work together in ongoing innovation for continued connection, growth, thriving guided by our shared values and higher purpose: Creativity, rising to challenges, innovating in our work

Relationships are at the heart of our community;
A climate of fun, laughter, joking and banter supports us

We flourish when our students do.

We are supported, challenged and encouraged by our administrators.
Flourishing in Schools

Leaderful Mindset
- **Ongoing** learning & building teacher capacities to expand leadership and improve schools
- **Sharing** vibrancy and passion for the betterment of greater community wellbeing
- **Turning** subjective experience of wellness out into the world
- **Modelling** wellbeing
- **Attending** to purpose, fostering autonomy & positive sense of achievement

Adaptive Community
- **Co-constructing** caring and challenging environments for dynamic professional growth
- **Focusing on community** as an ongoing process for practicing resiliency, experiencing meaning and satisfaction, & facilitating feedback for learning
- **Collegial** fun and enjoyment cultivates wellbeing
- **Collective** intelligence & adaptability

Subjective Wellbeing
- **Finding** meaning in student success & purpose through collegial collaboration
- **Creating** positive relational experiences with colleagues and students
- **Engaging** in ongoing learning & growth with colleagues for student engagement
- **Making** time for fun, laughter, play, presence with students, colleagues and staff
- **Reflecting** on positive experiences as a builder for further meaningful work
Flourishing in Schools by Noticing, Nurturing, and Sustaining

Teacher Well-being

Flourishing in Schools by Noticing, Nurturing, and Sustaining

Sabre Cherkowski and Keith Walker

Perspectives on Flourishing in Schools

Edited by
Sabre Cherkowski
and Keith Walker
Theoretical Frameworks

- **Positive psychology** is the study of conditions, strengths, and virtues that enable individuals and communities to thrive (Bakker & Schaufeli, 2008; Keyes, Fredrickson & Park, 2012).

- **Positive organizational scholarship** (POS) emerged from positive psychology (Carr, 2004; Gallos, 2008; Lillius et al., 2008; Luthans & Youssef, 2007; Pace, 2010; Roberts & Dutton, 2009; Wright, 2003).

- **School and professional learning communities and educational leadership/followership research** that support the conditions for continuous learning and sustainable school effectiveness and improvement at classroom, school and system levels (Fullan, 2006; Sergiovanni, 1994; Hargreaves & Fink, 2006; Mitchell & Sackney, 2009; Stoll & Louis, 2007).
 Anchored within the pan-Canadian research exploration of teacher induction and mentorship programs, this hopeful and resource-filled book provides a unique collection of perspectives on the bliss and blisters of early career teaching. Over 40 educators offer a wide, deep, and rich array of descriptions of, and prescriptions for, both the difficult and the delightful realities associated with being a new teacher and supporting new teachers. This book is an excellent resource for teacher educators, mentors, scholars, program coordinators, practicum and course instructors, school administrators, policy makers, teacher candidates, and new teachers who wish to hear the voices of their colleagues, mentors, and experts with across-Canada viewpoints.

This vital book is a unique collection of the Canadian research on teacher induction and mentoring. It makes a timely and valuable contribution by bringing together the pan-Canadian voices of authors who are passionate about the development of early career teachers. It is an excellent guide to scholars, practitioners, and policymakers who want to make a difference.

Rebecca Luce-Kapler, OCT, PhD, Dean of Education, Queen’s University

Bliss and blisters indeed! With over 40 authors from across Canada contributing to 25 chapters, this book offers the reader a pan-Canadian perspective on our differing approaches to schooling, mentorship and teacher education. Noting provincial differences sheds light on inequities and suggests new directions for the retention of the newest members of our profession.

Olenka Bilash, PhD, Professor of Education, University of Alberta

In the aptly titled The Bliss and Blisters of Early Career Teaching: The Pan-Canadian Perspective, Drs. Kutsyuruba and Walker have provided essential solutions to the puzzle of how we support, or should support, new teachers.

Kirk Anderson, PhD, President, Association of Canadian Deans and Directors of Education (2017-2019)
Developing Resilience and Wellbeing

**Work-life Balance:**
- Taking care of their mental health
- Being involved in activities unrelated to school work
- Getting enough sleep
- Having a hobby
- Not feeling guilty about taking time for themselves
- Pursuing counseling
- Mentoring support (professional and personal)
Developing Resilience and Wellbeing

**Healthy Mindset:**
- Nurturing a healthy and positive attitude
- Perseverance to overcome the many stressful obstacles
- Asking for help from mentors and colleagues
- Importance of “letting go” of certain policies and administrative norms
- Focusing on what’s doable and feasible
- Hopefulness and patience
- Building confidence: “aie confiance en toi” [believe in yourself]
Developing Resilience and Wellbeing

**Reflective Inquiry:**

- Self-reflection
- Think back and mentally prepare differently for the next time
- Talking to a confidante
- Learning, reading, taking courses
- Looking for resources
- Challenge of not having enough time to reflect
Developing Resilience and Wellbeing

3Cs - Consult, Connect, Collaborate:
Consultation manifested itself in formal and informal ways, such as mentoring, networking with colleagues, or just asking colleagues for help. Building relationships—connecting—with colleagues who are both like-minded and experienced, can strengthen a teacher’s capacity. Formal and informal collaboration provided such practical benefits to ECTs as network-building, time efficiency, and sharing teaching ideas while increasing their confidence and self-efficacy.

Importance of trust and accessibility
Roles of School Leadership in Early Career Teachers’ Well-being and Development

1. Approachable; make time for teachers; check in;
2. Provide feedback/advice; create trust; patient; sympathetic; caring; explain things well; effective in communication
3. Facilitate relationships / interaction with parents
4. Provide time/money for PD

1. Check in - only from time to time
2. Lack of support in some areas (i.e. special ed., emotional support)
3. No support for PD
4. No formal evaluation
5. Create negative/challenging relationships
6. Overloading teachers
Research questions

1. What are the factors, forces and dynamics that interact to explain how and why it is that certain school leaders (principals) flourish?

2. How do these school leaders foster and sustain a climate where all those within the learning community flourish most of the time?

3. Based on our research, what concrete pedagogical and policy recommendations can we make to inform how school can be supported in their sustaining a more positive organizational approach in a time of increased accountability?
Appreciative Inquiry
A Social Constructionist Perspective

Vitality is always there to be discovered

How we frame our inquiry is important

*The first question is fateful*

People increase their confidence for change when they build on what they know
Here is what we’ve been asking…

• **What if** the key work of school leaders were to learn how to flourish in their work in service of modeling, encouraging, and way-making all others in their learning communities to do the same?

• What traits, characteristics, behaviours, social exchanges & psychological contracts might we see? What differences do context and trust make?

• As we continue to spend time with school leaders, we’ve begun to see evidence of Four Flourishing Values
… working side-by-side with our classroom teachers and the students [is where I feel the best]. I think that is where people would see that I come to life more, being able to just sit down and work side-by-side or co-teach a lesson with a staff member. I think … we sometimes get stuck a little bit in our offices dealing with different situations that have come up. (Betty, secondary school vice-principal)

I guess I really love to be able to be a facilitator for others; to get to say yes to my colleagues, to their ideas and their hopes.

I get to help facilitate their teaching and to help them be the best teacher they can be and to support them. It’s nice to be able to shape a school, the culture and the climate. And know that ultimately, you’re part of the team, but you also have a big influence over the direction that your school goes. Not that it’s about control or power because I have no interest in that. But I guess I do appreciate that I’ve had as many years as an educator as I have, in that I really can help my staff make a difference for kids and families (Holly, elementary school principal)
“…I have come to see my work as being a gatherer of gifts. What I notice is I can witness kids supporting one another, teachers giving of themselves, and friendly salutations from the majority of the community” (Peter, secondary school principal)

“…I have my own network with my colleagues. We have an inquiry group. And then my leadership group that I belong to at the district level is really exciting. So we meet constantly. We’re just finishing a Harvard [online] course right now – it’s been excellent in helping us provide a direction and a means of where we’re going to go to next. So that I really enjoyed. So just all the networking with people and just seeing the changes happening and being a facilitator of change has been really I guess what’s kept me really having fun” (Linda, elementary school principal)
I’m more and more believing that what is going on [in a classroom] is a total reflection of where that teacher is at.

And where our teachers are at is often a reflection of where we are at.

So when you talk about the impact an administrator or principal can have on a school, that’s the impact. And we can do wonderful things around education, we can do wonderful things around curriculum and all those sort of things; but if we don’t bring that sense of,

“I want to be here, I want to be a part of this team…“

If you don’t bring that presence to the school then [teachers] are not going to bring that to the classroom. (Rick, middle-school principal)
And I think our job too, is to also create. I feel like we are the teacher of our staff. I almost see myself in that way now. If they are happy, if I create a happy world for them, that also filters down to their students right? (Stella, middle school principal)

... that laughter you heard in there, that is what we do.

We laugh a lot, which [is good cause] I like to laugh.

I think when I said earlier [about what makes us flourish] that people don’t take things too seriously. There is a lot of banter. A lot of good natured making fun of each other and we laugh at ourselves. So that is what I love about the staff, but there are so many strong leaders on staff that it’s really easy [for me as a leader].

They have lots of good ideas and we run with the good ideas and it makes me look good (laughing). (John, secondary school principal)
Co-Creating a Flourishing Culture
The Roles of Purpose, Presence, Passion and Play

**Purpose**
- Integrity is increased
- Positive emotions are fostered which promote positive school culture
- Stimulates lifelong virtuosity
- Promotes resiliency
- Builds authenticity

**Passion**
- Human capacity is nurtured
- Perpetuates positive emotions
- Contributes to social betterment
- Fuels identity formation needed for success

**Presence**
- Fosters authenticity
- Positive emotions are perpetuated enhancing relational trust
- Generates resources, social capital and resilience

**Play**
- Creates safe spaces
- Perpetuates positive emotions and unity
- Supports creative problem solving and idea sharing
- Fosters identity formation
- Optimizes organizational health

**Leadership**
- Creativity
- Curiosity
- Perseverance
- Social intelligence
- Wonder
- Imagination
- Playfulness

**Additional Elements**
- Working Together
  - Collective Action
  - Shared Ownership
  - Sense of Contribution, Meaning & Fulfillment

- Connection & Mindfulness
  - Positively attending to the emotional lives of others
  - Trust, Acceptance & Understanding

- Love
- Virtuousness
- Using strengths & gifts in pursuit of collective endeavors
Questions emerging from our research

School principals are instrumental in creating conditions where teachers experience a sense of thriving. How do we encourage and support wellbeing as a pillar of administrative work?

How do we/can we organize schools with a “flourishing-for-all” perspective?

What if wellbeing were an organizational imperative?
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Thank you!