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Examining the workplace well-being of elementary school teachers whose students participated in a social emotional learning program

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EXAMINING THE WORKPLACE WELLBEING OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHERS

WHOSE STUDENTS PARTICIPATED IN A SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING

PROGRAM

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction

of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership, Administration and Policy

by

Yorri Berry

August, 2023

Linda Purrington, Ed.D. – Dissertation Chairperson

This dissertation, written by

Yorri Berry

under the guidance of a Faculty Committee and approved by its members, has been submitted to the Graduate Faculty in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Educational Leadership, Administration and Policy

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

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DEDICATION

Dedicated to every soul, past and present, who made this moment possible.
Jason, and dreams that transcend life. Suzzanne, and audaciousness to write. Papa, and
courage to take flight.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Beyond grateful to my brilliant research chair, dedicated committee, family, friends, and ancestors past whose investment inspired my perseverance. I planned to start a dissertation, I never planned to finish it. Yet, a conversation with my 91-year-old grandmother cleared my vision to ensure victory was my only pursuit. I stand on the shoulders of souls who risked their lives for literacy and sacrificed freedoms so I could access education. The privilege to learn, even in institutions whose inaugural classes did not include faces like mine and create pathways for future generations of every background to live without apology is my greatest honor.

To the human vessels who offered me a safe passage to this earth so I could birth power and possibility. Your struggle and sacrifice are not lost on me. Mrs. Treneta Burns—my grandmother and undergirding current ensuring I made it where I was going. I am but an extension of the excellence you modeled without university papers, pedigree, or position. Thank you for teaching me to lead from any seat. I am deeply grateful to my tribe: Miss Gerri, for afternoon tea and lessons in taking up space; Tae, Bailey and DJ for inspiration; Victoria for being a mirrored image affirming my worthiness; Gwendolyn E. Boyd and Delta Sigma Theta for showing me Black girls from the Deep South could grow up to be whatever we wanted; Ronni for flying off to Harvard and Dr. Michelle as a living embodiment of Sadie T.M. Alexander's brilliance; Dot for offering a masterclass on using what was meant for evil for our greatest good; Garry, Cat, Mashonda^2, Sheree, and Ledisi for shining a light and challenging me to never dim my own; Eunique's parents' home, Tessa's guest suite, Kim's guest room, Dr. Wiley's upstairs bedroom, Nancy's dorm, Truc's couch, and Suzzanne's spirit for holding space for my dreams in daytime!

I tried to quit this journey countless times, but perseverance was inevitable as I pondered my grandfathers, Papa, as I affectionately called them. Memories of staring into the eyes of one before rushing off to elementary school in New Orleans or staring into the eyes of the other while writing the final chapters of a doctoral dissertation in Palm Springs. Their grit and grace to dream fearlessly and never lose their drive for life in a society that did not always value theirs taught me pride. Their entrepreneurial spirit audacious enough to fly planes, sail boats, and travel far beyond the borders of this country even without a college education taught me the only limits powerful enough to keep me from my purpose eternally are those I place on myself.

Sweetie and Pa—the life force that is Susan L. Taylor and Khephra Burns, the love force that is my reason to press on, the light force propelling me to shine unapologetically. Without your affirmations, holistic nourishment, and unceasing reminders to finish writing my dissertation, I would have never finished. Your love will always be warmer than this degree! It would take another dissertation to detail the gratitude. My appreciation to all who sacrificed, supported, and believed extends beyond this lifetime. My greatest honor will be paying it forward. Thank you.

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ABSTRACT

In the past few decades, public school teachers have faced many challenges, including differentiated instruction to diverse students, increased classroom management, and standardized testing. The accumulation of these challenges has created high teacher attrition rates leading to teaching shortages. Understanding the barriers and useful supports to address the challenges teachers face can help lower attrition rates and enhance teaching quality. This study examines the workplace well-being of elementary school teachers whose students participated in a social and emotional learning program. The study included 16 elementary school teachers in schools with a large population of students who are particularly vulnerable to psychological distress and poor academic outcomes.

A two-part survey questionnaire assessing positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning, accomplishment, negative emotion, and health was administered online to 16 teachers in two public schools whose students participated in the Socio and Emotional Learning (SEL) program for at least one academic semester. This study's Workplace PERMA Profiler survey results indicated a median score of 8.06 for overall well-being from all 16 participants. According to the score interpretation chart created by the developers of the Workplace PERMA Profile, a score of 8.0–8.9 (1.1 to 3 for negative emotion) indicates high functioning and overall well-being. The results indicate that the participants achieved PERMA and possess a highly functional and above-average sense of well-being in the workplace. The results suggest that teachers whose students engaged in an SEL program for at least one academic semester reported that their well-being improved or remained the same. Teacher well-being is supported by student well-being and access to SEL resources, and teacher well-being is supported by a healthy workplace culture and self-care practice.

Chapter 1: The Problem

Introduction

The COVID-19 global pandemic took the world by storm and required educators to adjust to the rapid changes needed to meet student needs. The pandemic caused unpredictable school closures and a sudden shift to virtual instruction at many schools. The closures and the growing health crisis posed additional demands and stressors to educators and students. Schools made national news, as many were forced to innovate to adjust to the pandemic's changes and unpredictability. This period highlighted the many challenges educators and students face. Most importantly is how school leaders are expected to continue effective instruction as natural disasters such as the pandemic strike. The period of state-mandated quarantines and social distancing offered an opportunity for reflection. Most importantly, it led to examining the holistic wellness needs of students and educators as significant barriers to student learning were created. The study birthed from a deep desire to examine how children who inherit a world unusually complex and layered with trauma before they ever step foot in a school building, and the teachers and leaders who serve them, could truly thrive holistically and flourish amid unexpected challenges like a global pandemic and ongoing setbacks posing barriers to teaching and learning each day.

Social and emotional learning (SEL) was introduced formally in the 1990s when schools traditionally emphasized only academics and neglected pupils' emotional and social learning requirements. Within the past decade, many schools within the United States have developed school-based supervision services for social and emotional learning.

SEL is "the process by which students gain awareness, arrangement skills, social relationships and emotions hence becoming better at managing their lives successfully"

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(Kabasakal & Totan, 2013). Additionally, Zins and Elias (2006) assert that SEL is "the process by which students gain awareness of their emotions and manage them, start taking other individuals into account, make better decisions, display moral and responsible behavior, develop positive relationships, and avoid negative behavior." Some students can achieve SEL without additional support, while others need extra support to meet their needs regarding social and emotional learning. Therefore, researchers argue that the task of meeting the social and emotional learning needs of students should be a priority in their education. This study examines the workplace well-being of elementary school teachers whose students are engaged in an SEL intervention using the Positive Emotion, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, and Accomplishment (PERMA) model as a framework.

Background of the Problem

The massive workload placed on teachers to meet the demands of differentiated instruction, standardized testing preparation, and effective classroom management has led to increased teacher attrition and teaching shortages. According to a National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (NCTAF) report, teacher attrition rates were 46% in the first five years. Moreover, the rate of teachers entering the education field is lower than that of those leaving the profession (NCTAF, 1996). Continuing such a path can potentially increase classroom sizes and hinder student learning. Contributing factors to teacher shortages and attrition rates include heavier workloads, classroom management challenges, and low support from school administrators. Furthermore, such challenges hinder teachers' effectiveness, and students are adversely affected if this situation goes unaddressed. In addition, teacher attitudes, well-being, and cognition play a role in the classroom climate. Therefore, teacher stress and burnout can harm student performance and the school environment.

Consequently, there have been calls in recent years for education reforms that provide resources and support for teachers to elevate instruction, increase retention and protect their well-being. School-based mindfulness interventions have been shown to support teacher well-being and classroom effectiveness. Mindfulness interventions may also help improve teachers' emotional and cognitive capacity and reduce workplace stress. A better understanding of the barriers and useful support for teachers to address challenges can help lower attrition rates and enhance overall teacher instruction that benefits students (Boulware et al, 2019; Mason & Matas, 2015).

This study's key concepts include well-being in educational contexts, social-emotional learning programs, teacher stress, PERMA, mindfulness, well-being, and the SEW-NOLA SEL intervention. Teaching is regarded as a high-stress job, and many teachers experience burnout. Therefore, it is worth taking a closer look at teacher well-being and developing ways to support workplace well-being.

6+Social-emotional learning has played a significant role in increasing students' awareness, preparedness, relationships, emotions, and ability to successfully control their lives (Kabasakal & Totan, 2013). Educational researchers have asserted how the non-academic needs of students can overwhelm teachers with stress (Ball & Anderson-Butcher, 2014; Roberts et al., 2019). Therefore, SEL interventions for students may positively support not only students but their teachers as well. Strengthening SEL competencies in students supports positive emotion, engagement, meaning, positive relationships, and accomplishment (PERMA), and well-being of teachers, specifically within an educational context. Finally, the SEW-NOLA SEL intervention is a specific example of mindfulness and well-being support for students that may also support their teachers. Thus, this study deems it beneficial to examine further the workplace well-being of

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teachers through exploring well-being in educational contexts, social-emotional learning programs, teacher stress, PERMA, mindfulness and well-being, and the SEW-NOLA program.

Well-Being in Educational Contexts

According to Watson (2016), "Well-being is a massive issue – not just for us, but for everyone who cares about education." Teaching is a high-stress job, and many in the profession experience burnout. In considering the link between student well-being and academic performance and the well-being of teachers, it is critical to focus on factors that improve and sustain teacher well-being (Paterson & Grantham, 2016).

Historically, research has focused on the importance of student well-being and the role education plays (Coles et al., 2016). However, newer research focuses on the relationship between student and teacher well-being and improved academic outcomes. A Wellbeing Australia (2011) survey of 466 educators indicated that teacher well-being was perceived to play a role in promoting students' mental health and social behaviors. Therefore, it is critical to consider the emerging evidence regarding how teachers and their well-being play a role in student outcomes and the support needed to improve teacher well-being.

Paterson and Grantham (2016) state that well-being aims to transcend compartmentalization and connect mind, body, and spirit. Historically, well-being has lacked theory-based measurements, which posed difficulty in determining a clear universal definition (Pollard & Lee, 2003; Ryff & Keyes, 1995). Researchers have struggled to determine how to measure and interpret data related to well-being clearly. There are various theories of well-being, but Dodge et al. (2012) suggest that well-being is "the balance point between an individual's resource pool and the challenges they face" (p. 91). The resource pool consists of social, psychological, and physical assets. This definition asserts that when an individual faces a

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challenge, they are driven to use their resources to return to a specific point to achieve well-being, but it does not control for economic and environmental factors. Given such limitations, La Placa et al. (2013) suggest that well-being should not be limited to individual subjectivity but should go beyond a single domain to include the well-being of the community, family, and the greater society. Ultimately, well-being is viewed through a holistic ecological lens that considers all factors and potential domains.

There exists a need to focus on well-being in educational contexts. If it may benefit schools to explore ways to improve and support the well-being of teachers, the overall success of students may also be improved. High-stress levels at work, more work hours, trauma, and posttraumatic stress disorder all contribute to poor well-being. Thus, school-based social and emotional learning intervention effects on teacher well-being are worth examining.

Social-emotional Learning Programs

Programs that focus on students learning and developing social and emotional skills are considered SEL programs. SEL school-based interventions improve listening, following instructions, and resolving interpersonal conflicts. SEL programs rooted in mindfulness practices increase a student's ability to focus compassionately on the present, improving self-management and decreasing stress (Biegel et al., 2009; Kabat-Zinn, 2003; Mendelson et al., 2010). The merging of SEL and mindfulness-based approaches to address student social and emotional learning are considered Mindfulness-Based Social Emotional Learning (MBSEL). According to Kaiser-Greenland (2010), MBSEL programs aim to improve students' social and behavioral intelligence through specific practices when led by a teacher focused on their collective experience. Common themes explored in MBSEL programs include self-awareness, contemplation, and kindness.

Teacher Stress

Both child development and educational researchers assert that the non-academic needs of students can overwhelm teachers with stress (Ball & Anderson-Butcher, 2014; Kyriacou, 2001). According to Roeser and Medley (1997), many teachers see the non-academic needs of students as necessary and within the scope of their job while simultaneously viewing them as a burden. Furthermore, teachers have noted that education and preparation training leave them lacking the confidence and knowledge to address the non-academic needs of students (Anderson-Butcher et al., 2008; Berzin et al., 2011). However, teachers with strong social and emotional learning competencies report more effective classroom management and increased positive relationships with students, improving student achievement and reducing teacher stress. Not surprisingly, research supports increased teacher stress and decreased student achievement when teachers lack the skills and training to support social and emotional learning and cultivate healthier classroom climates (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Jennings et al., 2017).

Perma

K-12 schools throughout America are filled with culturally diverse students. Thus, teachers in these schools have a right and responsibility to be adequately prepared to teach and lead culturally diverse students. According to Gay et al. (2002), teacher attitudes, knowledge, and beliefs correlate with the quality of student education. Scholars have emphasized how critical teacher instruction is in creating cultural sensitivity and equitability for culturally and linguistically diverse students to thrive academically (Gay, 2000; Siwatu, 2007). Seligman (2011) offers that life satisfaction and flourishing holistically through measurable increased positive emotion, engagement, meaning, positive relationships, and life accomplishments constitute PERMA and well-being (Seligman, 2011). The PERMA model assesses areas

including achievement and values positive relationships (Kern et al., 2015). White and Waters (2014) presents multidimensional methods to well-being helping education institutions to tailor systematic well-being methods to the developmental needs of students.

Coffey et al. (2016) completed two studies that determined PERMA was an accurate tool to measure whether one achieves optimal well-being. Positive education centers on education empowering individual happiness and skills. Both a need and an opportunity exist to focus on well-being within an educational context. Empowering educational progress by strengthening the safety, health, and moral development of educators at all levels is desirable and necessary (Land et al., 2001; Martens & Witt, 2004; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2011; Schaufeli & Taris, 2014).

Mindfulness and Well-Being

Contemplative education practices aid in preparing students to handle challenges better and help to build attention, concentration, awareness, and compassion towards self and others (Haight, 2010). Research with nonclinical populations has shown mindfulness-based interventions to effectively reduce perceived stress levels, anxiety, and tension in college students (Bodenlos et al., 2015; Crane et al., 2010). In addition, mindfulness interventions in school settings have successfully reduced psychological and emotional distress, which are key contributing factors to differences in student achievement (Nidich et al., 2011). The findings of this study demonstrated statistically significant differences in psychological distress between students in the same school setting who participated in a mindfulness practice twice daily and those who did not. There have also been evidence and findings demonstrating improvements in psychological distress among urban students in the same school who participated in a mindfulness practice twice daily over those who did not. (Wentzel, 1994). Accordingly,

mindfulness interventions may help college students decrease stress and promote positive well-being by teaching them to cope more effectively with stress (Bodenlos et al., 2015).

Sibinga et al. (2011) researched the acceptability and effects of a mindfulness-based intervention with at-risk urban youth. Participants revealed that practicing self-guided mindfulness meditation before homework or a test enabled them to feel less stressed. The findings revealed a positive correlation between mindfulness sessions and health, school achievement, and interpersonal interactions. Participants in the Sibinga study reported that due to mindfulness techniques, they felt more in the present in situations in which they used to zone out regularly. Mindfulness interventions have been used to strengthen students' emotional regulation to aid student success (Lam et al., 2015). Furthermore, mindfulness interventions have been shown to help individuals establish effective coping strategies in response to stress and help increase their quality of life (Grossman et al., 2004; Jastrowski Mano et al., 2016; Mattern & Bauer, 2014; Tarrasch et al., 2020).

A six-week intervention incorporating elements of mindfulness training was found to be effective in decreasing psychological distress, anxiety, and perceived stress in students (Deckro et al., 2002). Hick and Furlotte (2010) conducted two phases of research that initiated a customized mindfulness intervention designed especially for a population with high economic deprivation. The findings of this study indicated increased empathy toward self and greater fulfillment with life after completing the mindfulness training. The feedback indicated that the program improved the participants' self-view and decreased depression, anxiety, and negativity. The program also provided empowering tools to respond better to challenging circumstances. Core themes found in the qualitative analysis reported by the researchers included self-expressed benefits of the program, such as increased understanding and the ability to relate to others.

Because of the effectiveness of mindfulness in decreasing student conflict, anxiety, and stress, as well as increasing self-regulation (Sibinga et al., 2013), it would be beneficial to explore further the connection between mindfulness practices, student achievement, and teacher flourishing, as measured by PERMA.

According to Durlak et al. (2011), student social and emotional learning skills have played a critical role in cultivating student adjustment and improving academic performance, social behaviors, relationships with peers, and academic performance while decreasing emotional distress. Similarly, mindfulness-based interventions and practices have been shown to increase well-being, positive emotion, compassion, and empathy (Shapiro et al., 2012). Together, such approaches significantly improve student attention, academic performance, and behavior while reducing stress (Flook et al., 2010; Schonert-Reichl, 2017). While there is a gap in research evidence about the impact of mindfulness and social and emotional learning student-based interventions on teachers, studies support the effectiveness of mindfulness practices in improving the well-being of teachers and reducing their stress (Jennings et al., 2012).

SEW-NOLA SEL Intervention

The SEW-NOLA SEL program was first implemented in 2016 south Louisiana after Hurricane Katrina. The SEW-NOLA program originated in 2016 and expanded to multiple schools, and the program continued and data collection for this study occurred five years after the initial implementation between 2021-2022. The storm's aftermath punctured citywide and education infrastructure and increased community violence. It also placed New Orleans' low socio-economic minority youth vulnerable to psychological distress and poor academic functioning. A growing body of research suggests that school-based social and emotional development programs can improve academic achievement and health outcomes for low-income

minority youth. In New Orleans, where African-American youth are disproportionately affected by disparities in education and health, SEW-NOLA implemented a social and emotional wellness program for pre-kindergarten through sixth-grade students in two public elementary schools in the Central City neighborhood. The essential components of the classroom-based intervention taught by SEW-NOLA-trained instructors included relaxation techniques and meditation, emotional regulation, and social facility (how individuals manage relationships, interact, and show caring). This study takes a deeper look at the SEW-NOLA SEL intervention as an important opportunity to examine how programs specifically designed to impact students' social-emotional learning and well-being may also support teachers' workplace well-being.

The SEW-NOLA SEL intervention involves a manualized social and emotional learning intervention. Classes meet weekly for one hour over 14 weeks at four urban elementary schools. Instructors with master's degrees, trained in social and emotional learning, facilitate the intervention. Intervention classes focus on formal and informal mindfulness practices, including body scan meditation, sitting meditation, yoga, and social-emotional outcomes such as focus, empathy, attention, and self-regulation.

SEW-NOLA implemented social and emotional learning and small group therapeutic interventions at two schools in its first year. An evaluation was done after one year to determine academic, behavioral, and social-emotional growth indicators. Students who participated in the intervention showed significant academic improvements in the second semester: 45% improvement in reading, 55% improvement in math, 28.9% improvement in science, 62% improvement in social studies, and 46% improvement in writing. In addition, changes in detentions, demerits, and unexcused absences measured the behavioral impact of students over one academic semester: 51.3% of students had fewer detentions, 67.3% of students had fewer

demerits, and 36.3% of students had fewer unexcused absences in the second semester than the first semester. In addition to qualitative feedback from teachers, quantitative data on emotional regulation, focus, empathy, and attention was used to measure the social-emotional impact of the intervention on students over one academic semester: 66% of students improved in emotional regulation with the average growth at 86%; 70% of students improved in focus and the average growth was 85%; 54% of students improved in empathy and the average growth was 41%, and 64% of students improved in attention with an average growth of 75%.

Qualitative interviews with teachers whose students participated in the intervention over one academic semester revealed that:

1. Components of SEW-NOLA were helpful and produced positive impacts on social and emotional learning goals;

2. Students enjoyed SEW-NOLA, and teachers thought it was helpful;

3. Students need social-emotional programming, teachers support it, and they believe that SEW-NOLA is complementary to their work; and

4. Teachers thought the program was logistically smooth but recommended that SEW-NOLA staff access capacity-building around classroom management and communicate directly with teachers rather than school leaders.

While this data provided insights regarding academic, behavioral, and social-emotional learning interventions supporting student well-being and success, what has not been studied or known about the SEW-NOLA intervention is if or how such supports create teacher well-being and flourishing. The SEW-NOLA intervention connects to the overall study by providing an opportunity to study if social-emotional learning interventions that support student behavior and academic performance may simultaneously support teacher well-being.

Problem Statement

Social-emotional learning interventions enable students to build awareness, arrangement skills, social relationships, and emotions to better manage their lives and improve their well-being and success more effectively. Data from the SEW-NOLA SEL intervention proved to be a positive fit for students' academic, behavioral, and social-emotional needs and effectively addressed them throughout implementation. However, what is not known is whether student participation in the SEW-NOLA SEL intervention supports teacher workplace well-being and, if so, how? (Bodenlos et al., 2015; Evans et al., 2011; Lam, 2015; Seligman, 2011).

Therefore, research was conducted to assess elementary teacher workplace well-being and to explore elementary teacher perspectives regarding teacher workplace well-being as a result of having students participate in social-emotional learning program taught by trained instructors. This may help uncover additional solutions to decrease psychological distress and increase well-being in teachers to support student achievement.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this concurrent, embedded, mixed-methods study is to examine the self-assessed workplace well-being and perspectives of elementary classroom teachers in the Southern United States whose students participated for an academic semester in the social-emotional learning program taught by trained instructors.

In order to accomplish the study's purpose, a two-part questionnaire was administered to elementary teachers in two public schools whose students participated in the social-emotional program for a minimum of one academic semester. Part one of the study questionnaire consist of the Workplace PERMA-Profiler. The Workplace PERMA-Profiler is a 23-question measure assessing positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning, accomplishment, negative

emotion, and health. This tool measures all the constructs of PERMA. In addition to the

PERMA-Profiler questions, the second part of the questionnaire will include two semi-structured

questions requiring a narrative response. The added questions will ask elementary teachers if

they have observed any changes in their workplace well-being since student participation in the

SEL intervention and perspectives on what, if anything, could improve their workplace well-

being.

Study Importance

The outcomes of this study might interest and benefit teachers, school administrators, and

students. This study will assess the positive emotion, engagement, positive relationships,

meaning, accomplishment, negative emotion, and health of teachers whose students are engaged

in SEL practices. It will also assess how teachers describe changes in their well-being and their

perspectives regarding the impact of student well-being on their well-being as it relates to the

SEL intervention program goals and objectives. The outcomes may provide insights related to

practices impacting student well-being and teacher well-being. This study will add data to

existing literature regarding how specific social and emotional learning interventions may

support teacher well-being. The research will also add new knowledge to areas that have been

overlooked, including whether social and emotional learning practices in an urban setting may

support the well-being of teachers and positive student outcomes. This study is compelling and

relevant based on research regarding teacher stress and the benefits of teacher well-being for

teachers and their students. The study also provides information to researchers desiring to do

scholarly work in education and teacher well-being.

Definition of Terms

- *Social and Emotional Learning*

  o *"*The process by which students gain awareness of their emotions and manage them, start taking other individuals into account, make better decisions, display moral and responsible behavior, develop positive relationships, and avoid negative behavior" (Zins & Elias, 2006).

- *Mindfulness-based Social and Emotional Learning (MBSEL)*

  o *"*The intervention utilized a series of guided mindful-based awareness and attention-focusing practices as the method for students to engage with social and emotional learning (SEL) concepts" (Bakosh et al., 2015).

- *Well-Being*

  o "Life satisfaction and flourishing holistically through measurable increased positive emotion, engagement, meaning, positive relationships, and accomplishment in life" (Seligman, 2011).

- *Urban*

  o "Densely developed areas with 50K or more residents" (census.gov).

- *Low Socio-economic*

  o "Students living beneath the national poverty line. The United States Census Bureau updates the poverty thresholds and federal poverty measures annually. The thresholds are used to determine the number of Americans living in poverty and are issued yearly in the Federal Register by the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). The 2019 poverty threshold is $12,490 for a family of one, $16,910 for a family of two, $21,330 for a family of three, $25,750 for a

family of four, $30,110 for a family of five, and $34,590 for a family of six"

(United States Census Bureau, 2019).

- *PERMA*
  - **"Well-being theory composed of 5 elements: positive emotion, engagement, positive relationships, meaning, and accomplishment"** (Seligman, 2011).

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework that grounds this study is comprised of the well-being theory and PERMA Model.

Well-Being Theory

Using Seligman's definition (2011), well-being theory comprises five elements: positive emotion, engagement, positive relationships, meaning, and accomplishment. The central purpose and goal of well-being theory are to improve individual flourishing through improving these five elements and to focus on strengthening and achieving each of the five elements equally. Key contributors and theorists associated with well-being theory include Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, Martin Seligman, and Christopher Peterson. Well-being theory is the framework underlying the PERMA Model.

PERMA Model

The PERMA model has five elements of well-being that can be measured (Seligman, 2011). These elements include:

1. Positive Emotion - living pleasantly.

2. Engagement - completely absorbed in the present task/experience.

3. Positive Relationships – "other people."

4. Meaning - belonging to and serving something one believes to be bigger than oneself.

5. Accomplishment – achieving life; what human beings free of coercion do for its own sake.

None of the five PERMA elements defines well-being, but each contributes to individuals achieving well-being. The PERMA measurement tool also assesses negative emotion and health, contributing to well-being. The elements have been objectively and subjectively measured through self-report and research measures. All elements contributing to life satisfaction are measured subjectively. The central purpose and goal of well-being theory are to improve individual flourishing through improving the five PERMA elements (Seligman, 2011). Well-being theory focuses on strengthening and achieving each of the five PERMA elements equally. Moreover, well-being has multi-dimensional methods and is not limited to what one believes about themselves but can be measured. The outcomes of both positive psychology and well-being theory are centered on improving the flourishing of individuals and the planet (Kern et al., 2020; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Consequently, well-being is the theoretical framework that will be used to explore the impact of mindfulness interventions on the positive emotion, engagement, positive relationships, meaning, and accomplishments of college students (Seligman, 2011).

The PERMA Profiler is a brief measure of PERMA and is related to the PERMA model as the tool asks three questions to assess well-being. The Profiler assesses overall well-being, negative emotion, loneliness, and physical health. Additionally, it allows individuals to monitor their well-being across multiple psychosocial domains. The PERMA Profiler is a complete measure of well-being and, therefore, will be my primary instrument for assessing elementary teacher well-being in this study.

Research Questions

The following three questions guided the research study.

Concerning teachers who work with elementary students who have participated in the

SEL intervention taught by trained instructors for a minimum of one academic semester:

1. How do elementary school teachers self-assess their workplace well-being using

   the PERMA Profiler?

2. How do elementary teachers think their workplace well-being has changed, if

   at all, since working with the students in the SEL program?

3. What else do elementary teachers believe could be done to improve their

   workplace well-being?

Delimitations

This study will be delimited to teachers at two public elementary schools in the Southern

United States whose students have participated for a minimum of one academic semester in the

SEL program taught by trained instructors.

Limitations

Perceived limitations of the study include:

1. Results of the study are specific to the population studied.

2. The study focuses only on teachers and elementary school students.

3. Data collection was extended from 2021 to 2022 due to the COVID-19

   pandemic.

4. Teachers did not participate in the SEL program.

5. Data collection occurs after one semester of the SEL intervention.

6. No control group exists in the study, and

7. Data is partially self-reported.

Assumptions

Key assumptions of the study include:

1. Overall well-being can be measured accurately through the Workplace PERMA Profiler tool.

2. The research instrument will measure what it purports to measure.

3. The underlying theories framing the study are accurate and true.

4. Teachers will honestly and accurately self-report and possess an accurate understanding of themselves and their students.

Organization of Study

This dissertation is divided into five chapters. Chapter one briefly introduces social and emotional learning, well-being, teacher well-being, the purpose of the study, the justification for using quantitative and descriptive research methods, the theoretical framework, a statement of the problem, and the research question(s). Chapter two presents a broad review of the literature relevant to the topic, a historical overview of the SEL intervention, and the theoretical framework for this dissertation. Chapter three delineates the research methods used in the study, which includes data collection, participant recruitment, data analysis, and the approaches that are taken to increase the reliability and validity of the study, potential ethical issues, and the background and role of the researcher. Chapter four presents a detailed analysis of survey findings, and Chapter Five discusses the findings, conclusions, and recommendations for policy/practice and future study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter presents the rationale for researching students' social and emotional learning interventions and how the research may support teacher well-being in primary school settings. The seven key variables addressed in this study include positive emotion, engagement, positive relationships, meaning, accomplishment, negative emotion, and health. Research supports the value of positive emotions throughout one's lifetime.

Organizationally, engagement refers to one's vigor, dedication, and absorption levels in the workplace. Meanwhile, relationships are measured in most major international well-being surveys. Meaning is one's direction in life and the ability to connect to something larger than self. Accomplishment entails working toward and reaching goals and the competence, efficacy, and achievement of tasks. Individuals can simultaneously experience positive and negative emotions, impacting their overall health and well-being (Butler & Kern, 2016).

The literature review is organized into sections:

- historical background on social-emotional learning interventions implemented at the schools of study participants
- theoretical framework that addresses the core components of PERMA and well-being theory
- teacher well-being
- intersections of mindfulness-based social-emotional learning interventions for students and/or teachers in a K-12 setting
- teacher stress
- PERMA
- well-being, flourishing, and student efficacy

- mindfulness and well-being

- SEW- NOLA intervention

Historical Background

Social-emotional learning interventions enable students to build awareness, arrangement skills, social relationships, and emotions to effectively manage their lives and contribute to their overall well-being and success. Data from the SEW-NOLA SEL intervention proved to be a positive fit for students' academic, behavioral, and social- emotional needs and effectively addressed them throughout implementation. However, what is not known is whether student participation in the SEW NOLA SEL intervention may support teacher well-being and, if so, how? Therefore, research is needed to explore teacher perspectives about student well-being and teacher well-being and to discover solutions to decrease psychological distress and increase teacher well-being that supports student achievement.

The discussion on SEL will present its history and studies highlighting its efficacy and the intersection of SEL interventions and K-12 populations. Overall, the study will examine SEL approaches to improving teacher and student well-being, increasing student achievement, and decreasing the psychological distress of students and teachers in the various studies.

Theoretical Framework

Well-being has five core components used to measure it: positive emotion, including overall life satisfaction, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment (Seligman, 2011). Together these five elements measure and predict flourishing. The well-being theory aims to increase individual flourishing by improving the five elements.

Well-Being Theory

Well-being theory centers on strengthening and achieving each of the five PERMA elements equally. Furthermore, well-being includes multi-dimensional methods that are not limited to what one believes about themselves but rather methods that can be measured.

The conclusions of both positive psychology and well-being theory are aimed at increasing the flourishing of individuals and the world (Diener & Seligman, 2002; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). As a result, well-being theory is the theoretical framework used to examine the impact of mindfulness interventions on the positive emotion, engagement, positive relationships, meaning, and accomplishments of urban college students (Seligman, 2011).

Before developing the well-being theory, Seligman developed the authentic happiness theory. Well-being theory differs from authentic happiness theory by seeking to achieve more than happiness and life satisfaction. Authentic happiness theory is one-dimensional and solely fixated on how one feels, asserting that one decides a life path according to feelings. Increasing individual happiness is the primary goal (Seligman et al., 2009). One critical shortcoming of authentic happiness theory is that individual happiness is not the sole predictor of life-satisfaction for every person. Therefore, other elements are worth considering to account for what makes us flourish and achieve holistic wellness.

The literature also highlights how PERMA as a school-based intervention may impact student flourishing. Well-being theory, as viewed in the literature, provides insight into how PERMA contributes to holistic human flourishing. A lens informed by well-being helps schools support and design integrated approaches to increase student stress and negative mental health. This theoretical perspective centers around the following: (a) How do mindfulness interventions impact well-being? (b) How do mindfulness interventions impact student efficacy? Well-being

theory builds on authentic happiness theory and goes beyond individual happiness as the sole

predictor of individual life- satisfaction. Instead, well-being theory focuses on additional

elements to better explain what supports human flourishing and holistic wellness.

Given the literature's emphasis on the connection between mindfulness-based

interventions and increased well-being - statistically significant and not - well-being as a

theoretical framework provides the necessary awareness to understanding how mindfulness

interventions may support student and teacher flourishing in an academic setting.

Teacher Well-Being

American teachers are expected to not only prepare students academically but socially

and emotionally as well. However, many schools lack adequate resources and support to develop

student's social and emotional learning skills; consequently, students and teachers suffer. Zinsser

et al. (2016) suggest that the ability of a teacher to effectively teach and engage in support of

student social and emotional learning partly depends on the teacher's well-being and emotional

and social competencies. They also reported that teachers working with increased student social

and emotional learning supports had greater job satisfaction, felt more support in managing

challenging behaviors, viewed their workplace climate as more positive, and were less

depressed.

Furthermore, research shows that teachers experience high levels of psychological

distress, which is impacted by poor student behavior, work conditions, workplace relationships,

and other interpersonal factors. At the same time, research shows that a teacher's mental health

and well-being impact their ability to effectively support children's social and emotional learning

(Barry et al., 2017; Friedman-Krauss et al., 2014; Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). Zinsser et al.

(2016) while there is research highlighting the significance of programs supporting the children's

social and emotional competencies, less attention has been paid to the teachers implementing these tasks and their workplace climate. There is a need for research that dives into social and emotional learning programming and supports that can strengthen the workforce's capacity to support those students (Slack, 2013). Aloe et al. (2014), posit that a strong correlation between student behavior and teacher burnout. This correlation ultimately impairs teacher well-being and students' optimal performance in the classroom. After a multivariate meta-analysis of student misbehavior and emotional exhaustion, personal accomplishment, and depersonalization, which all contribute to teacher burnout, the results supported a significant relationship between the variables. The behavior of students impacted the emotional exhaustion of teachers the greatest.

Research supports that many teachers nationally have limited quality training to support student's social and emotional learning needs (Jennings et al., 2013; Schonert-Reichl et al., 2015). There is also growing evidence connecting the teachers' workplace experience and psychological health to classroom quality and teacher turnover (Jepson & Forrest, 2006; Montgomery & Rupp, 2005; Whitebook et al., 2001).

Teachers are necessary components in cultivating the learning environment that significantly shapes the development and growth of students (Hamre et al., 2012). Due to the teacher's role as emotional stabilizers tasked with cultivating the emerging social and emotional competencies of primary school students, the research suggests the need to be equally attentive to the psychological health of those teachers and it affects the student's learning environment and holistic development (Denham et al., 2012; McLean & Connor, 2015; Zinsser et al., 2016). The research, which focused on the emotional health, depression, and stress of teachers, reported that while many teachers indicated high job satisfaction, many also said that teaching is emotionally

challenging (Farber, 2000; Johnson et al., 2005; Thomason & La Paro, 2009; Thomason & La Paro, 2013).

The emotional well-being of teachers can affect their classroom management, their relationship with students, and their ability to support the social and emotional learning needs of students. Emotionally overwhelmed teachers are less effective as educators and more likely to leave the profession (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Jepson & Forrest, 2006). Bloom (2010) acknowledges the limited body of research focused on the interconnectedness between center-level administrative practices and the psychological health of employees. There exists a need to look deeper at teacher well-being and its support systems; the social and emotional competence of teachers who can effectively manage psychological distress in healthy ways improves their interpersonal relationships in the workplace and enhances student learning (Goddard et al., 2004; Li Grining et al., 2010).

Teacher Well-Being and Social Emotional Learning

Existing research supports the relationship between wellness and social and emotional learning (SEL; Cohen, 2006; Zins et al., 2003; Payton et al., 2000). Within the past decade, many U.S. schools have centered school-based guidance services for social and emotional learning. Social-emotional learning, or SEL, is "the process by which students gain awareness, arrangement skills, social relationships and emotions hence becoming better at managing their lives successfully" (Kabasakal & Totan, 2013). Per Elias et al. (2015), social and emotional learning was introduced in the nineties when schools traditionally only emphasized academics and neglected students' emotional and social learning requirements.

Teacher stress, efficacy, and job satisfaction relate to personal outcomes in engagement, motivation, and commitment to teaching but also impact the students (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004;

Weiqi, 2007; Wilson, 2002). Research indicates that teachers with lower stress and higher job satisfaction have greater teaching effectiveness in generating greater student achievement (Caprara et al., 2006; Ross et al., 2012).

A 2012 study by Collie et al. investigated teacher perceptions regarding how social and emotional learning and school climates impacted teacher stress, efficacy, and job satisfaction. The study examined stress from the workload and student behavior. Participants - 664 Canadian elementary and secondary school teachers - answered online questions about school climate, SEL perceptions, and teacher outcomes. Of the four school climate factors, teachers selected behavior and motivation as having the most significant impact on teacher stress, efficacy, and job satisfaction.

The study was limited because its cross-sectional study design could not support a causal relationship between variables. Instead, directional relationships were determined based on relationships via previous research. Other limitations included the possibility that only high-functioning teachers took the time to complete the questionnaire, thus skewing the results. Nonetheless, the study supported the importance of teacher perceptions about school climate and social and emotional learning in research and practical applications. Furthermore, teacher perceptions should be considered to gain a deeper understanding of their experiences and supports needed to improve well-being and student outcomes. The study asserts that teacher perceptions are essential when implementing social and emotional learning initiatives.

Aldrup et al. (2018) examined the relationship between student misbehavior and teacher well-being. The study examined major teacher stressors, including student disturbances and disciplinary issues, which have been correlated to reduced occupational well-being. Split et al. (2011) viewed the teacher-student relationship as a key variable of teacher well-being and

student behavior. In the study, 222 teachers rated student misbehaviors in the classroom, teacher-student relationships, and teacher well-being as factors in their emotional exhaustion and enthusiasm toward their work. Additionally, 4,111 students served by the teachers were asked about their classroom behavior. Results of the study indicated a link between teacher exhaustion and decreased job satisfaction and student misbehavior. The study results also indicated a strong relationship between teacher well-being and the teacher-student relationship. The study asserts future research should examine teacher perceptions in greater detail to understand better how to improve teacher education and student interventions that benefit student well-being.

Furthermore, study findings reveal that teacher-student relationships also play a critical role in teacher well-being. Strengthening teacher-student relationships could support improved teacher well-being. Improving teachers' social and emotional competence would assist them in better understanding and regulating students' emotions and their own to build better teacher-student relationships and student development.

Mindfulness-Based Social and Emotional Learning (MBSEL)

This section will briefly review mindfulness and how the lack of well-being impacts student flourishing. It will also examine suggested mindfulness approaches, particularly emphasizing the literature highlighting the relationship between mindfulness practices and student well-being.

Mindfulness is a consciousness that arises through purposeful non- judgmentally attentiveness in the current moment (Kabat-Zinn, 2003). Historically, mindfulness in the United States initially focused on adult health and psychology. Jon Kabat-Zinn is credited with bringing the traditional practice of mindfulness into the western scientific world in the 1970s. However, the general practice of mindfulness existed for centuries in various forms, including Hindu yoga

practice, which originated around 1500 BCE, Daoist qì go ng practices, Buddhist seated meditation, and breath consciousness. Christian monasteries and mysticism, Islam's Sufism practices, and Kaballah practices in Judaism have also integrated mindfulness techniques (Smith, 1995).

As it is used in the West, the word mindfulness relates to Eastern words such as Pali's sati, Sanskrit's smrti, and Tibetan's dran-pa. Mindfulness is also associated with Buddhist elements, including recollection, care, and awareness (Bodhi, 2000). The Western practice of mindfulness focuses on intentionally bringing total awareness to one's moment-to-moment experiences and accepting them without judgment (Kabat-Zinn, 2003; Shapiro et al., 2008). Essentially, mindfulness calls for the abandonment of one's conditioned and emotional responses, reactions, judgments, and evaluations of whatever one focuses on at the moment (Bodhi, 2000; Kabat-Zinn, 2003).

Conclusive data from various studies suggest that mindfulness interventions for urban youth may help improve interpersonal relationships, school achievement, and physical health while reducing hostility and emotional distress (Roth & Creaser, 1997; Sibinga et al., 2011). According to Roth and Creaser (1997), mindfulness practices can facilitate profound individual change, symptom relief, and health improvement. Qualitative measures in the Sibinga study (2011) support positive outcomes of mindfulness techniques used in the study, as many participants described the positive effects they experienced after adopting mindfulness techniques in their lives. Although qualitative and quantitative data support the validity of study findings, the lack of a control group poses challenges to distinguishing whether improvements and positive changes are related to mindfulness or other group effects. Recommendations for future research include more controlled trials assessing the efficacy of mindfulness intervention

programs, more objective measures of study outcomes, and evaluating the duration of identified effects reported by participants. According to the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, SEL is the process through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions.

Thus, programs focusing on student preparedness to learn and develop social and emotional skills are considered SEL programs. SEL school-based interventions improve listening, following instructions, and the students' interpersonal and conflict-resolution competencies. In addition, SEL programs rooted in mindfulness practices that increase student capacity to focus curiously on the present with kindness have been shown to impact student self-management positively and decrease stress (Biegel et al., 2009; Kabat-Zinn, 2003; Mendelson et al., 2010).

Combining SEL and mindfulness-based approaches to address student social and emotional learning is considered MBSEL. Per Kaiser-Greenland (2010), MBSEL programs aim to improve students' social and behavioral intelligence through specific practices led by a teacher focused on the students' collective experiences. Common themes explored in MBSEL programs include self-awareness, contemplation, and kindness. Sibinga et al. (2013) used a mindfulness intervention on a predominately female urban youth population. Results from the intervention showed a decrease in youth anxiety, stress, and conflict while indicating an increase in self-regulation. The intervention further examined mindfulness instruction with greater methodological rigor in active control conditions. While baseline data on psychological symptoms, stress, mindfulness, coping, and sleep revealed no significant differences between the

control and other youth groups, data collected upon completion of the program revealed mindful youth had significantly less anxiety and increased well-being. In addition, the study results revealed that mindfulness improved the self-regulatory process and the coping and regulation of emotions.

Jon Kabat-Zinn, the pioneer of mindfulness interventions in the United States, states "Mindfulness adds value to SEL because it goes beyond cognitive understanding and is grounded in an actual practice that can be sustained or evoked throughout the day" (Broderick, 2013). Durlak et al. (2011) conducted a meta-analysis in which 213 school-based SEL programs showed various benefits for students, including decreased emotional distress, improved social behavior, and increased efficacy in many school settings and among racially and ethnically diverse students. Similarly, Greenberg et al. (2003) and Zinns et al. (2004) support the ability of SEL programs to strengthen student attitudes, behavior, and academic performance, and those school-based SEL interventions and youth development programs have effectively increased social, emotional, and academic outcomes of students. Such results further emphasize the need for additional research examining the impact of mindfulness instruction and interventions on students in urban settings, specifically focusing on the duration of the effect, and connected psychological, behavioral, and social outcomes of participants involved.

There are a small number of empirical students and conceptual papers examining the impact of mindfulness on social and emotional learning in various adult and youth populations. Empirical studies examining the connection between mindfulness interventions and well-being in young adult populations are limited. However, data from previous students suggest that would be a relevant item to be explored in future research. The literature in this section has reviewed the

studies on mindfulness in adolescents. The following section will overview the concept of well-being and how it intersects with mindfulness, specifically in an academic setting.

Teacher Stress

Research has shown a clear relationship between teacher stress and burnout, low job satisfaction, low self-efficacy, and poor physical health (Brouwers & Tomic, 2000; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2009). Unfortunately, fewer studies have examined the role that teacher stress, emotional exhaustion, and poor well-being play in student success. However, studies examining the impact of teachers' emotional exhaustion and student outcome have found that the teachers' self-efficacy is positively connected to student achievement. Moreover, teachers with greater emotional exhaustion have less effective classroom management and coping strategies to deal with poor student classroom behavior (Brouwers & Tomic, 2000; Chang, 2009; Friedman, 1991; Goddard et al., 2004).

Arens and Morin (2016) examine the impact of teacher emotional exhaustion on student educational outcomes, including student achievement on classroom and standardized tests and competence in self-perception, perception of teacher support, and school satisfaction. The study examined 380 primary teachers and over 7800 4th grade students. The findings support a direct negative impact between teacher emotional exhaustion and student academic achievement, perception of teacher support, and school satisfaction, but not student competence in self-perceptions. The findings also revealed that for individual students, there was a significant relationship between teacher exhaustion and student academic achievement and non-cognitive outcomes. Standardized tests showed a more significant negative connection to teacher exhaustion than school grades due to the subjective nature of school grades and teachers' ability to adjust evaluation practices to compensate for subpar instruction. However, a negative

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relationship existed between teacher emotional exhaustion and school grades.

Klusmann et al. (2008) examined the engagement and exhaustion of over 1900 secondary teachers and the role context plays. The study examines how teachers with higher motivation and less stress are more productive to the schools and organizations they serve. Furthermore, it asserts how the high turnover and low retention rate of teachers is room for concern and that teachers' emotional state can seriously impact their classroom performance. Per their findings, principal support on educational matters was the highest contributor to teacher engagement, and disciplinary problems in the classroom were the highest contributor to teachers' emotional exhaustion. The study suggests that having principal support to decrease student disciplinary issues and other classroom barriers can lead to greater teacher engagement.

Conclusively, teachers with greater emotional exhaustion may lack the resources needed to provide high-quality instruction and deliver curriculum and critical learning content to students (Chang, 2009; Klusmann et al., 2008) and should be given greater consideration as a critical educational outcome among students.

In addition to research examining the negative impact between higher teacher exhaustion and stress and poor student outcomes, studies also examined the connection between teachers engaged in mindfulness practices and increased well-being. Eva and Thayer (2017) examined the role a mindfulness intervention and mindfulness resources played in stress management and the ability to improve the well-being of teachers. The study uncovers teachers' physical and emotional exhaustion, evidenced by a significant increase from 35% in 1985 to 51% in 2012 in teachers who reported experiencing high stress levels several days per week. High stress is correlated with lower job satisfaction, decreased budgets, and working in underperforming schools (Jalongo & Heider, 2006; Markow et al., 2013). Consequently, the study suggests that

teachers need professional development and school-supported programs directly addressing their psychological well-being and the development of effective daily coping strategies to combat everyday stressors within the profession.

Jennings et al. (2013) examined the connection between a mindfulness-based professional development program for teachers and stress, teacher performance, and student learning environments. The research findings supported significant increases in teacher well-being and effectiveness and a decrease in teacher stress and time-related burnout after the mindfulness intervention. Similarly, Singh et al. (2013) examined mindfulness training for preschool teachers and found that such improved student-teacher relations and student behavior. Such supports the potential of mindfulness practices and interventions to effectively improve teacher stress and overall well-being, in addition to student benefits ranging from improved academic achievement to increased compassion for themselves and their peers.

Eva and Thayer (2017) suggest looking beyond academics and focusing on the emotional life of the classroom to address emotional wellness to reinvigorate teachers and students.

Furthermore, they suggest using less traditional models that may include core teachings and components of positive psychology, PERMA, and pro-social behaviors that foster resilience and growth. This way, greater social-emotional skills and competencies that will support academic improvement and well-being may be built. Conclusively, the study emphasizes that sustainable and positive change occurs when teachers are supported in improving and maintaining their day-to-day well-being. Furthermore, it highlights the ability of teacher self-care to shift and improve the classroom climate and that the mindfulness of teachers carries a transferable presence, sense of awareness, and attention to their classroom and students to cultivate opportunities for greater engagement.

PERMA

PERMA encompasses Seligman's well-being theory, which is comprises of five critical elements: positive emotion, engagement, positive relationships, meaning, and accomplishment. According to Seligman (2011), life satisfaction and flourishing holistically occur through measurable increased positive emotion, engagement, meaning, positive relationships, and accomplishment in life constitute PERMA and well-being. *Positive emotion* is defined as living pleasantly; *Engagement* is defined as being completely absorbed in the present task or experience; *Positive relationships* refer to healthy relationships with other people; *Meaning* is defined as belonging to and serving something one believes to be bigger than self, and *Accomplishment* is defined as achieving life; accomplishment is what human beings free of coercion do for its own sake (Seligman, 2011).

Seligman asserts that the five core elements of PERMA are an accurate measure toward students achieving optimal well-being. No single element of PERMA defines well-being; each one contributes. Each of the elements comprising PERMA has been subjectively measured. Coffey et al. (2016) conducted two studies assessing college students' flourishing and determined that PERMA is a valuable and accurate predictor of college students' flourishing.

Similarly, Kern et al. (2015) empirically tested the five core elements of PERMA using a multidimensional theory. The study engaged 516 male students from 13to 18 years old. The researchers used a detailed well-being assessment and analyzed four of the five core elements of PERMA, including two ill-being factors, anxiety, and depression. The study also examined cross-sectional relationships with stressful life events, somatic symptoms, growth mindset, spirituality, hope, gratitude, physical vitality, physical activity, school engagement, and life satisfaction. The study results suggested that the well-being of students is multi-dimensional and

that most well-being factors aligned with the PERMA model. Consequently, meaning and positive relationships overlap as youth may gain meaning from specific positive relationships with others. Researchers argued that directly examining subjective well-being across various domains helped educational institutions to better understand and advocate for the well-being of their students. Furthermore, the study asserted that schools serve as ideal entities to engage in interventions that potentially strengthen the well-being of students and challenged schools to look beyond academic learning and seek to build well-being and character (Kern et al., 2015).

Lambert & Pasha-Zaidi (2016) affirm that well-being theory and the PERMA model are interchangeable and that the five core elements of a person serve as pathways through which individuals can achieve happiness. The five pathways outlined include:

- The pleasant life: maximization of positive emotions.

- The engaged life: a combination of flow and engagement.

- The meaningful life: meaning and purpose in life.

- Positive relationships.

- Achievements.

Lambert D'raven and Pasha-Zaidi (2016) also discussed how other cultures experience the PERMA model, allowing them to identify areas in one's life to develop PERMA. The study affirmed that the PERMA model effectively identifies challenges and opportunities for intervention in the United Arab Emirates.

A previous study by Tan & Martin (2013) assessed adolescents at a mental health clinic over a five-week mindfulness-based pilot intervention. Adolescents and their parents completed pre- and post-intervention questionnaires and a follow-up questionnaire three months after the intervention. Baseline data revealed moderate to severe mental health symptoms. After

completing the intervention, the adolescents reported that their psychological distress had significantly decreased, and mindfulness and self-esteem increased. Data collected from the participants' parents echoed significant progress in student development. Additional qualitative data revealed that the participants viewed the intervention as valuable and engaging. Consequently, the intervention reveals that the results from this mindfulness-based intervention were practical, acceptable, contributed positively to the participant's mental health, and merit future research (Tan & Martin, 2013).

Webster (2014) posits that while schools have long focused on student accomplishment, specifically academically accomplishment, it is critical to support mechanisms that will help teach skills to help strengthen relationships, have deep engagement with the larger world, cultivate positive emotions, and find meaning for students to flourish and achieve optimal well-being. Furthermore, he supports a shift in emphasis at schools away from the slim mindset of focusing on what educated people need to know and focusing instead on a deeper understanding of the skills and capacities students need to flourish. Webster further advocates embracing research and methods to build well-being, specifically suggesting that if leaders build well-being at schools, communities and their youth will flourish.

Well-Being and Flourishing

Mindfulness-based interventions are actively used across various domains, including psychology, holistic health care, and K-12, undergraduate, and graduate educational levels. Findings from various interventions provide evidence about the effectiveness of mindfulness-based interventions in increasing focus in the present moment, helping cultivate emotional stability, and improving physical and mental well-being. According to Seligman (2011), well-being is synonymous with flourishing and is defined as attaining life satisfaction and thriving

holistically through measurably increased accomplishments, PERMA. Ultimately, PERMA constitutes well-being and flourishing in life (Diener et al., 2010; Seligman, 2011).

There are not many studies measuring each of the five PERMA components, but there are studies that measure some PERMA components. Bajaj & Pande (2016) examined the impact of mindfulness's resilience on well-being and life satisfaction. A sample of 327 undergraduate students in India used various tools to measure mindful attention, positive and negative affect, and life satisfaction, which aligns with the PERMA measures. The results revealed that resilience helped to mediate the relationship between life satisfaction and mindfulness. These findings have implications for further testing regarding resilience's role in mindfulness and how it contributes to well-being.

Mindfulness requires orientation to current events and experiences in an attentive and responsive way. The experiential method of perception and processing aids practitioners in responding to stress more healthily.

Well-Being and Student Efficacy

There is literature that examines various intersections between well-being and student efficacy (Brown et al., 2007; Caldwell et al., 2010; Hoffman, 2010; Shapiro et al., 2008). *Well-being* is defined as an individual's overall contentment and happiness. *Student efficacy* refers to a student's capacity to produce the desired result. Regehr et al. (2013) assert that one-half of university students report moderate levels of stress and mental health concerns, including, but not limited to, depression and anxiety. This research finds that many college health services are only equipped to serve a small percentage of students, as the decrease in student well-being is outpacing schools' resources (Murphy, 2006). Therefore, Regehr et al. (2013) caution

universities to consider using accessible program options to address student stress and help lessen student depression and anxiety.

Various studies show a relationship between student efficacy and well-being (Galla, 2016; McCallum & Price, 2010; Regehr et al., 2013). Galla (2016) explored the longitudinal connection between shifts in mindfulness and self-compassion and the emotional well-being of healthy yet stressed youth. A sample of 132 youth participated in a five-day meditation intensive intervention. The participant median age was 16.76 years, and 61% were female. The participants were assessed through a pre- and post-assessment and then again three months after the intervention ended. The assessment questionnaire measured mindfulness, self-compassion, and emotional well-being. ANOVA (analysis of variance) revealed improvement in mindfulness, self-compassion, and all indicators of emotional well-being after the five-day intensive. Further, the young participants maintained many improvements three months after the intervention. Additionally, analysis of multilevel growth curves with time-varying covariates revealed improvements in self-compassion and predicted decreases in perceived depressive symptoms, adverse effects of stress, and increased life satisfaction and positive affect.

The researchers conducted a systematic meta-analysis and literature review to look closely at the effectiveness of various interventions proposed to decrease student stress. Regehr et al. (2013) included studies with participants randomly assigned to experimental and control groups or through a parallel cohort design. The meta-analysis analyzed the data of 1,431 students from 24 studies. The findings revealed that behavioral, cognitive, and mindfulness-based interventions focused on reducing stress significantly reduced anxiety symptoms. Even considering variations in experimental approaches such as the intervention length, individual elements of the intervention, and the geographical location of student participants, the results

were consistent. Secondary outcomes of the meta-analysis findings involved decreased levels of cortisol and depression. The meta-analysis offers conclusive evidence supporting the effectiveness of behavioral, cognitive, and mindfulness-based interventions in reducing university student stress and increasing well-being. In light of the high stress-induced mental health issues reported by college students, university leaders are urged to consider ways to provide opportunities for more students to access similar school-based interventions (Sibinga et al., 2013).

Byrne et al. (2013) engaged in a comparative quasi-experiment of mindfulness-based intervention, interpersonal process, and no-treatment groups. Study participants included 112 students from two universities. Upon immediate completion of the experiment, study findings indicated that the participants in the mindfulness-based intervention and interpersonal process groups displayed significant reductions in depression, interpersonal problems, and anxiety compared to the control group not receiving treatment. Upon a six-month follow-up after the intervention, only the participants in the mindfulness-based intervention groups maintained reductions in academic issues and depression. Only participants in the interpersonal process group maintained reductions in interpersonal problems. The study shows that mindfulness-based interventions may help increase well-being beyond the intervention timeframe.

Caldwell et al. (2010) used a quasi-experimental design to examine whether changes in student mindfulness were linked to improvements in the perception of stress, mood, sleep quality, and self-efficacy. The 15-week experiment occurred at a midsize public university and engaged 208 students aged 18 to 48. Over a 15-week period, 76 students engaged in mindfulness intervention, while the remaining 132 served as the control group. The mindfulness intervention group met for two weekly 50 minute-sessions over a 15 weeks. The outcome measures included

a self-report of various factors, including mood, perceived stress, sleep quality, and mindfulness. The study findings showed an increase in mindfulness scores in the intervention group but not in the control group. Additionally, overall well-being variables increased in the mindfulness-based intervention group compared to the control group, which saw its well-being unchanged or in decline. Improvements in mindfulness had a significant correlation to improvements in overall well-being variables. Experiment findings buttress the contention that mindfulness-based interventions correlate to improved sleep quality, mood, perceived stress, and increased mindfulness, but not self-regulated self-efficacy. However, the findings also argue that randomized control design substantiates the causational relationships between mindfulness-based interventions and increased mindfulness and overall well-being (Caldwell et al., 2010).

Mindfulness and Well-Being

Various studies examine the intersection and overlap between mindfulness practices, interventions, and well-being. Studies were conducted on both Kabat-Zinn's (1990) MBSR and Easwaran's EPP (Easwaran, 1978) mindfulness-based intervention. The results reported well-being benefits in randomized and controlled adult populations (Shapiro et al., 2008). Bergen-Cico et al. (2013) examined a five-week MBSR program integrated into an academic course. The program's purpose was to explore the potential psychological health benefits of an MBSR program. The program engaged 119 undergraduate students; 72 served in the MBSR treatment group, while 47 were in the control group that enrolled in an elective course on addictive behaviors. The comparative quasi-experimental study used a pre- and post-test to compare psychological health changes between groups. The study results showed significant improvements in the psychological health among MBSR program participants compared to the control group, measured by the Philadelphia Mindfulness Scale and Self-Compassion Scale.

However, significant decreases in anxiety were not found. The study suggested that brief MBSR interventions can increase psychological health and well-being. Furthermore, it suggested that longer MBSR interventions may reduce psychological distress and anxiety.

Hanley et al. (2015) asserts that the relationship between well-being and mindfulness has been examined empirically and theoretically. However, they argue that after a closer examination of the literature, psychological well-being and conceptual well-being are theoretically different, although often researched synonymously. As a result, the study focused on examining the associations between dispositional mindfulness, subjective well-being, and psychological well-being. The study analyzed an online sample of 106 contemplative mindfulness practitioners and 245 non-practitioners. The study reported that well-being and mindfulness are related regardless of contemplative practice, and that contemplative practitioners tend to have unified well-being construct inclusive of the various types of well-being. Also, study findings revealed that contemplative practitioners displayed more significant levels of mindfulness, psychological well-being, and subjective well-being.

Social Emotional Learning and Teacher Burnout

It is important to explore examples from previous research that highlight the intersection of social-emotional learning and teacher burnout. Studies have examined teacher burnout in social-emotional learning programs and interventions. According to Oliveira et al. (2021), research has uncovered how the education profession presents particular occupational stressors that are primarily connected to an imbalance between social and emotional resources and demands (Iancu et al., 2018; McCarthy et al., 2016; Osher et al., 2016). Interventions seeking to address teacher burnout have examined the social and emotional teacher skills that s enabling them to deal more effectively with the requirements and demands of their job. The study also

highlights how the effectiveness of these interventions is still unclear, so it aims to complete a systematic review with a meta-analysis that the impact social and emotional learning (SEL) interventions have on in-service teacher burnout levels (Iancu et al., 2018).

The Maslach (1976) model defines teacher burnout as a three-dimensional condition categorized by three core components. The first component is emotional exhaustion, which includes feelings of emotional distress, the depletion of emotional resources, fatigue, and energy loss. The second component is depersonalization, which is also known as cynicism. This component encompasses negative and detached feelings, irritability, a decreased sense of idealism, and psychological withdrawal. The final component is a reduction in personal accomplishment and diminished professional efficacy. This involves decreased workplace competence and efficacy, diminished productivity, ongoing discouragement, and helplessness regarding one's ability to meet work demands (Leiter & Maslach, 2003; Maslach & Jackson, 1981); which are all driven by chronic teaching stressors (Maslach, 1976; Maslach et al., 2001; Maslach & Leiter, 2016).

Study findings have revealed that educational leaders should emphasize examining and building social-emotional learning and wellness intervention models that help to alleviate teacher burnout. Per Oliveira et al. (2021), much literature supports that burnout is heightened as teachers experience exceptionally high social and emotional demands. These demands include classroom management, decision making, workload-specific time management, exceptionally low social and emotional resources and support similar to the SEW-NOLA program, and other insufficient institutional support such as lack of time to connect and collaborate with other teachers to build a healthy, more holistic workspace (McCarthy et al., 2016; Roeser et al., 2013). Study results also show that one of the best benefits of SEL interventions for teachers is the

development of-increased confidence in their ability to cope with the job demands. The stronger the teacher's intrapersonal social emotional connection and ability to self-manage, the greater their sense of personal accomplishment and decreased burnout (Bresó et al., 2007; Schaufeli et al., 2009; Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998).

SEW-NOLA Intervention

Introduction

Navigate NOLA, a division of the Deep South Center for Environmental Justice, Inc., implements the program Social & Emotional Wellness – NOLA (SEW-NOLA) in New Orleans public schools to support the emotional well-being and developmental skills of children. Because this is a new program informed by the existing evidence about the efficacy of social-emotional learning, the evaluation component must be strong in order to make improvements, ensure that it is effectively meeting the community's needs and that any promising results are identified to determine if the program should be replicated or scaled up. The program evaluation aims to determine student and school officials' satisfaction with the program's implementation, its effects, and the extent to which student participants demonstrate social-emotional learning and academic and behavioral improvement. The Navigate NOLA assistant director and evaluator lead the evaluation team with data collection support from staff social workers, school coordinators, and the division director.

Program Description

In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, community violence increased, placing New Orleans low socio-economic minority youth particularly vulnerable to psychological distress and poor academic functioning. A growing body of research suggests that school-based social and emotional development programs can improve academic achievement and health outcomes for

low-income minority youth. In New Orleans, where African-American youth are disproportionately affected by disparities in education and health, SEW-NOLA implements a social and emotional wellness program for pre-kindergarten through sixth-grade students at least two public elementary schools in the Central City neighborhood.

SEW-NOLA Project

The SEW (Social & Emotional Wellness) NOLA project, funded by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, is a seven-month school-based social and emotional learning program that addresses disparities low-income minority youth face growing up in post-disaster New Orleans., The SEW NOLA project provides school-aged youth (pre-kindergarten to 8th grade) with the skills of self-awareness, self-management, responsible decision-making, and improving relationships and social awareness. By cultivating these skills, SEW NOLA aims to improve school behavior, enhance interpersonal relationships and address disparities in academic achievement. The overall goal is to cultivate the underpinnings of successful outcomes for low-income, minority youth. The project is in its second year and has been implemented at four public elementary & middle schools.

The SEW NOLA weekly, one-hour interventions are conducted in a classroom. Participants are divided into small groups and visit the following one of three centers in 20-minute increments: a skills center, a yoga/meditation center, and or a technology center (with web-based social and emotional learning activities). SEW NOLA uses the target population's psychosocial stage of development as the framework for cultivating social and emotional intelligence.

SEW NOLA weekly session interventions use the peer group to encourage and reinforce the cultivated social and emotional developmental skills. Licensed mental health professionals

lead the intervention. Each session will build on the previous session. The program uses movement, art, images and creativity, role plays, and engaging activities to sustain the participants' interest. School leaders receive weekly reports of the goals and the interventions scheduled to accomplish the session objectives.

SEW-NOLA Impact

Since 2015, we have provided social and emotional wellness service to nearly 500 school aged children. In our 2016/2017 programming year, teachers reported improvements greater than 50% in all of the targeted outcome categories (emotional regulation, focus, empathy and attention).

- 66% in emotional regulation 70% in focus

- 54% in empathy,

- 64% in attention

In the 2016/2017 programming year, the average growth in each outcome area was as follows:

- 86% in emotional regulation 85% in focus

- 41% in empathy

- 75% in attention

SEW-NOLA Project Goals and SMART Objectives

These goals and objectives have been developed in response to needs stated by schools, community leaders, and parents. Through the Division Director's work in mental health service provision in schools, these goals (increased access to services for students, increased capacity to provide these services for schools) have been constant across schools and grade levels.

- **Goal 1.** Increase access to social-emotional learning and physical wellness services for children in New Orleans.

- *Objective 1.1.* By the end of three years, 750 students will receive the SEW curriculum as it aligns with their grade level (150-Year 1, 300-Year 2, 300-Year3)

- *Objective 1.2.* By the end of program year 1, program participants will receive 2 visual arts lessons. By the end of year 2 and year 3, program participants will receive 4 (bimonthly/every other month for seven months) visual arts lessons

- *Objective 1.3.* By the end of program year1, program participants will receive 1 physical/nutrition activity lesson. By the end of year 2 and year 3, program participants will receive 4 (bimonthly/every other month for seven months) physical/nutrition activity lessons

- *Objective 1.4.* By the end of each program year, 15 4-6th grade participants are trained in digital storytelling

- *Objective 1.5.* By the end of each program year, teachers will report that 50% of program participants improved in the areas of emotional regulation, empathy, focus, and attention

- *Objective 1.6.* By the end of each program year, 20% of students will improve academically or behaviorally

- **Goal 2.** Increase capacity of schools to provide social-emotional learning/holistic programming to their students

- *Objective 2.1.* By the end of the first quarter, an MOU and data-sharing agreement are signed with at least two schools for partnership and implementation of the SEW-NOLA model.

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- *Objective 2.2.* By the end of each program year, 2 professional development trainings will have been provided and 25 teachers will have been trained in ways to include social emotional learning within their classrooms

- *Objective 2.3.* By the end of each program year, 100% of school leadership partners will report satisfaction with the program through surveys/interviews

- **Goal 3.** Increase capacity of New Orleans mental health professionals to implement the SEW-NOLA curriculum and to provide culturally relevant clinical services to children in New Orleans

- *Objective 3.1.* By the end of the first quarter of program year 1, all staff are trained in the SEW-NOLA curriculum. By the end of the first quarter of program year 2 and 3, three graduate interns are trained in the SEW-NOLA curriculum.

- *Objective 3.2.* By the end of each program year, mental health staff will attend at least seven case presentations/consultations

- *Objective 3.3.* By the end of each program year, 100% of staff social workers and graduate school interns will report increased confidence and skills to provide culturally relevant clinical services to children in New Orleans

- **Goal 4.** Share results of SEW-NOLA with the partners, academia, and the New Orleans community

- *Objective 4.1.* At the end of each program year, a report detailing successes, challenges, and evaluative results are shared with each school and be made publicly available to participants' families

- *Objective 4.2.* By the end of the funding period, the SEW-NOLA model and evaluation results are disseminated in at least 5 conferences/panel

discussions/abstracts/academic papers.

a. Long-term Outcomes

SEW-NOLA ultimately hoped to see a reduction in suspension and expulsion rate for New Orleans children, increased access to high-quality mental health services in New Orleans schools, and increased access to social-emotional learning services/physical wellness services in New Orleans schools.

The long-term outcomes for this project are aspirational in nature – to achieve community-level results, SEW-NOLA needs to be one of many programs advocating this approach to service delivery and mental health resourcing of schools. However, if all students had access to programs like SEW-NOLA that intervened early in the process of learning to identify and process feelings and emotions and providing the necessary supports to schools to execute those programs, these outcomes could be achieved.

Evaluation Activities

Engaging Stakeholders. The primary stakeholders in SEW-NOLA are school officials, social workers, and teachers. Both evaluation and facilitation staff gather general satisfaction feedback from the students, but since the program participants are so young, the assessment of their progress and learning must come primarily from the supportive adults in their lives and in the classroom. To that end, school leaders and mental health staff have been deeply engaged in the design of the program, the selection of participants, and the targeting of small group interventions towards the areas of highest need. They are similarly involved in the evaluation of the program to determine any areas of necessary change, and to identify promising strategies that are working well. Specifically, school leaders, mental health staff, and classroom teachers participate in in-depth interviews at the close of each program year.

Classroom teachers provide growth-related feedback on specific students as well as an overall sense of the project, while mental health staff and school leaders provide context to the school year and how SEW-NOLA has fit in or affected their policies and practices.

Focusing the Evaluation. The primary evaluation questions that SEW-NOLA hopes to answer are as follows:

    ☐ To what extent does the SEW-NOLA project affect children's educational, behavioral, and health-related outcomes?

    ☐ To what extent does access to training and professional development on social emotional learning concepts affect the capacity of New Orleans schools and future mental health professionals to provide culturally relevant services to children?

To answer these questions, SEW-NOLA conducts a combination of process and outcome evaluations. To ensure that the curriculum is implemented as intended, that school partners are receiving the services that they have requested and agreed to, and that trainings are being conducted with a specific focus, process evaluation is key to keep staff on track and to ensure that deliverables are met as intended. However, because the program utilizes a new curriculum (designed by drawing from existing research), it is also important to conduct an outcome evaluation to determine if this approach is effective and has the potential be replicated or scaled up.

This evaluation is mixed-methods. Though the SEW-NOLA team believes deeply in participatory evaluation, the young age (many of the participants are under seven years old) makes it particularly challenging to engage the primary target population of the intervention in designing the assessment of their progress. However, at the close of the first program year, teachers, school leaders, and mental health professionals are interviewed and are asked for feedback as to potential improvements in the assessment process. Ideally, this feedback is

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integrated into the measurement framework for years 2 and 3. The same process are used for assessments of trainings and professional development workshops (i.e., any process undertaken with adults).

For most elements of the evaluation, particularly the process elements, the design is non-experimental. However, to assess the effects of the curriculum, a quasi-experimental design is utilized. Specifically, school partners share academic and behavioral data for student participants, and those indicators are compared to the student's performance in the previous year (or semester, depending on the level of granularity that the school can provide). This design, where a student serves as their own control, is chosen to avoid the problems inherent in identifying a suitable control group and the ethical issues around denying the intervention to that control group.

Gathering Credible Evidence and Justifying Conclusions. This evaluation uses both primary and secondary data. Most session-level primary student data are collected by SEW-NOLA staff and includes the use of a standard session assessment tool, sign-in sheets, and observations made by the Division Director. School partners also share student academic and behavioral data that they routinely collect through testing, etc. School leaders, teachers, and mental health professionals are interviewed by the Assistant Director/Evaluator and/or Division Director using interview guides, as will staff social workers and graduate student interns. Professional development and workshop participants are surveyed after their participation using a post-test. To analyze progress towards long-term city-wide goals, secondary data is gathered from resources made available by city and education research organizations.

Process data is analyzed primarily in SEW-NOLA's data management system, Social Solutions' Apricot. This platform allows session data to be easily input by staff and extracted

into interactive reports that can be used for quality assurance purposes as well as quick statistics and progress towards deliverables. Quality assurance reports are pulled weekly by the Assistant Director/Evaluator to ensure that data is complete and accurate. Qualitative data, including all interviews, is analyzed for themes using QDA Miner Lite. Any more sophisticated analyses, particularly exploring the relationships between the program and student behavioral/academic achievement, is completed using SPSS. The Assistant Director/Evaluator is responsible for data analysis but develops the analysis framework with the Division Director and staff social workers. All analyzed data is shared with SEW-NOLA staff to contextualize the results with real experiences of how the program was implemented. Social workers who are responsible for most real-time interaction with program participants is invaluable to the process of understanding program data, advancing ideas about the results, and sharing how they think the program could be altered for improvement. The Assistant Director/Evaluator also contextualizes the data in the larger scope of city-wide data available related to children's health, education, and well-being to better understand the experience of program participants in a global sense.

Data security and confidentiality is of the utmost importance since the primary population that this intervention serves are classified as a vulnerable population as it relates to research ethics. To ensure the informed consent of all parties, guardians of the program participants actively consent to their participation in the project and the collection of student data. In addition, school partners sign a data sharing agreement that outlines minimum standards to which all data storage/sharing processes must comply. Data is stored in a secure, web-based data management system (Apricot), and the site manager grants access to specific users based on their role. Each participant is assigned a unique identifier, and when data is exported from the system to analyze using other software, it is connected to that identifier rather than names or other

identifying information.

Using Evaluation Results. Every staff member at SEW-NOLA is expected to be involved in decisions about evaluation results, framing, and dissemination of information. Quality assurance reports are run weekly by the Assistant Director/Evaluator and shared with the team at a weekly staff meeting. Any staff member can offer solutions or make suggestions as to changes that would improve service delivery, and these should be informed by the data they are collecting.

Weekly written reports are also provided to school partners, who can track progress and share information from their perspective that may improve the program approach. Data is analyzed cumulatively at the end of each program year, and a written report is produced to share with the SEW-NOLA team, partner schools, and parents of participants if the partner school chooses to make it available. This information is also shared with the community during workshops, panels, and presentations.

Each time the evaluation results are shared, there is a specific and proactive method included to solicit feedback from stakeholders that informs changes made to the program. If the format is a written report, there is a contact listed and an invitation to share feedback. If the data is shared in a meeting or presentation, time on the agenda is allotted specifically to stakeholder feedback. The SEW-NOLA team also seeks opportunities to present evaluation results at national conferences and in academic publications.

Teacher Burnout and Covid-19

The Covid-19 global left many educators needing to adjust to rapid changes required to meet student needs amid this crisis. The pandemic prompted ongoing school closures and a sudden shift to virtual instruction for many schools, which when paired with the growing health

crisis posed additional demands and stressors to both educators and students. School leaders were forced to innovate while simultaneously grappling to adjust to countless changes and great unpredictability. This period further illuminated many challenges faced by educators and students. Specifically, how school leaders are expected to continue to effectively deliver instruction even as natural disasters like a global pandemic beyond anyone's control occurs. This period of state mandated quarantines and social distancing offered an opportunity for reflection it and further examination of examples from the field supporting the holistic wellness needs of students and educators as rare global pandemic and everyday life seeps into classrooms and pose great barriers to student learning.

This study is occurring during a global pandemic, that presented many unexpected challenges—wellness related and otherwise—to students and staff in schools throughout the country. During the pandemic a global and national discussion regarding many topics including mental health, self-care and wellness were highlighted and prioritized for some individuals and institutions in ways greater than they have been prioritized historically. The wellness of students, teachers and other school leaders have the power to impact the larger school community positively or negatively ranging from effective instruction to healthy school culture.

Furthermore, working to create a consistently and holistically healthier school community will benefit everyone while not burdening teachers on top of an already demanding job.

Over five-hundred thousand teachers move or leave the profession every year, which costs the United Stated over $2 billion (Haynes et al., 2014; Trinidad, 2021). Such contributes to elevated stress in students due to frequent transitions and failed consistency, as well as increased burnout in teachers due to unrealistic heavy workloads, substandard pay, lack of resources,

accountability pressures, hostile environments, and other factors inherent in the work of teaching (Helou et al., 2016; Richards, 2012). According to Trinidad (2021), when the pandemic began in 2020, teacher stress and burnout was intensified by the external Covid-19 crisis. Furthermore, teachers were increasingly exhausted and understandably experiencing even greater demands and even higher levels of stress during the early part of the pandemic (Sokal et al., 2020). The increased stress of the pandemic, uncertainty and confusion birthing from rapid and ongoing school closures and reopening, as well as the abrupt transition to remote learning without adequate resources or updated technology and training posed even greater threats to teacher burnout, stress, and diminished well-being (Kim & Asbury, 2020; Sokal, 2020). Not to mention the fact that all of this is underscored by great political and racial tensions likely permeating the learning experiencing as well (Galea & Abdalla, 2020). Covid was a time of great transition, but it was and can still be a time of great opportunity—to examine schools, systems, learning models, curriculum, resources, and supportive services that benefit holistic learning and wellness in schools.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter outlines the research methodology used in the study, including the validity and trustworthiness of the study design, setting, population, sample and sampling procedures, human subject considerations, the approaches that will be taken to increase the validity and reliability of the study, data collection procedures, data management, and data analysis.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this concurrent, embedded mixed-methods research study is to (a) describe the self-assessed well-being of teachers who work with elementary students participating in the SEW-NOLA social and emotional learning (SEL) intervention in two public schools in the southeastern region of the U.S., and to explore teacher perspectives regarding (b) how, if at all, teacher well-being has changed over one academic semester since the implementation of the SEL intervention program for students, and (c) what else do teachers believe could be done to improve their well-being?

Research Questions

The following questions will guide this research study:

With regards to teachers who work with elementary students in two Southeast public urban schools who participated a minimum of one academic semester in the SEW-NOLA SEL intervention taught by SEW-NOLA-trained instructors:

1. How do teachers self-assess their well-being using the PERMA Profiler?

2. How do teachers think their well-being has changed since working with the students in the SEW-NOLA SEL program?

3. What else do teachers believe could be done to improve their well-being?

Research Methodology and Rationale

This is a concurrent, embedded mixed-methods research study. A two-part questionnaire (See Appendix A and B) will be administered online to 16 elementary teachers in two public schools whose students have participated in the SEL program for a minimum of one academic semester. The first part of the questionnaire will consist of the Workplace PERMA-Profiler. The Workplace PERMA-Profiler is a 23-question measure assessing positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning, accomplishment, negative emotion, and health. This tool measures all the constructs of PERMA. In addition to the Workplace PERMA-Profiler questions, the second part of the questionnaire will include two semi-structured questions requiring a narrative response. The added questions will ask elementary teachers if they have observed any changes in their workplace well-being since student participation in the SEL intervention. The questions also probe the teachers' perspectives on what, if anything, could improve their workplace well-being.

Furthermore, the Workplace PERMA-Profiler tool will serve as an indicator for participants to determine which areas need support and improvement to build well-being. Qualtrics is the survey tool used to administer the two questionnaires. This reputable online survey platform enables the researcher to: (a) quickly analyze open text responses, (b) automatically build reports, including visualizations selected for each question, and (c) create collaboration and share customized reports online that update in real-time.

Creswell (2011) noted, "the concurrent embedded strategy of mixed methods can be identified by its use of one data collection phase, during which both quantitative and qualitative data are collected simultaneously" (p. 214). In this study, the primary method that guides the project is quantitative (the Workplace PERMA Profiler instrument), and the secondary supporting method is qualitative (the two semi-structured questions). The Workplace PERMA

Profiler will comprise the first part of the online instrument and will address guiding research question one. The two semi-structured questions make up the second part of the instrument and will address guiding research questions two and three. The two data sets will be analyzed side-by-side and used to provide an overall composite description of the problem.

Quantitative research refers to the process of collecting, analyzing, interpreting, and writing the results of a study, while qualitative research is the data collection, analysis, and report writing approach that differs from the traditional quantitative approaches. Many research methods are used to conduct quantitative research, including descriptive ones. In the descriptive research method, correlational, developmental design, observational studies, and survey research are used; they can also be used with experimental and causal-comparative research (Creswell, 2014). *Descriptive research* is a basic research method used to examine a situation as it exists. It involves identifying attributes of a specific phenomenon based on observation or exploring the correlation between two or more phenomena. Using descriptive survey research, the researcher captures current phenomena, samples data from participants representing a specific population, and uses a closed-ended instrument or open-ended items.

The qualitative research method enables one to explore and understand the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a human or social problem (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Qualitative design approaches focus on the complexity of the phenomena at hand while simultaneously observing individual or group perceptions. Qualitative methods allow education researchers to uncover more detailed descriptions of complex phenomena. Rigorous qualitative research establishes credibility and trustworthiness within a study (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Furthermore, the goal of this study is to generate new knowledge about the experience and well-being of teachers using qualitative research methods.

A survey research advantage is that it can reach many people. Moreover, an anonymous survey offers more candid and unfiltered participant feedback. Participants can complete the survey over a two-week window and pause, save, and revisit the survey as many times as needed during the window. Two survey disadvantages are the difficulty in getting the desired response rates and the challenges for the researcher to ensure the highest response rate possible.

Setting

The study will be administered to teachers working in two New Orleans public elementary schools who have participated in the SEW-NOLA SEL intervention. All study participants teach in schools with a large minority youth population of low socio-economic status. These students are vulnerable to psychological distress and poor academic functioning. The teachers work in schools in an urban area in the deep South.

A 2018 Louisiana equity report disclosed that 84% of students attending New Orleans public schools are economically disadvantaged. Income disparities between African American and white New Orleans households rank among the highest in the country. New Orleans is ranked third among the 100 largest U.S. cities, and the region ranks sixth among the 150 largest national metro areas in income inequality. In the communities where SEW-NOLA is used, more than one-third of children live in poverty, and nearly all are children of color. New Orleans also leads the world in the percentage of its population that is incarcerated. More than three-fourths of the students are eligible for free and reduced-price lunches (Perry, 2016).

Population, Sample, and Sampling Procedures

Population

This study's target population includes 30 classroom teachers in two selected public urban elementary schools in the Southeastern United States. The students must have participated

or are participating in the SEW-NOLA intervention program taught by SEW-NOLA trained instructors for a minimum of one academic semester.

Sample

The study's sample will include a minimum of 10 teachers (33% of eligible participants) to represent the above target population.

Sampling Procedures

Non-random purposive sampling procedures will be used to recruit participants from the target population. The two schools and their teacher participants will be identified through the SEW-NOLA administrator directly implementing the SEL intervention in New Orleans elementary schools. The researcher will collaborate with the SEW-NOLA team and local school leaders to effectively reach a broad audience and enroll the number of participants needed for the study.

Community violence spiked in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, which made New Orleans's economically disadvantaged minority youth increasingly vulnerable to psychological distress leading to poor academic achievement. A growing body of research suggests that school-based social and emotional development programs can improve low-income minority youth's academic achievement and health. SEW-NOLA selected schools in the Central City neighborhood of New Orleans to implement the social and emotional wellness intervention based on the following criteria:

- majority of pre-kindergarten through sixth-grade students are from low socio-economic homes
- low academic achievement as evidenced by students not meeting grade-level proficiency based on school performance and standardized tests

- limited mental health support staff

- high rates of student detentions and expulsions

- school leaders willing to implement the SEW-NOLA intervention for a minimum of one year.

The criteria for study inclusion of participants include teachers working at schools whose students participated in the SEW-NOLA intervention for a minimum of one academic semester. The recruitment process for study participants includes:

1. Schools are identified based on their participation in the SEW-NOLA intervention.

2. Once schools have been identified, the researcher, with the help of each school administrator, will send out a study information letter online to teachers who meet study inclusion criteria; the information letter will provide an overview of the study and what participants will be asked to do.

3. Teachers interested in participating in the study will click on a link in a letter that will take them to informed consent.

4. After reading the informed consent, teachers who agree to participate will indicate their consent by clicking on a link to the survey instrument,

5. Consenting teachers will provide quantitative and qualitative feedback for the study.

Human Subject Considerations

Per Pepperdine University's Graduate and Professional Schools Institutional Review Board, steps were taken to ensure the welfare and rights of human subjects participating in research activities. To ensure proper protection for human subjects, the researcher completed

CITI's research ethics and compliance training course for Human Subjects and followed all GPS

IRB research guidelines. The researcher gained approval from Pepperdine University and

participating schools to conduct the study. In addition, ethical guidelines of the American

Psychological Association were followed.

Permissions

Signed permissions was sought from SEW-NOLA leaders and school administrators to

conduct the study following New Orleans School guidelines and Pepperdine University's IRB

policies.

GPS IRB Approval

An application for exempt status was submitted to Pepperdine University's Graduate

Professional School Institutional Review Board.

Informed Consent

Informed consent was given electronically to potential participants. (See Appendix D for

Informed Consent). Potential participants identified through SEW-NOLA administrators

working with students in two New Orleans elementary schools engaged in the SEW-NOLA

intervention. A school administrator sent an electronic invitation to participate in the study. (See

Appendix D). In the electronic invitation, SEW-NOLA will provide a brief background of the

researcher, the study, and more information on how to participate. If interested in participating,

teachers read informed consent information (See Appendix D Informed Consent). Then, they

indicated consent by clicking on a link to the instrument and responding to a questionnaire. The

participants may print a copy of the informed consent.

Confidentiality

Participant data will be held confidentially throughout the data collection process. The

participants' confidentiality will be ensured using a secure online database to store all electronic responses. Hard copies will be stored securely at the SEW-NOLA office under lock and key. The only people with access to participant data will be the researcher, SEW-NOLA administrators, and a statistician who may be utilized in the study. All study and data collection leaders will read, review, and sign a confidentiality agreement that lists the measures required to maintain participant confidentiality and the study's integrity. Using aliases in coding and recording (if needed) participant data will further strengthen the participants' confidentiality. The researcher kept a master list of identity codes separate from the data and other study documents electronically in a secure, password-protected online folder. The researcher is the only one who knows the identity of the participants, and the master code list will be destroyed upon study completion. All other study documents will be safeguarded in a secure, password-protected electronic folder for at least three years after the study is completed. The researcher will not know the identity of the study participants, only the school in which they participate. Participants will otherwise remain anonymous to the researcher. The SEW-NOLA SEL program administrators or school principals will know participants who receive the surveys but will not know who responds.

Potential Risks

It is anticipated that any potential risks related to participation in the study will be minimal. Potential risks may include minor mental fatigue, loss of personal time, and re-surfacing emotions resulting from recollecting experiences. To prevent or minimalize risks, the researcher has structured the instrument so that participants may complete responses in less than an hour. The researcher will remind participants that they make take breaks if needed and that they may choose not to answer any discomforting questions. It is anticipated that the benefits of

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participation will outweigh the potential risks. Study participation is only available to teachers whose students are enrolled in the SEL intervention; therefore, supporting future research examining the impact of social and emotional learning interventions on school leaders serves as the key benefit of participation. Additional benefits include opportunities for positive self-reflection and expression and to contribute to research intended to cultivate discussion and programming that may enhance the well-being and flourishing of teachers and school staff.

Instrumentation

Nature of Survey

The instrumentation is a two-part questionnaire that includes the quantitative Workplace PERMA-Profiler (Appendix A) survey and two additional qualitative questions examining the well-being of teachers, teachers' perspectives on well-being, and teacher and student well-being.

Workplace PERMA Profiler

The primary study instrument is the Workplace PERMA-Profiler. The Workplace PERMA-Profiler (Appendix A) is a 23-item questionnaire that participants will complete before and after students have engaged in the intervention. The PERMA model has five elements that can be measured to assess well-being:

- positive emotion - living pleasantly,

- engagement - completely absorbed in present task/experience,

- positive relationships – "other people,"

- meaning - belonging to and serving something one believes to be bigger than self, and

- accomplishment – achieving life; what human beings free of coercion do for their own sake (Seligman, 2011).

These five PERMA pillars, including negative emotion and health, will be measured to determine how a mindfulness-based social and emotional learning intervention for students supports elementary teacher workplace well-being.

Validity and Reliability

The Workplace PERMA-Profiler (Appendix A) was designed as a brief measure of PERMA. The tool initially compiled hundreds of theoretically relevant items over three studies. The items were reduced, tested, refined, and the result included 15 questions measuring three components of each of the five core elements of PERMA. The Profiler added eight additional questions to measure negative emotion, loneliness, physical health, and overall well-being. This addition resulted in the final Workplace PERMA-Profiler, which includes 23 items to measure PERMA. The validity and reliability of the Profiler occurred after eight additional studies to assess the psychometrics of the measurement tool. The Profiler shows internal and cross-time consistency, good model fit, and evidence of content, convergent, and divergent validity (Butler & Kern, 2014). Participant scores appear as a profile across domains and demonstrate the multidimensional nature of well-being. This tool effectively contributes to well-being measures and enables participants to use it to monitor their overall well-being across many psycho-social domains.

According to Watanabe et al. (2018), who conducted a validation study of the Workplace PERMA-Profiler among Japanese workers:

The Workplace PERMA-Profiler demonstrated good reliability and convergent validity, with adequate structural validity. Wellbeing at work was associated with not only health outcomes but also work-related psychosocial factors and work performance. Indeed, the PERMA factors were more strongly related to job satisfaction than to life satisfaction, suggesting that the

concepts of the original PERMA profiler and the Workplace PERMA are critically distinct. This measure could be applicable for assessment of well-being at work among Japanese workers. (p. 383)

Furthermore, regarding the structural validity of the Workplace PERMA Profiler, Watanabe (2018) states, "Standardized covariance among the five factors ranged from 0.73 to 0.97, indicating strong correlations."

Qualitative Research Questions

In addition to the PERMA Profiler survey, the study includes two additional qualitative questions that examine the well-being of teachers, teacher perspectives on well-being, and teacher and student well-being. The qualitative questions include:

1. How do teachers think their well-being has changed, if at all, since working with the students in the SEL program?

2. What else do teachers feel could be done to improve their well-being?

The researcher shared the PERMA Profiler and qualitative questions with two research experts for their feedback regarding instrumentation and proposed study data collection. Positive and negative emotions are critical components of our well-being. Regarding positive emotion, the Workplace PERMA-Profiler measures general tendencies toward joy and contentment. Regarding negative emotion, the instrument measures tendencies toward feeling anxiousness, anger, and sadness. The Workplace PERMA-Profiler also measures health subjectively through items focused on feeling healthy and good daily. Health is a significant component of well-being. Positive and negative emotions, and overall health, while not parts of the core PERMA elements play a role in a person's well-being. Therefore, the Workplace PERMA-Profiler is dependable for measuring PERMA and well-being (Butler & Kern, 2014). Scores of the Workplace

PERMA-Profiler are calculated as the average of the elements comprising each factor, including positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning, accomplishment, overall well-being, negative emotion, health, and loneliness. The Workplace PERMA-Profiler tool only measures well-being, not teacher perspectives or changes in well-being. Therefore, additional questions will be added to the survey tool to capture perspectives regarding the impact of student well-being on teacher well-being, SEL program improvements, supports to improve well-being, and if the teacher's well-being has changed since working with students engaged in the SEL intervention. If teachers indicate that student well-being supported their well-being or a change in well-being, the researcher will include open-ended short answer questions regarding how student well-being had supported teacher well-being and how their well-being has changed since working with the students.

Data Collection Procedures

Recruitment and data collection took place between 2021-2022. Participants were identified through school administrators working with students in two New Orleans elementary schools. Data collection procedures of the study include:

1. Obtain permission from district or school administrators to conduct the study.

2. Obtain Pepperdine University GPS IRB approval.

3. A school administrator emails cover letters with an introduction to the study, a description of participant involvement, and a link to the informed consent (See Appendix D for the statement of informed consent).

4. The informed consent includes a link to a two-part survey.

5. The study participants complete the Workplace PERMA- Profiler questionnaire (See Appendix A for Workplace PERMA-Profiler questionnaire).

6. The target number of participants is a minimum of 33% of teachers (10) whose students have participated in the SEL intervention. A school administrator emails an electronic invitation to participate in the study and complete the survey.

7. In the electronic invitation, a school administrator will describe a brief background of the researcher, the study, and more information on how to participate.

8. Interested teachers read the informed consent information. If they are interested and willing to participate, teachers will not need to sign anything, as clicking on the tab to begin the survey indicates they are interested and willing.

9. Once they click on the link, the questionnaire begins with demographic information, continues with the quantitative Workplace PERMA-Profiler, and ends with qualitative narrative questions.

All participant responses are anonymous. The anticipated response rate was within two weeks. The total time each subject was involved did not exceed one hour.

Data Management

Data collected throughout the study was coded using numbers to maintain the participants' privacy. The data was stored physically and electronically in secure locations requiring passwords and keys to access. Finally, the researcher will destroy the study data three years after the study is completed by deleting all electronic files and shredding all physical files.

Data Analysis

Two types of data analysis were conducted in the study. The first is a descriptive statistical analysis of the results from the Workplace PERMA-Profiler questionnaire. Descriptive statistical reporting involves discovering statistical correlations between two characteristics depending on how well those characteristics have been calculated (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001). The

second data analysis involves qualitative coding of narrative responses to qualitative questions. Coding involves organizing data through bracketing text data gathered throughout the data collection process, segmenting sentences into categories, and labeling the categories with a term based on the actual language of participants. Creswell (2014) proposes using Tesch's (1990) eight steps for the coding process:

1. Get a sense of the whole.

2. Pick one document and ask, "what is this about?" and write your thoughts in the margin.

3. After completing step two, list all topics and cluster them by similar topics. Return to the data, abbreviate the topics as codes and write the codes next to the appropriate text segments.

4. Find the most descriptive wording for the topics and turn them into categories.

5. Make a final decision on the abbreviation for each category and alphabetize these codes.

6. Assemble the data material belonging to each category in one place and perform a preliminary analysis.

7. If necessary, recode existing data

8. Report the methods and findings (pp. 142-149).

Creswell proposes using Tesch's steps for the coding process, and the research followed these steps. The steps taken to analyze data for this study involved analyzing data to get a clearer sense of the whole picture once the researcher received responses of the Workplace PERMA Profiler from participants. Next, notes were compiled for all survey questions to further examine and understand participant responses. Upon completing the first two steps, topics were listed and

clustered by similar themes. Topics were then abbreviated and coded. Next, topics and key themes were grouped into categories, and category names and codes were finalized. The researcher then assembled the data in a single document based on final categories and conducted a preliminary analysis. Finally, the data was recoded, and the methods and findings were presented. Subsequent chapters provide a deeper analysis, point out the patterns and themes that emerge from participant data, and discuss the analysis results.

Chapter 4: Results

This chapter presents the detailed findings of this research study.

Re-Statement of the Purpose

The purpose of this concurrent embedded mixed methods study was to examine the self-assessed workplace well-being and perspectives of elementary classroom teachers in the Southern United States whose students participated for an academic semester in the SEW-NOLA social-emotional learning program taught by SEW-NOLA trained instructors.

Research Question

The following three questions guided this research study:

With regards to teachers who work with elementary students who have participated in the SEW-NOLA SEL intervention taught by SEW-NOLA trained instructors for a minimum of one academic semester:

1. How do elementary teachers self-assess their workplace well-being using the Workplace PERMA Profiler?

2. How do elementary teachers think their workplace well-being has changed, if at all, since working with the students in the SEW-NOLA SEL program?

3. What else do elementary teachers believe could be done to improve their workplace well-being?

Research Design

This study used a concurrent embedded mixed methods research design. A two-part questionnaire (See Appendix A and Appendix B) was administered online to 16 elementary teachers in two public schools whose students participated in the SEL (Socio-Emotional Learning) program for a minimum of one academic semester. The first part of the questionnaire

consisted of the Workplace PERMA-Profiler. The Workplace PERMA-Profiler is a 23-question measure assessing positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning, accomplishment, negative emotion, and health. This tool measures all the constructs of PERMA. In addition to the Workplace PERMA-Profiler questions, the second part of the questionnaire included two semi-structured questions that required a narrative response.

The additional questions aimed to capture elementary teacher feedback on changes in their workplace well-being since their students participated in the SEL intervention. The questions also solicited the teacher's perspectives on what could improve their workplace well-being. Furthermore, the Workplace PERMA-Profiler tool was an indicator for participants to determine which areas needed support and improvement to build well-being.

Qualtrics was the survey tool used to administer the two questionnaires. This reputable online survey platform allows quick analysis of open text responses, builds reports including visualizations selected for each question, and creates online customized reports that update in real-time. Upon completing the online survey, participants received a message thanking them for participating. Two sets of survey data from the Workplace PERMA Profiler and semi-structured questions were analyzed side-by-side to provide an overall composite description of positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning, accomplishment, negative emotion, and health in the workplace.

Participants' Demographic Information

The target population for this study was approximately 30 classroom teachers in two Southeast public urban elementary schools whose students participated, or are participating, in the SEW-NOLA intervention program taught by SEW-NOLA trained instructors for a minimum of one academic semester.

The study sample consisted of 16 teacher participants, more than 33% of the target population.

Non-random purposive sampling procedures were used to recruit participants from the target population. The two schools and participants were identified through the SEL program administrator and school principals. The researcher collaborated with the two local school leaders to effectively reach a wide audience and enroll the number of participants needed for the study.

Table 1

Participants' Demographic Information

Participant Pseudonyms		School
P1: Teacher	1	School 1
P2: Teacher	2	School 1
P3: Teacher	3	School 1
P4: Teacher	4	School 1
P5: Teacher	5	School 1
P6: Teacher	6	School 1
P7: Teacher	7	School 1
P8: Teacher	8	School 1
P9: Teacher	9	School 2
P10: Teacher	10	School 2
P11: Teacher	11	School 2
P12: Teacher	12	School 2
P13: Teacher	13	School 2
P14: Teacher	14	School 2
P15: Teacher	15	School 2
P16: Teacher	16	School 2

Participant Profiles

All participants in the study were recruited from schools in underserved areas with students with many minority students who are particularly vulnerable to psychological distress that poses barriers to well-being. The teachers work in urban schools in the deep South.

- *PERMA*
  - PERMA incorporates five pillars of wellbeing, including positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment. The PERMA-Profiler was created to measure these five pillars and negative emotion and health.

- *Engagement*
  - Engagement is being absorbed, interested, and involved in one's work and is a critical measure for workplaces. Significant engagement levels are known as "flow"- a state in which one is so completely absorbed in an activity that they lose all sense of time (Kern et al., 2014).

- *Relationships*
  - Relationships are defined as feeling connected, supported, and valued by others in the organization. According to Kern et al. (2014), having positive relationships is important to feeling good and going well.

- *Meaning*
  - Meaning is having a sense of purpose in one's work and that one's work matters (Kern et al., 2014).

- *Accomplishment*
  - According to Kern et al. (2014), accomplishment can be objective, marked by honors and awards, but feelings of mastery and achievement are also important.

The Workplace PERMA Profiler measures the participants' subjective feelings

regarding accomplishment and staying on top of daily responsibilities. Such

involves working toward and reaching goals and feeling able to complete tasks

and responsibilities each day.

- *Negative Emotion*

  o Emotions are an essential part of our well-being, ranging from negative to very

    positive, as well as from high arousal (e.g., excitement, explosive) to low arousal

    (e.g., calm, relaxed, sad). For positive emotion, the PERMA-Profiler measures

    general tendencies toward contentment and joy. For negative emotions, the

    Profiler measures tendencies toward feeling sad, anxious, and angry (Kern et al.,

    2014).

- *Health*

  o While health is not an original pillar of the PERMA model, Kern et al. (2014)

    identify physical health and vitality as essential and vital components of well-

    being. The Profiler measures a subjective sense of health – through participants'

    responses regarding feeling good and healthy each day.

Workplace PERMA Profiler

The Workplace PERMA Profiler is an updated version of the original PERMA Profiler.

The Workplace PERMA Profiler has all the elements of the original PERMA Profile, but it

adjusts the questions to the workplace. The Profiler included 23 questions measuring the five

pillars of PERMA, and positive and negative emotion, health, and loneliness. A total of 16

participants responded to the 23-question survey. Elementary teachers at two elementary schools

completed the survey.

The questions are grouped based on the pillars and essential components of PERMA and were presented to participants as noted in the original survey (see Appendix A). Participants responded to the survey questions, which were presented on a sliding scale with only the endpoints labeled. These responses were measured on an 11-point scale, ranging from 0 to 10.

Table 2

PERMA Profiler Score Interpretation (Butler & Kern, 2016):

Very high functioning	*= 9 and above (0 to 1 for negative emotion)*
High functioning	*= 8-8.9 (1.1 to 3 for negative emotion)*
Normal functioning	*= 6.5 to 7.9 (3.1 to 5 for negative emotion)*
Sub-optimal functioning	*= 5 to 6.4 (5.1 to 6.5 for negative emotion)*
Languishing	*= below 5 (above 6.5 for negative emotion)*

For each of the following questions, the scores are reported. The mean (M) was calculated by determining the average of participant responses. The standard deviation (SD) was calculated for each question to get a more accurate measure of variability and diversity within the data. The researcher determined the standard deviation by taking the square root of the variance within the data set. Finally, variance (V) was determined by calculating the sum of the squared differences between the mean and data points divided by the number of data points in the study. The second data set (Question 24 and 25) relates to the two semi-structured questions and involves qualitative coding to narrative responses.

Question 1. Question 1 asked participants to what extent their work is purposeful and meaningful. Table 1 presents a summary of the responses.

Figure 1

Meaning 1

To what extent is your work purposeful and meaningful? ⓘ
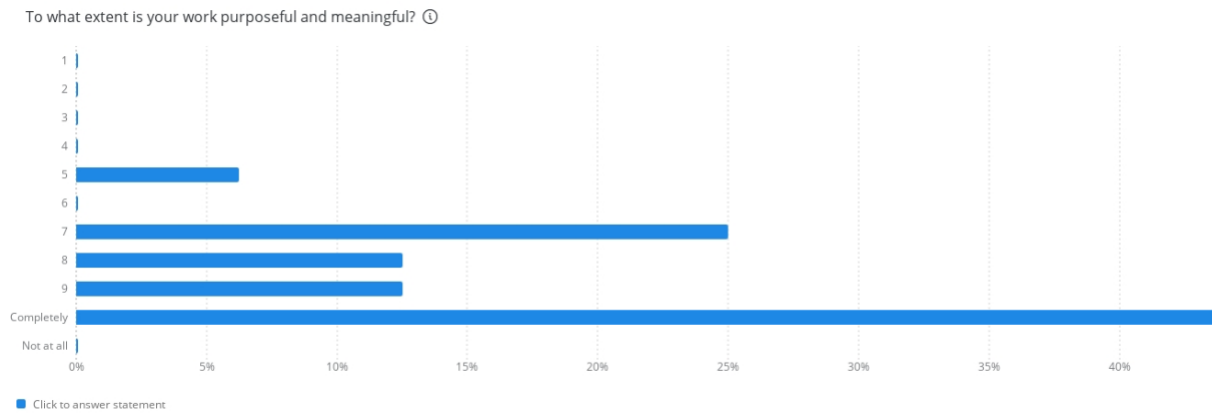
Meaning is a core pillar of PERMA and a measure of well-being. Eleven of 16 participants indicated their work was significantly purposeful and meaningful. A descriptive analysis of participant responses resulted in $M = 10$, $SD = 2$, $V = 2$. On average, participants reported an above-average sense of purpose and meaning in their work.\

Question 2. Question 2 asked participants how often they feel they are progressing towards accomplishing work-related goals. Table 2 presents a summary of the responses.

Figure 2

Accomplishment 1

How often do you feel you are making progress towards accomplishing your work-related goals? ⓘ
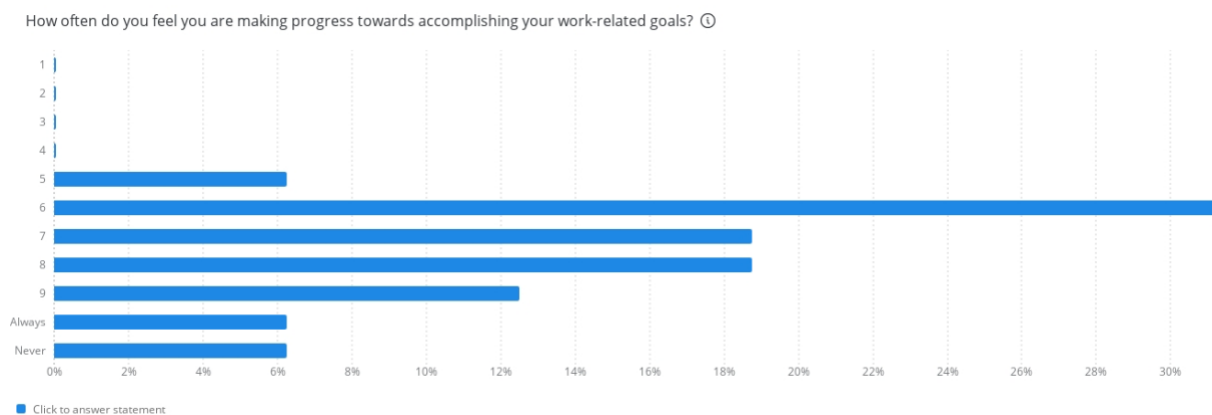
Accomplishment is a critical pillar of PERMA and a measure well-being. One participant indicated never feeling they are making progress toward accomplishing work-related goals, while 87% of participants indicated making more than average progress toward work-related goals. A descriptive analysis of participant responses resulted in $M = 8$, $SD = 2$, $V = 5$. Participants reported above-average sense of accomplishment regarding work related goals.

Question 3. Question 3 asked participants how often they become absorbed in what they are doing at work. Table 3 presents a summary of the responses.

Figure 3

Engagement

At work, how often do you become absorbed in what you are doing? ⓘ

■ Click to answer statement
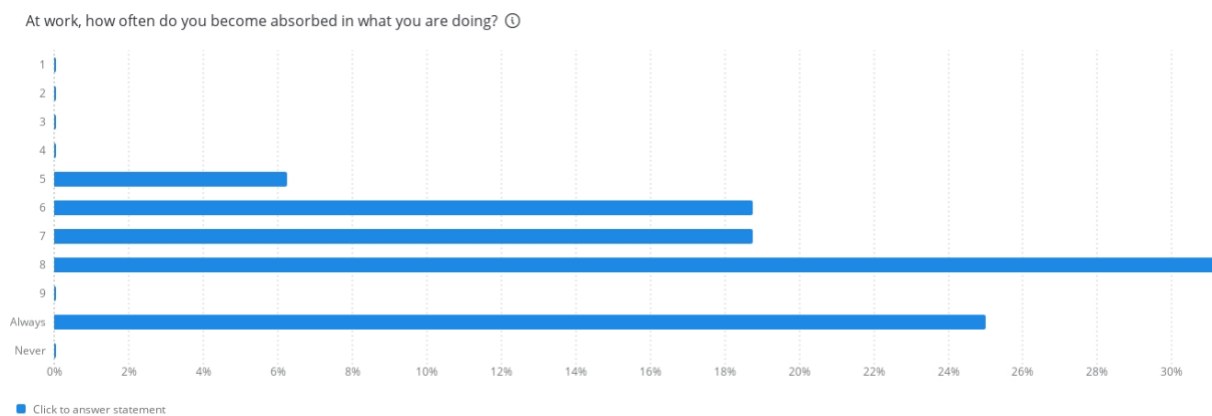
Engagement is a key pillar of PERMA and a measure of well-being. Nine of 16 participants indicated significant engagement in becoming absorbed in their work. A descriptive analysis of participant responses resulted in $M = 9$, $SD = 2$, $V = 2$. Participants reported above-average response regarding becoming absorbed in their work.

Question 4. Question 4 asked participants to define the overall quality of their health generally. Table 4 presents a summary of the responses.

Figure 4

Health

In general, how would you say your health is? ⓘ

■ Click to answer statement
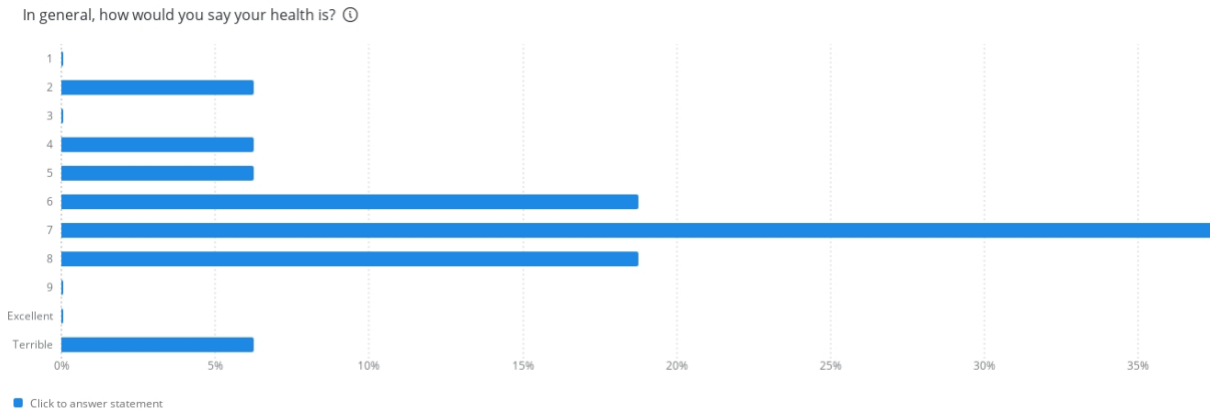
Health is an essential component of PERMA and a measure of well-being. Two participants indicated below-average health, 1 indicated terrible health, and 3 participants indicated above-average health. A descriptive analysis of participant responses resulted in $M = 7$, $SD = 2$, $V = 5$. Participants reported above-average response regarding the state of their health.

Question 5. Question 5 asked participants how often they feel joyful at work. Table 5 presents a summary of the responses.

Figure 5

Positive Emotion

At work, how often do you feel joyful? ⓘ

■ Click to answer statement
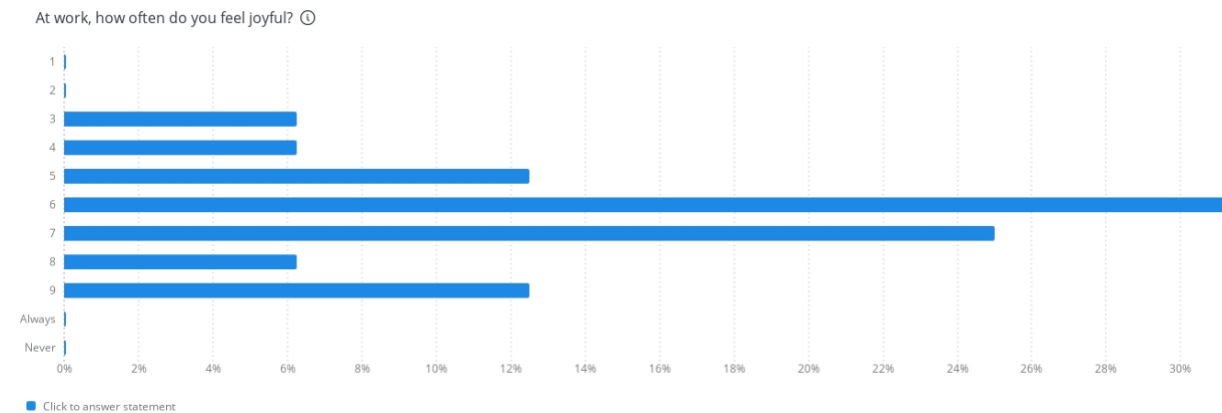
Positive emotion is a significant measure of well-being. Twelve of the 16 participants indicated 6 or higher when asked how often they feel joyful in the workplace. Participants reported above-average sense of joy in their work. A descriptive analysis of participant responses resulted in $M = 7$, $SD = 2$, $V = 5$.

Question 6. Question 6 asked participants to what extent they receive help and support from co-workers when needed. Table 6 presents a summary of the responses.

Figure 6

Relationships

Relationships are a core pillar of PERMA and a measure of well-being. One participant indicated they do not feel supported by co-workers. Meanwhile, 9 of 16 participants indicated a score of 8 or above suggesting that they think they are receiving the necessary help and support at work. A descriptive analysis of participant responses resulted in $M = 8$, $SD = 2$, $V = 6$. Participants reported above-average help and support from co-workers when needed.

Question 7. Question 7 asked participants how often they feel anxious at work. Table 7 presents a summary of the responses.
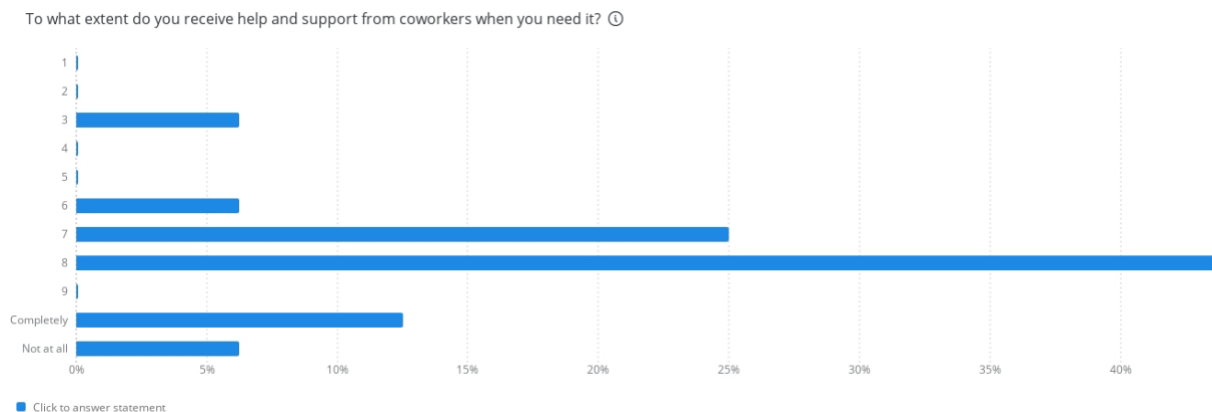
Figure 7

Negative Emotion

At work, how often do you feel anxious? ⓘ
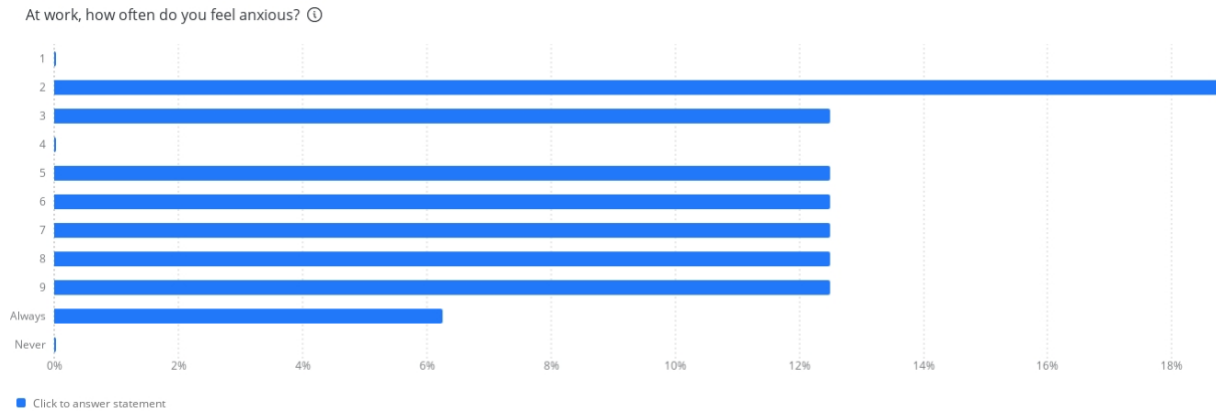
Negative emotion is a measure well-being. Three participants indicated they rarely feel anxious at work, while 5 of 16 told of elevated feelings of anxiety at the workplace. A descriptive analysis of participant responses resulted in $M = 7$, $SD = 3$, $V = 7$. Participants reported average feelings of anxiousness in the workplace.

Question 8. Question 8 asked participants how often they achieved the important work goals they had set for themselves. Table 8 presents a summary of the responses.

Figure 8

Accomplishment 2

How often do you achieve the important work goals you have set for yourself? ⓘ
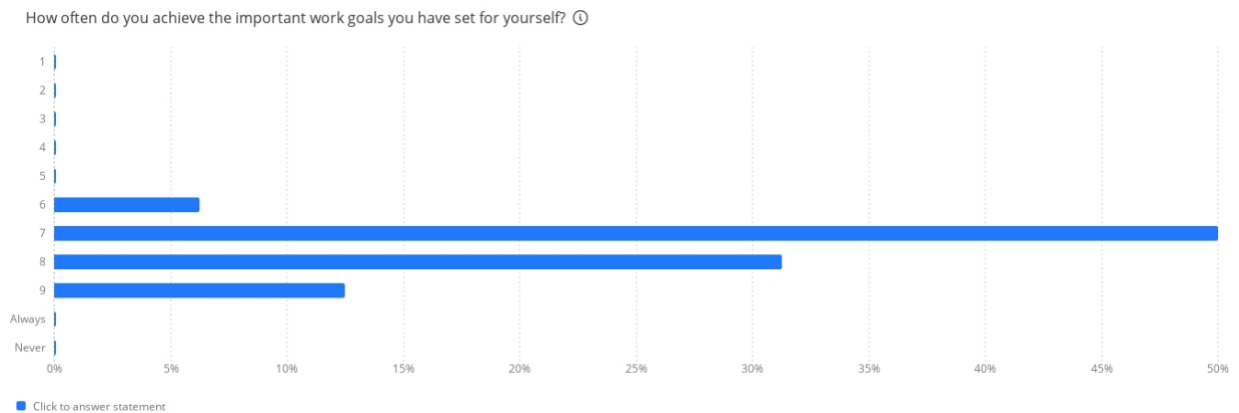
Accomplishment is a core pillar of PERMA and a measure of well-being. All participants scored 6 or higher regarding a sense of accomplishment and achieving goals they set for themselves at work. A descriptive analysis of participant responses resulted in $M = 9$, $SD = 1$, $V = 1$. Participants reported above-average achievement regarding work related goals.

Question 9. Question 9 asked participants to what extent they feel what they do at work is valuable and worthwhile. Table 9 presents a summary of the responses.

Figure 9

Meaning 2

In general, to what extent do you feel that what you do at work is valuable and worthwhile? ⓘ
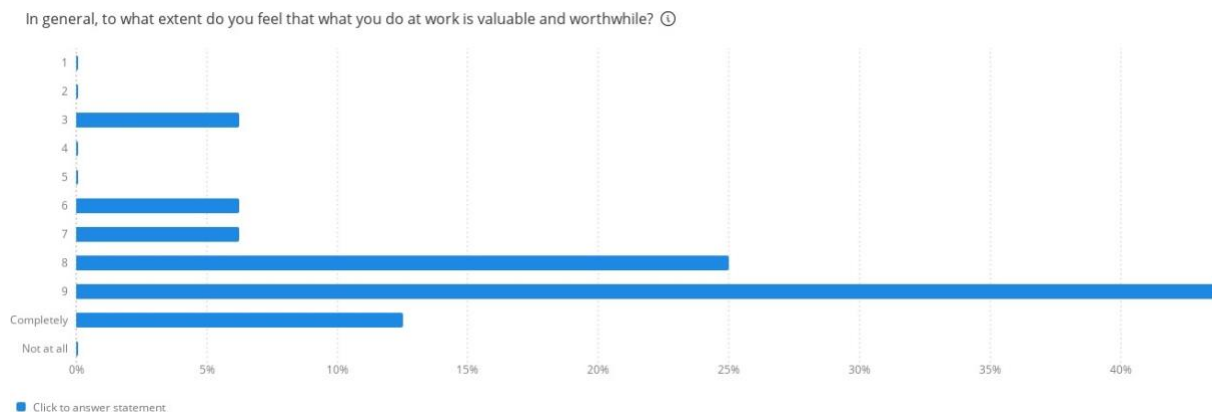
One participant indicated a below-average response regarding finding meaning in the workplace and feeling that their work is valuable and worthwhile. Thirteen of 16 participants indicated their work was significantly valuable and worthwhile. A descriptive analysis of participant responses resulted in $M = 9$, $SD = 2$, $V = 3$. Participants reported above-average sense of feeling their work is valuable and worthwhile.

Question 10. Question 10 asked participants how often they feel positive at work. Table 10 presents a summary of the responses.

Figure 10

*Positive Emotion 2*

At work, how often do you feel positive? ⓘ
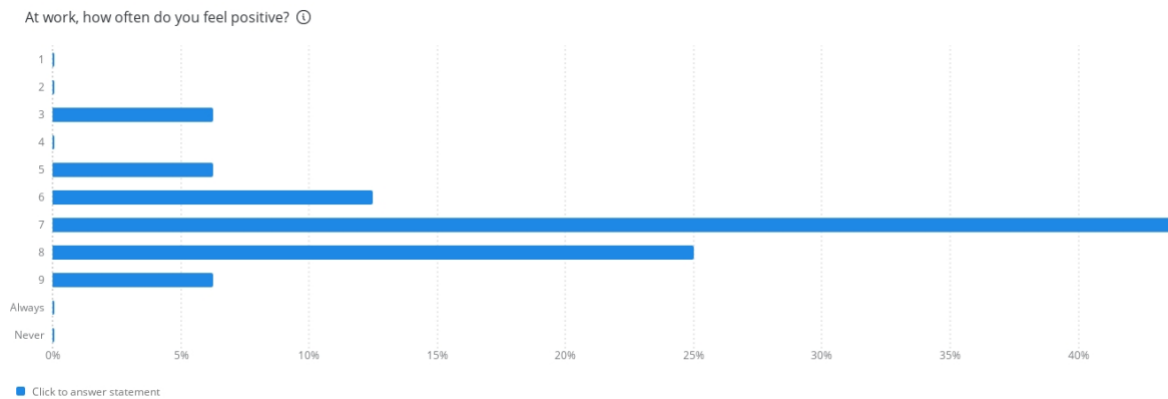
Thirteen of 16 participants responded with 6 or higher regarding how often they feel positive at work. A descriptive analysis of participant responses resulted in $M = 8$, $SD = 1$, $V = 2$. Participants reported above-average positivity in the workplace.

Question 11. Question 11 asked participants to what extent they felt excited and interested in their work. Table 11 presents a summary of the responses.

Figure 11

Engagement 2

To what extent do you feel excited and interested in your work? ⓘ
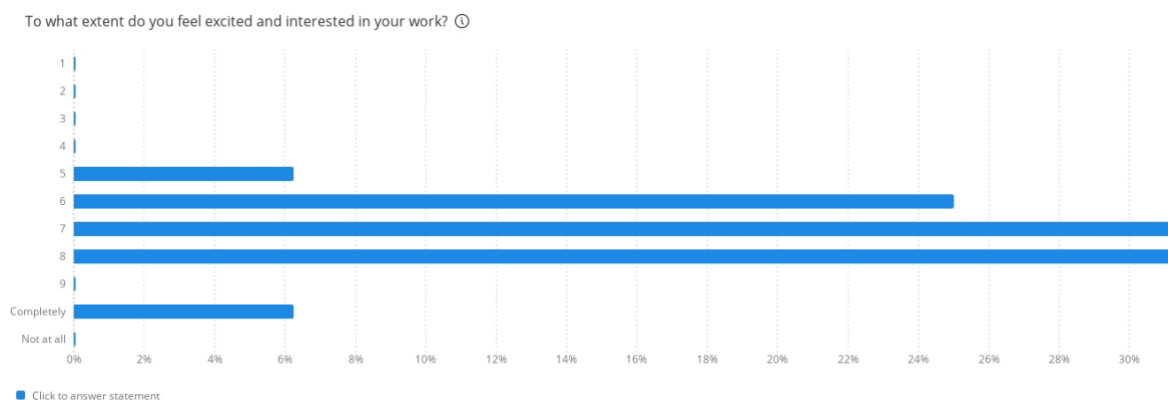
Fifteen of 16 participants indicated a 6 or higher response regarding feeling excited and interested in their work. A descriptive analysis of participant responses resulted in $M = 8$, $SD = 1$, $V = 1$. Participants reported above-average excitement and interest in their work.

Question 12. Question 12 asked participants how lonely they felt at work. Table 12 presents a summary of the responses.

Figure 12

Loneliness
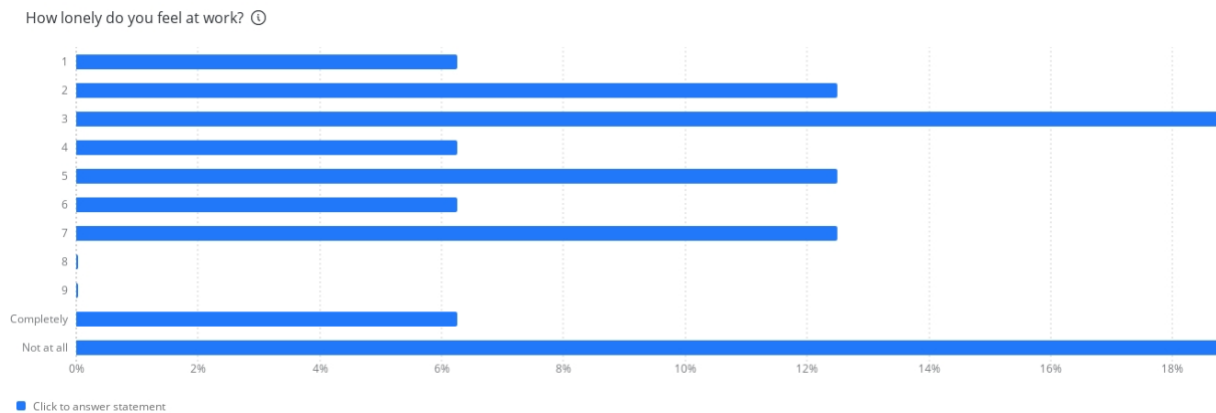
Six participants hardly ever felt lonely at work, while 1 of 16 showed feeling completely lonely at work. A descriptive analysis of participant responses resulted in $M = 5$, $SD = 3$, $V = 8$. Participants reported above-average loneliness at work.

Question 13. Question 13 asked participants how satisfied they were with their current physical health. Table 13 presents a summary of the responses.

Figure 13

Health 2
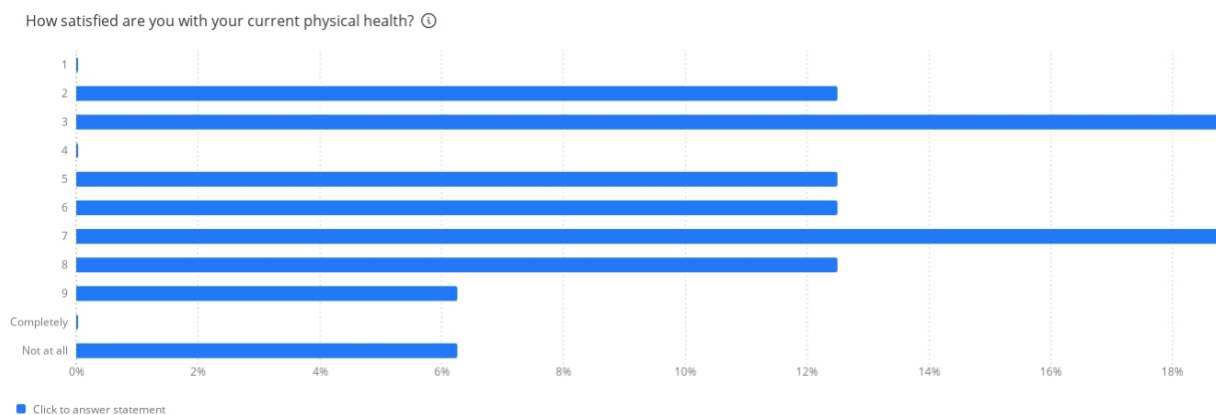
Regarding their level of satisfaction with their current physical health, one-half of the participants scored a 5 or below, while the other half scored 6 or higher. A descriptive analysis of participant responses resulted in *M* = 6, *SD* = 3, *V* = 6. Participants reported sub-optimal physical health.

Question 14. Question 14 asked participants how often they feel angry at work. Table 14 presents a summary of the responses.

Figure 14

Negative Emotion 2
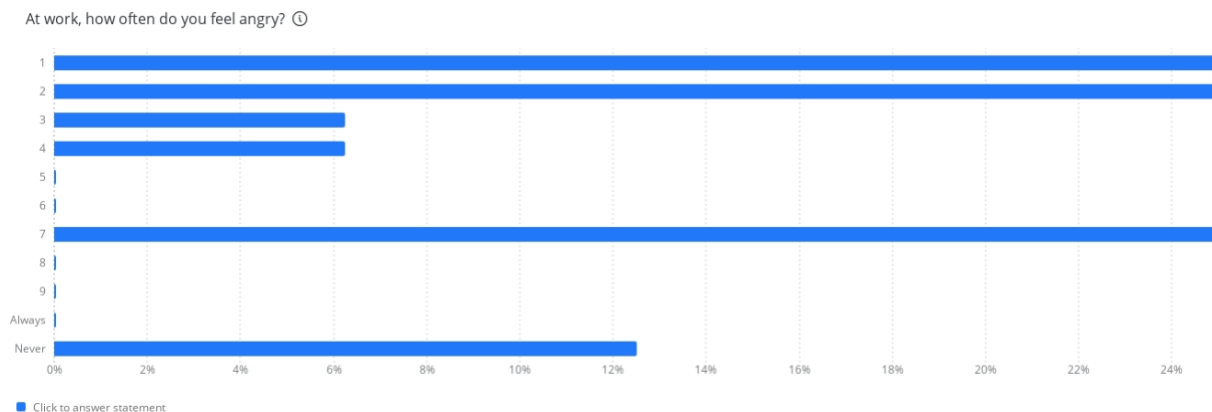
Twelve participants indicated a response of 4 or lower regarding how often they feel anger, while 4 of 16 revealed moderate feelings of anger often in the workplace. A descriptive analysis of participant responses resulted in *M* = 4, *SD* = 3, *V* = 6. Participants reported rarely feeling angry at work.

Question 15. Question 15 asked participants to what extent they felt appreciated by their coworkers. Table 15 presents a summary of the responses.

Figure 15

Relationships 2

To what extent do you feel appreciated by your coworkers? ⓘ

■ Click to answer statement
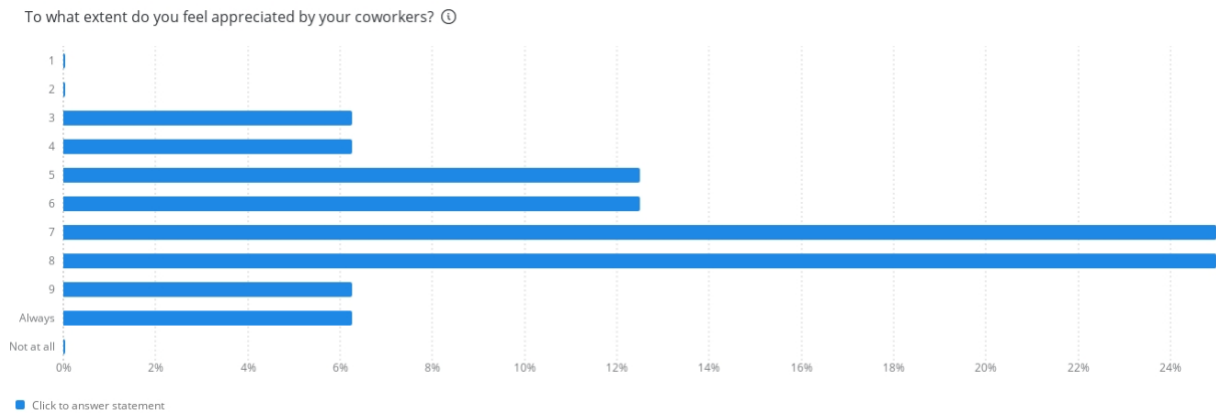
Eleven of 16 participants indicated a score of 6 or higher regarding feeling appreciated by coworkers. A descriptive analysis of participant responses resulted in $M = 8$, $SD = 2$, $V = 3$. Participants reported above-average feelings of appreciation by co-workers.

Question 16. Question 16 asked participants to identify how often they can handle their work-related responsibilities. Table 16 presents a summary of the responses.

Figure 16

Accomplishment 3

How often are you able to handle your work-related responsibilities? ⓘ

■ Click to answer statement

Fifteen of 16 participants indicated a score of 6 or greater regarding how often they can handle work-related responsibilities. A descriptive analysis of participant responses resulted in *M* = 8, *SD* = 1, *V* = 1. Participants reported above-average ability to handle work-related responsibilities.

Question 17. Question 17 asked participants to what extent they generally feel that they have a sense of direction in their work. Table 17 presents a summary of the responses.

Figure 17

Meaning 3
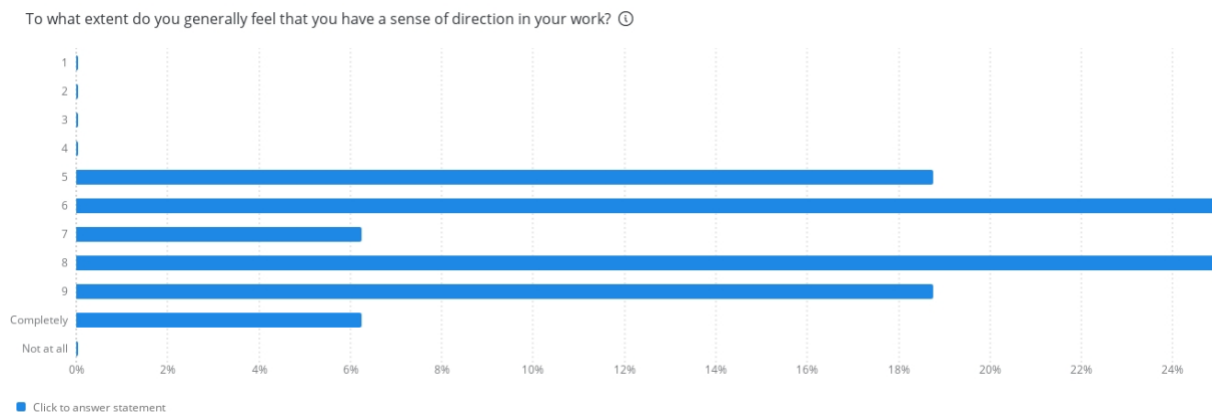
Thirteen of 16 participants indicated a score of 6 or greater regarding generally feeling they have a sense of direction and meaning in their work. A descriptive analysis of participant responses resulted in *M* = 8, *SD* = 2, *V* = 3. Participants reported above-average sense of direction and clarity in their work.

Question 18. Question 18 asked participants how their health was compared to others of a similar age and sex. Table 18 presents a summary of participant responses.

Figure 18

Health 3

Compared to others of your same age and sex, how is your health? ⓘ
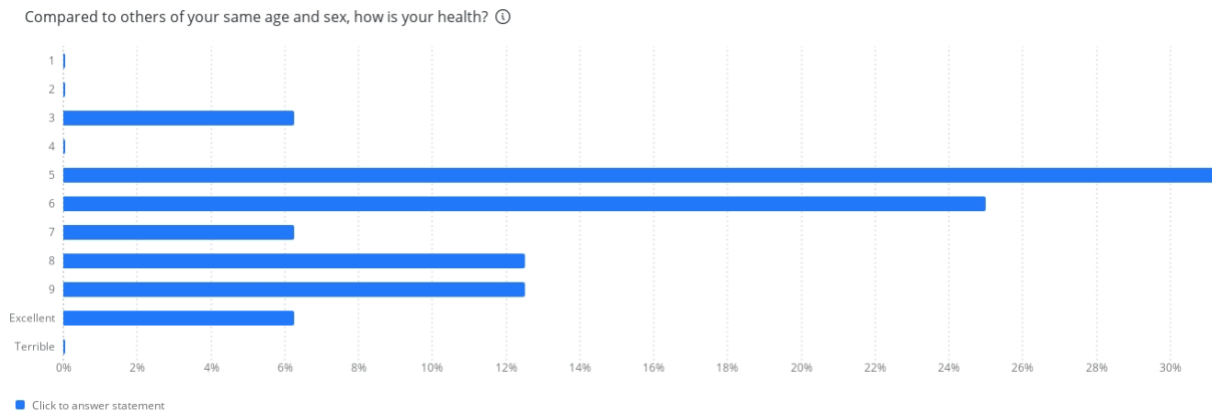
Ten of 16 participants indicated a score of 6 or greater and more positive health compared to others their same age and sex. A descriptive analysis of participant responses resulted in *M* = 7, *SD* = 2, *V* = 3. Participants reported having average health compared to others their age.

Question 19. Question 19 asked participants their level of satisfaction regarding their professional relationships. Table 19 presents a summary of the responses.

Figure 19

Relationships 3

How satisfied are you with your professional relationships? ⓘ
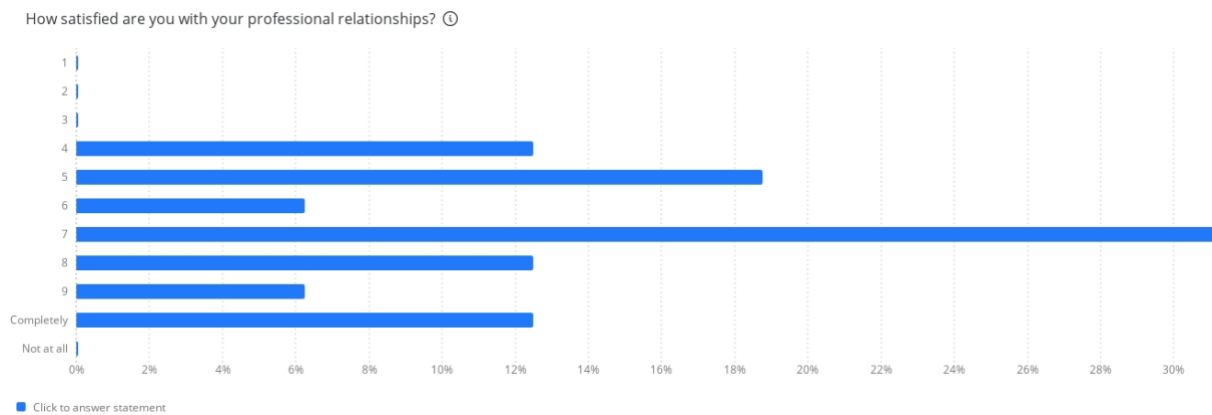
Ten of 16 participants indicated a score of 6 or greater and greater satisfaction with their professional relationships. A descriptive analysis of participant responses resulted in $M = 8$, $SD = 2$, $V = 3$. Participants reported above-average professional relationships.

Question 20. Question 20 asked participants, "at work, how often do you feel sad."

Table 20 presents a summary of participant responses.
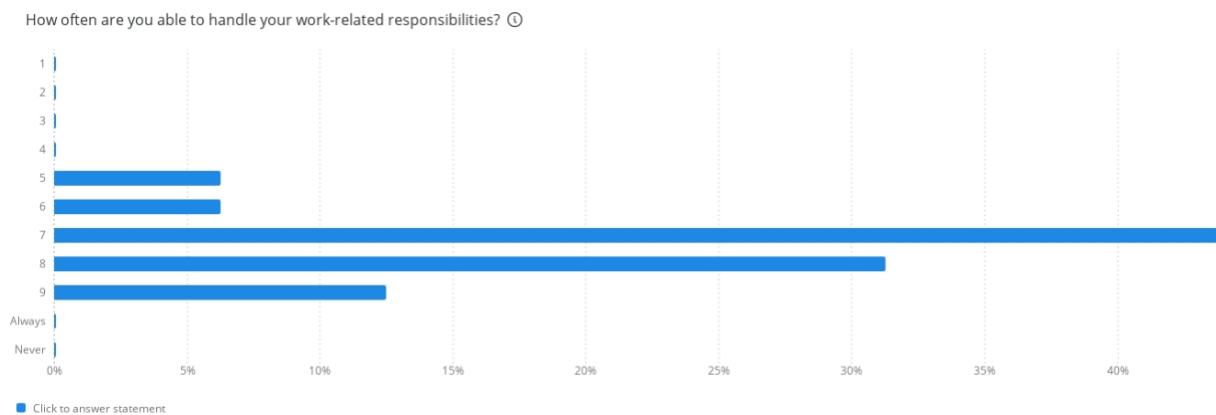
Figure 20

Negative Emotion 3
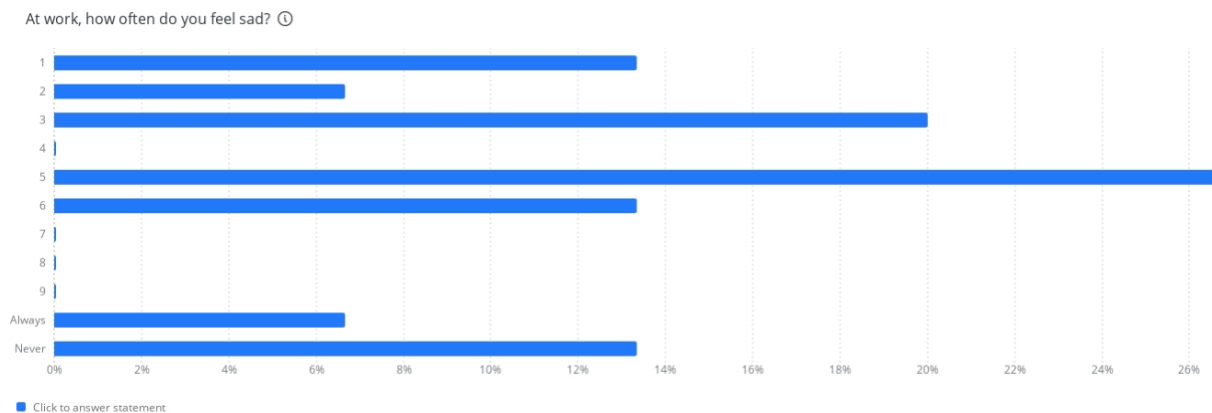
Thirteen of 16 participants indicated a score of 5 or below regarding feeling sad in the workplace. A descriptive analysis of participant responses resulted in $M = 5$, $SD = 3$, $V = 7$. Participants reported not usually feeling sad at work.

Question 21. Question 21 asked participants how often they lose track of time while doing something they enjoy at work. Table 21 presents a summary of participant responses.

Figure 21

Engagement 3

At work, how often do you lose track of time while doing something you enjoy? ⓘ
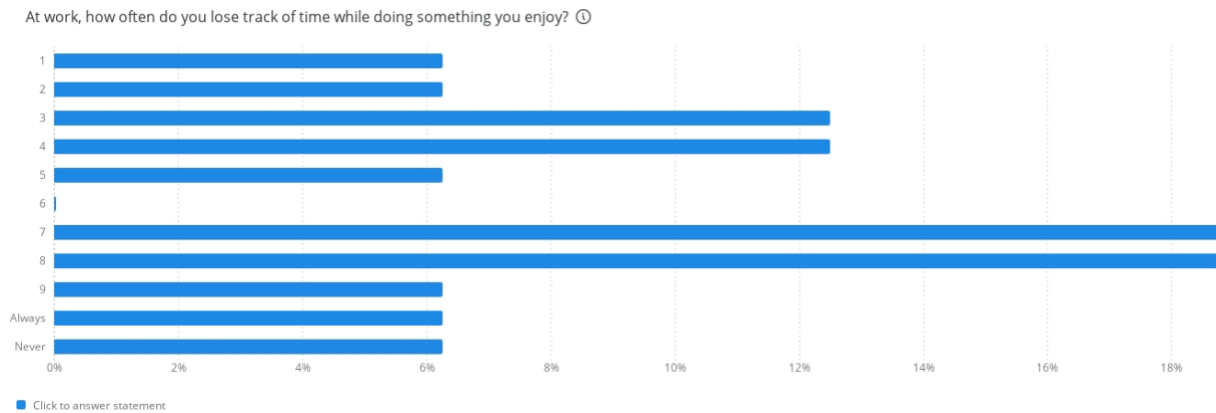
Half of the participants indicated a score of 5 or lower, while the other half indicated a score of 6 or greater regarding how often they lose track of time in the workplace engaged in something they love. A descriptive analysis of participant responses resulted in $M = 6$, $SD = 3$, $V = 9$. Participants had an average response to losing track of time when engaged in work.

Question 22. Question 22 asked participants to what extent they felt contented at work. Table 22 presents a summary of the responses.

Figure 22

Positive Emotion 3

At work, to what extent do you feel contented? ⓘ
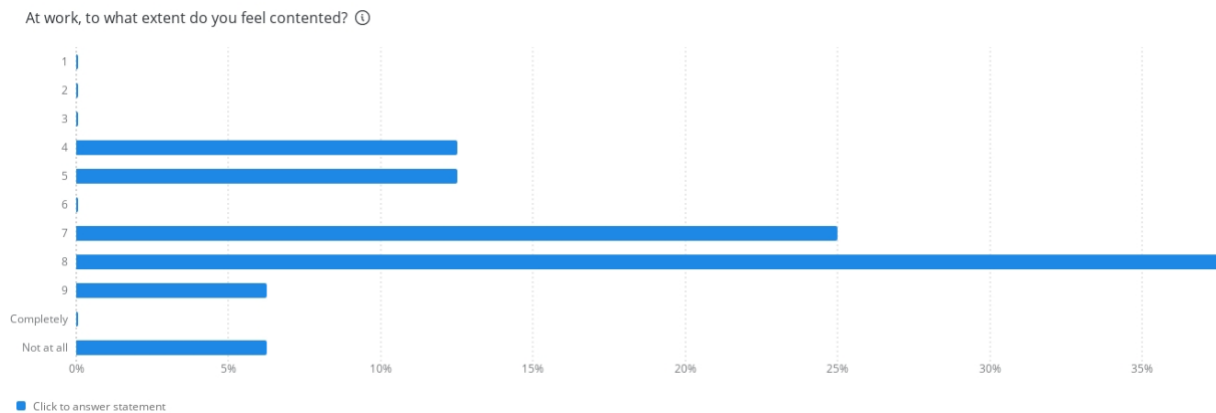
One participant indicated not feeling content at all, while 11 of 16 participants marked a score of 7 or greater regarding feeling content at work. A descriptive analysis of participant responses resulted in $M = 7$, $SD = 2$, $V = 5$. Participants had an average response to feeling contentment in their work.

Question 23. Question 23 was an overall measure of happiness and well-being. Participants were asked how happy they would say they were. Table 23 presents a summary of the responses.

Figure 23

PERMA

Taking all things together, how happy would you say you are with your work? ⓘ

Click to answer statement
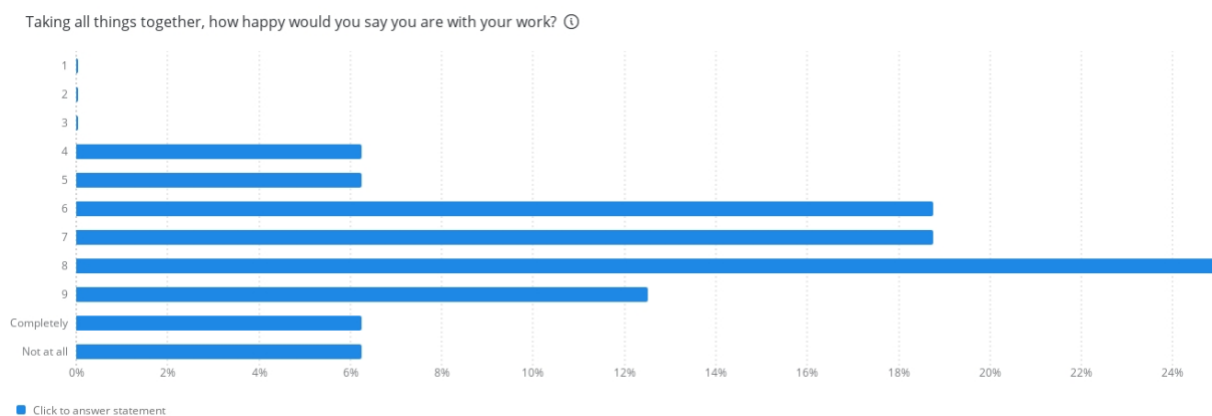
One participant indicated not being happy with their work, while 7 of 16 gave an above-average measure of happiness and well-being in the workplace. A descriptive analysis of participant responses resulted in $M = 8$, $SD = 2$, $V = 5$. Participants reported above-average overall happiness at work, ultimately achieving PERMA.

The overall results of the Workplace PERMA Profiler survey is included in table 3.

Table 3

Workplace PERMA Profiler Survey Results

Question	PERMA Pillar	Score/Mean
1 To what extent is your work purposeful and meaningful?	Meaning 1	10 – Very high functioning
2 How often do you feel you are making progress towards accomplishing your work-related goals?	Accomplishment 1	8— high functioning
3 At work, how often do you become absorbed in what you are doing?	Engagement 1	9– Very high functioning
4 In general, how would you say your health is?	Health 1	7 – normal functioning
5 At work, how often do you feel joyful?	Positive emotion 1	7 – normal functioning
6 To what extent do you receive help and support from coworkers when you need it?	Relationships 1	8— high functioning
7 At work, how often do you feel anxious	Negative emotion 1	7 – languishing
8 How often do you achieve the important work goals you have set for yourself?	Accomplishment 2	9– Very high functioning
9 In general, to what extent do you feel that what you do at work is valuable and worthwhile?	Meaning 2	9– Very high functioning
10 At work, how often do you feel positive?	Positive emotion 2	8— high functioning
11 To what extent do you feel excited and interested in your work?	Engagement 2	8— high functioning
12 How lonely do you feel at work?	Loneliness	5 – sub-optimal functioning
13 How satisfied are you with your current physical health?	Health 2	6 – sub-optimal functioning
14 At work, how often do you feel angry?	Negative emotion 2	4 – normal functioning
15 To what extent do you feel appreciated by your coworkers?	Relationships 2	8— high functioning
16 How often are you able to handle your work-related responsibilities??	Accomplishment 3	8— high functioning
17 To what extent do you generally feel that you have a sense of direction in your work?	Meaning 3	8— high functioning
18 Compared to others of your same age and sex, how is your health?	Health 3	7 – normal functioning
19 How satisfied are you with your professional relationships?	Relationships 3	8— high functioning
20 At work, how often do you feel sad?	Negative emotion 3	5 – normal functioning
21 At work, how often do you lose track of time while doing something you enjoy?	Engagement 3	6 – sub-optimal functioning
22 At work, to what extent do you feel contented?	Positive emotion 3	7 – normal functioning
23 Taking all things together, how happy would you say you are with your work?	Happy	8 — high functioning

The Workplace PERMA Profiler survey results were grouped based on the 5 core pillars of PERMA pillars, as well as an overall measure of well-being, negative emotion, health and loneliness in Table 4.

Table 4

Workplace PERMA Profiler Category Grouping Results

Well-Being Measure	Results	Score	Meaning
Positive Emotion	P = mean (P1, P2, P3)	7.33	Normal functioning
Engagement	E = mean (E1, E2, E3)	7.67	Normal functioning
Relationships	R = mean (R1, R2, R3)	8	High functioning
Meaning	M = mean (M1, M2, M3)	9	High functioning
Accomplishment	A = mean (A1, A2, A3)	8.33	High functioning
Overall Well-being	PERMA = mean (P1, P2, P3, E1, E2, E3, R1, R2, R3, M1, M2, M3, A1, A2, A3, happy)	8.06	High functioning
Negative Emotion	N = mean (N1, N2, N3)	5.33	Sub-optimal functioning
Health	H = mean (H1, H2, H3)	6.67	Sub-optimal functioning
Loneliness	Lon (single item)	5	Sub-optimal functioning

Question 24. Question 24 was the first semi-structured qualitative question asking teachers how their workplace well-being has changed, if at all, since working with the students in the SEL program. Table 24 presents a summary of responses.

Table 5

Qualitative Question 1 – How Has Your Workplace Well-being Changed, if at all, Since Working

with Students Who Participated in a Social-emotional Learning Program?

Socio emotional learning was a part of the school culture when I started. It has been maintained, which is positive but I would not say it has changed

The days flow smoother when students are relaxed and have programs and activities to help them deal with their emotions. I don't know that it changes my well-being, but it certainly doesn't add stress.

I'd say yes. When my students are healthier, it helps. When my students are having a difficult time at home without the necessary support and resources to channel those experiences, energy and anger, it makes teaching more challenging.

I'm not sure if it changed because I have regular self-care practices to stay balanced and better support my students and colleagues. However, social emotional supports for my students certainly helps to alleviate stress because it frees me to focus on teaching without having to manage poor behavior and attitudes that may spill over from home.

I don't always notice change right away. It happens incrementally. Generally I'd say when students return to class after social emotional learning activities, they appear more calm and balanced—which helps the quality of i structure and positive classroom culture.

When my students are balanced and having a good day, it helps my day to flow better.

N/A

My workplace well-being has improved since working with students in a social emotional learning program. I have seen my relationships with students get stronger as well as the relationships between students get stronger.

No

I am more aware that students' may be enduring tough situations outside of school.

We have incorporated divide emotional classes to assist middle schoolers. It appears to solidifying goals in progress.

Some

It has not changed at all, Elan was a part of SEL when I got here.

I grow as my students grow. A less chaotic classroom helps me to reach benchmarks and achieve goals quicker. This also helps with work-life balance.

PERMA

How has your workplace well-being changed, if at all, since working with students who
   participated in a social emotional learning program?

Key Themes	# of Responses
School culture	14
Balance	
Community	
growth	

92

Regarding the impact of student well-being and the SEL program on teacher well-being, key themes in participant responses include a general correlation between teacher well-being and student well-being post-SEL program. Respondents also indicated that their overall well-being was supported or elevated due to students having the resources and outlets to achieve better balance and wellness. The responses also revealed beliefs regarding teacher growth specifically regarding their workplace well-being. Some participants indicated their workplace well-being did not change or improve due to existing solid self-care practices and workplace culture valuing wellness predating the SEL program.

Table 6

Qualitative Question 2 – Question 25 Was the Second Semi-structured Qualitative Question

Asking Teachers What Else Could Be Done to Improve Wellbeing in the Workplace. Table 25

Presents a Summary of the Responses.

What else could be done to improve your workplace well-being?

Staff activities, retreat and time to connect outside of work and professional development. More effective communication and better clarity regarding teacher expectations.

More support all around. Burnout is real, and if I don't have anything to give myself after being depleted, I cannot offer anything of substance to my students. Schools need to gather more feedback like this to better understand what teachers need to feel supported, and then act upon the feedback.

Continued support for students and teachers.

More virtual supports for both students and families. Perhaps hosting activities like yoga or meditation for teachers, and ongoing encouragement and mental and emotional well being tips and supports for us.

Less intense schedules; more support for everyone—including administrators and students. More resources specifically for student and staff well being.

More time off. Pay increase. Setting and respecting boundaries to better achieve work-life balance. Even more social emotional support for supports.

An actual investment in me and not the idea of investment. A recognition that the "system" is broken but to not merely accept that it is broken.

Having financial security for my program

Give teachers more appreciation or pay and help

Less frequent meaningless meetings, more time to prep for over saturated teaching days; increasing teacher moral.

Bringing value, consistency and always practicing fidelity. In addition, being the exemplars needed to make necessary change.

DEI training, more opportunities for open dialog

More communication, staff bonding (not at school), consistency, clear rules/deadlines

Improved health and mental health benefits. More wellness programs.

More mental and health support and resources for teachers.

What else could be done to improve your workplace well-being?

Key Themes	# of Responses
Continued/more resources	15
Staff bonding/connection	

Authentic, consistent, holistic support for staff/student well-being

There were several key themes in the responses about possible additional resources, support, and considerations to improve teacher well-being in the workplace. These included increased teacher resources, bonding and non-work activities, authentic, ongoing investment and holistic support for staff and students, and emotional and financial security.

Summary

This concurrent embedded mixed methods study examined the self-assessed workplace well-being and perspectives of elementary classroom teachers in the Southern United States. These teachers had students who participated in the SEW-NOLA social-emotional learning program taught by SEW-NOLA trained instructors for an academic semester.

This study's the primary method guiding the study was quantitative (the Workplace PERMA Profiler instrument) and the secondary supporting method was qualitative (two semi-structured questions). The 23-question Workplace PERMA Profiler comprised the first part of the online instrument and addressed guiding research question one (1) How do elementary teachers self-assess their workplace well-being using the PERMA Profiler? Two semi-structured questions comprised the second part of the instrument and addressed guiding research questions two and three. (2) How do elementary teachers think their workplace well-being has changed, if at all, since working with the students in the SEW-NOLA SEL program? and (3) What else do elementary teachers believe could be done to improve their workplace well-being?

In response to question 23, which served as an overall measure of happiness and well-being, 81% of participants (13 of 16) indicated an average or above-average measure of well-being/PERMA.

In response to the question regarding how their workplace well-being changed, if at all, since working with students who participated in a social-emotional learning program,

participants believed (a) their well-being was supported or elevated as a result of students having resources and outlets to achieve greater balance and wellness, (b) they grow and evolve as their students grow and evolve, and (c) uncertainty if their well-being has changed at all, due to regular pre-existing self-care practices or belief that a culture of self-care within the school community predated the program and therefore warranted no significant shift in their well-being while also acknowledging the positive impacts of such. Overall, the top three themes mentioned across all responses regarding what else could be done to improve their overall workplace well-being were increased teacher resources, bonding, non-work activities, authentic ongoing investment and holistic support for staff and students, and emotional and financial security.

Chapter 5 engages a broader discussion regarding how these findings relate to the literature review. Furthermore, the chapter addresses the implications of the findings, recommendations for future practice and further research, as well as conclusions.

Chapter 5: Discussion Findings, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The literature review of this study opened stating the rationale for conducting this research on social and emotional learning interventions for students and how such may support teacher well-being in primary school educational settings. Elementary school leaders have a unique opportunity of educating students holistically while simultaneously cultivating a positive working environment that supports the well-being of teachers and staff (Butler & Kern, 2016). This chapter engages a wider discussion regarding how the findings presenting in chapter 4 relate to the literature review. Furthermore, final conclusions are addressed and recommendations for future practice and further research are presented.

The study centers on well-being, specifically the well-being of teachers whose students have been engaged in a school based social emotional learning program over one academic semester. The seven key variables addressed in this study to measure well-being includes: positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning, accomplishment, negative emotion, and health. Together, these variables or pillars comprise PERMA. PERMA umbrellas Seligman's well-being theory. According to Seligman (2011), life satisfaction and flourishing holistically occurs through measurable increased positive emotion, engagement, meaning, positive relationships, and accomplishment in life constitutes PERMA and well-being. The findings dive deeper into factors both contributing to and detracting from teacher well-being, specifically the well-being of their students.

Zinsser et al. (2016) draws parallels between teacher well-being and student well-being in asserting that the ability of a teacher to effectively teach and engage in the support of student social and emotional learning is partly dependent on the teacher's well-being and their emotional and social competencies. A key theme that emerged from this study included the connection

between teacher well-being and student well-being. Zinsser et al. (2016) highlights the significance of programs supporting the social and emotional competencies of children, and how far less attention has been paid to teachers and the workplace climate of teachers aiding in the implementation of such. However, multiple participants supported that their own well-being is supported and elevated when students are provided access to well-being resources and outlets to achieve or maintain balance.

To increase teacher retention and decrease teacher burnout in high-needs schools especially, additional research is needed to learn more regarding what school-based supports for students and staff helps and hinders holistic teacher well-being in the workplace. Butler and Kern (2016) affirms how individuals can experience both positive and negative emotions simultaneously, and each impacts their overall health and wellbeing. Consequently, teacher burnout not only impact their overall health, but also that of their students. Studies also show the opposite to be true. Friedman-Krauss et al. (2014) and Jennings and Greenberg (2009) suggest that a teacher's mental health and well-being impacts their ability to effectively support children's social and emotional learning, while teachers also experience high levels of psychological distress which is impacted by poor student behavior, work conditions, workplace relationships, and other interpersonal factors.

The last chapter of the dissertation discusses key findings developed after surveying 16 elementary teachers in two public schools whose students participated in a social emotional learning program in New Orleans for a minimum of one academic semester. First, the findings were compared with the literature review in Chapter 2. Second, implications are drawn from the findings and final conclusions. Ultimately, the researcher makes recommendations for future study.

Purpose

The purpose of this concurrent embedded mixed methods study is to examine the self-assessed workplace well-being and perspectives of elementary classroom teachers in the Southern United States whose students participated for an academic semester in the SEW-NOLA social emotional learning program taught by SEW-NOLA trained instructors. The researcher administered a two-part questionnaire 16 to elementary teachers in two public schools whose students participated in the SEW-NOLA program for a minimum of one academic semester.

Research Question

This study explored the following research questions:

How do teachers self-assess their well-being using the Workplace PERMA Profiler? How do teachers think their well-being has changed, if at all, since working with the students who participated in a school based SEL program for one academic semester? What else do teachers believe could be done to improve their well-being?

Research Design Overview

This study utilized a concurrent embedded mixed methods approach to research design. The data was collected from sixteen elementary school teachers whose students participated in a SEL program for a minimum of one academic semester. The surveys were administered to teachers in two New Orleans public elementary schools. School administrators assisted the researcher in distributing the study information virtually online to teachers who met study inclusion criteria. The information letter provided an overview of the study participant instruction. Teachers who were interested in participating in study and agreed to the informed consent clicked a link directing them to the survey instrument and an opportunity to provide quantitative and qualitative feedback for the study.

Surveys were completed virtually and anonymously. Participants completed the first part of the questionnaire that included the Workplace PERMA-Profiler—a 23-question measure assessing positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning, accomplishment, negative emotion, and health (see Appendix A). Additionally, participants responded to two semi-structured questions in narrative form (see Appendix B). The two additional questions captured participants' feedback regarding observations of any changes in their workplace well-being since student participation in the SEL intervention, and perspectives on what, if anything, could improve their workplace well-being. Furthermore, the Workplace PERMA-Profiler instrument served as an indicator for participants to determine which areas need support and improvement to build well-being.

Qualtrics was the survey tool used to administer both questionnaires. The platform allowed the researcher to quickly analyze open text responses, build reports including visualizations selected for each question, and create customized online reports. Upon completion of the online survey, participants received a message thanking them for their participation, and the two sets of survey data from the Workplace PERMA Profiler and semi-structured questions were analyzed side by side and used to provide an overall composite description of the problem.

The questions were designed to measure how teachers self-assess their individual well-being. This was done utilizing the Workplace PERMA Profiler survey, which examines positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning, accomplishment, negative emotion, and health to determine overall well-being in the workplace. The questions were also designed to measure how teachers think their well-being has changed, if at all, since working with the students in the SEL program; as well as teachers' beliefs regarding what else could be done to improve their well-

being in the workplace. The data was reviewed and themes emerging from the data were recorded and analyzed.

Butler & Kern (2016) highlight a PERMA-Profiler Score Interpretation Chart by the creators of the PERMA instrument ranging from languishing to very high functioning. The Workplace PERMA Profiler survey results in this study indicate a median score of 8.06 for overall well-being from all 16 participants. According to the score interpretation chart created by the developers of the Workplace PERMA Profile, a score of 8.0 – 8.9 (1.1 to 3 for negative emotion) indicate high functioning overall well-being. Conclusively, the self-assessed well-being of 16 participants across two elementary schools whose students engaged in a SEL program over one academic semester is high functioning. Such indicates the participants achieved PERMA and possess a highly functional and above-average sense of well-being in the workplace. The discussion regarding key findings, conclusions, implications, and recommendations continue to connect the literature, PERMA pillars and survey results.

Discussion of Key Findings

The following three key themes emerged from this study:

1. Most participants whose students engaged in a SEL program over one academic semester reported their well-being improved or remained the same.

2. Teacher well-being is supported by student well-being and access to SEL resources

3. Teacher well-being is supported by a healthy workplace culture & self-care practice

Teacher Well-Being

The study results reveal the self-assessed health of teachers is mostly positive. In response to Question 23 in the Workplace PERMA Profiler, which served as an overall measure

of happiness and well-being, 81% of participants (13 of 16 participants) indicated an average or above-average measure of well-being and PERMA. Responses also revealed beliefs regarding how teacher growth and wellness in the workplace was not changed significantly due to many participants indicating strong existing self-care practices, as well as a healthy workplace culture valuing wellness predating the SEL program.

Figure 24

Taking all Things Together, How Happy Would You Say You are with Your Work?

Field	Min	Max	Mean	Standard Deviation	Variance	Responses
Click to answer statement	1	11	8	2	5	16
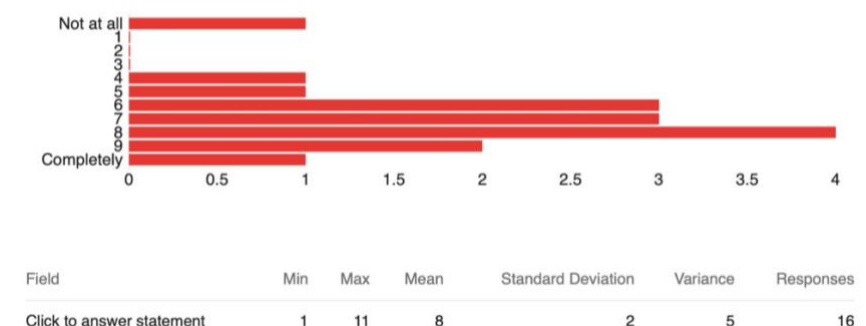
Figure 25

In General, How Would You Say Your Health is?

Field	Min	Max	Mean	Standard Deviation	Variance	Responses
Click to answer statement	1	9	7	2	5	16
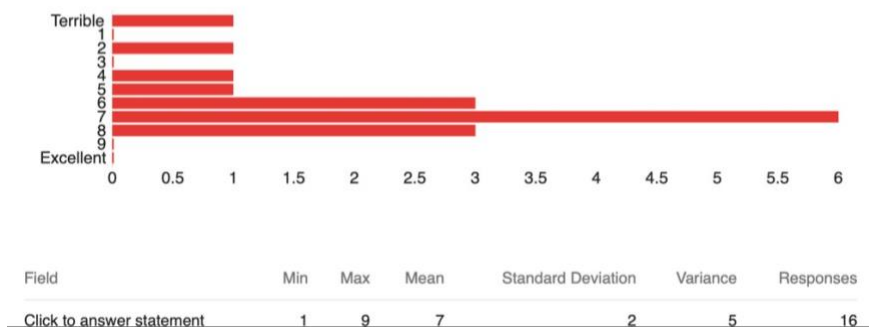
Teacher Well-Being and Student Well-Being.

Teacher well-being is supported and elevated with student access to well-being resources and outlets to achieve or maintain balance. Participant responses indicated a connection between

teacher well-being and student well-being post SEL program, as well as beliefs that the overall well-being of teachers was supported or elevated as a result of students having resources and outlets to achieve greater balance and wellness. The study also revealed a connection between student well-being and school resources.

According to Slack (2013), there exists a need for research diving into social and emotional learning programming and supports can strengthen capacity of the workforce supporting those students (Slack, 2013). Similarly, Aloe et al. (2014), suggests there also exists a strong correlation between student behavior and teacher burnout, which ultimately negatively impacts their well-being and optimal performance in the classroom. After conducting a multivariate meta-analysis between student misbehavior and emotional exhaustion, personal accomplishment, and depersonalization, which all contribute to teach burnout, the results supported a significant relationship between the two variables. Behavior of students impacted the emotional exhaustion of teachers the greatest. While this study focused exclusively on measuring the self-assessed well-being of teachers whose students participated in the SEL program and not the well-being of the students themselves, multiple researchers offer data supporting how student well-being improves with social emotional learning supports and interventions, as well directly linking student well-being to teacher well-being in the workplace and burnout. Therefore, it can be inferred that the benefits of the SEL program on students in the two New Orleans elementary schools also extended to their teachers' ability to maintain and improve their own wellness.

For example, Participant 2 shared that, "the days flow smoother when students are relaxed and have programs and activities to help them deal with their emotions. I don't know that it changes my well-being, but it certainly doesn't add stress" when asked how their workplace well-being has changed since working with students who participated in a SEL program.

Participant 3 wrote, "I'd say yes. When my students are healthier, it helps. When my students are having a difficult time at home without the necessary support and resources to channel those experiences, energy, and anger, it makes teaching more challenging." Similarly, Participant 6 expressed that "when my students are balanced and having a good day, it helps my day to flow better." Multiple study responses affirm teachers' appreciation and ability to derive value from their students' participation in SEL programs. While it is impossible to accurately quantify such value, or even to suggest a causal relationship between the SEL program for students and teacher well-being in the workplace—the expressed first-hand accounts of multiple teachers allows one to engage the self-proclaimed positive benefits and value of social emotional learning programs supporting student well-being on their own individual well-being and the ability to achieve greater wellness in the workplace.

Figure 26

How Satisfied are You with Your Current Physical Health?

Field	Min	Max	Mean	Standard Deviation	Variance	Responses
Click to answer statement	1	10	6		3	6	16
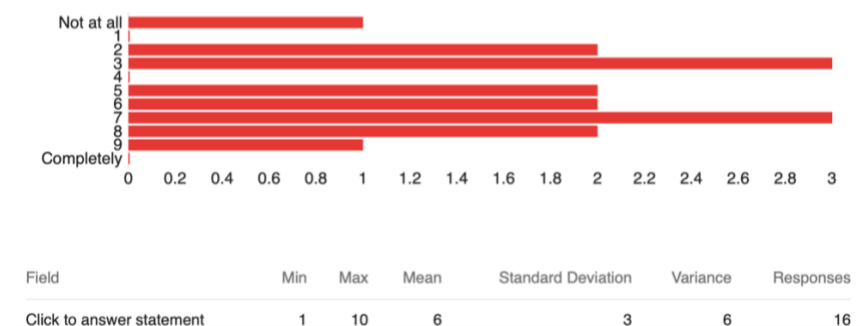
Workplace Culture and Self-Care Practices

The study findings affirm the positive benefits of pre-existing individual self-care practices, as well as a positive and healthy workplace culture prioritizing social and emotional learning in the school culture, and the well-being of both students and staff. This study also

revealed that some participants experienced a very clear workplace culture affirming wellness or pre-existing self-care practices within and beyond the workplace that positively contributed to their well-being. When asked if they observed a change in their well-being after their students participated in the SEL program, Participant 4 wrote, "I'm not sure if it changed because I have regular self-care practices to stay balanced and better support my students and colleagues. However, social emotional supports for my students certainly helps to alleviate stress because it frees me to focus on teaching without having to manage poor behavior and attitudes that may spill over from home." Such affirms how there may be indirect benefits of the SEL programs on teacher well-being that will remain unknown without further research. It is also worth noting self-care practices are not limited to the workplace, and oftentimes self-care practices and rituals individuals enact at home transfer to other settings and environments. Question 13 regarding participation satisfaction with their physical health is an example of how individual self-care practices, specifically related to physical health, impact teacher well-being whether only practiced in the workplace or beyond it. Nonetheless, the results inform and certainly affirm teachers possessing consistent ongoing self- care practices can indeed prove beneficial in their ability to maintain a healthy sense of self and well-being in the workplace.

Figure 27

To What Extent is Your Work Purposeful and Meaningful?

Field	Min	Max	Mean	Standard Deviation	Variance	Responses
Click to answer statement	6	11	10	2	2	16
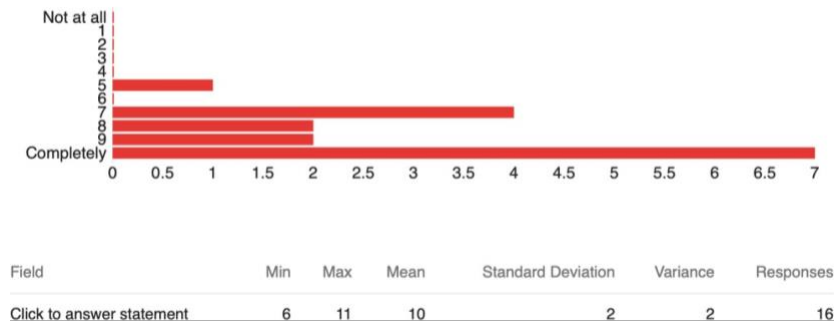
Throughout the study, participants referenced both school culture and self-care in relation to their well-being. One thing particularly interesting is the role hard to quantify or measure variables such as purpose and meaning impact well-being, specifically in this and similar settings. Furthermore, how does such connect back to school culture. It's clear in Question 1 of the PERMA Profiler regarding meaning that majority (15 of 16) participants expressed an overwhelmingly positive response regarding their work being both purposeful and meaningful.

Similarly, Question 10 asks how often participants feel positive in the workplace, which is also connected to the climate and culture of the school environment.

Figure 28

At Work, How Often Do You Feel Positive?

Field	Min	Max	Mean	Standard Deviation	Variance	Responses
Click to answer statement	4	10	8	1	2	16
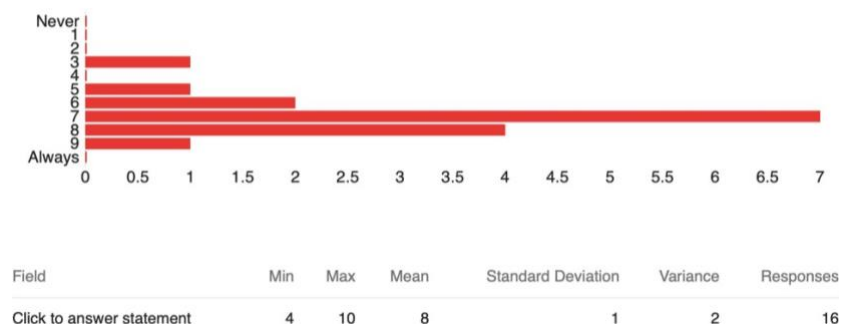
Figure 29

How Lonely Do You Feel at Work?

Field	Min	Max	Mean	Standard Deviation	Variance	Responses
Click to answer statement	1	11	5	3	8	16
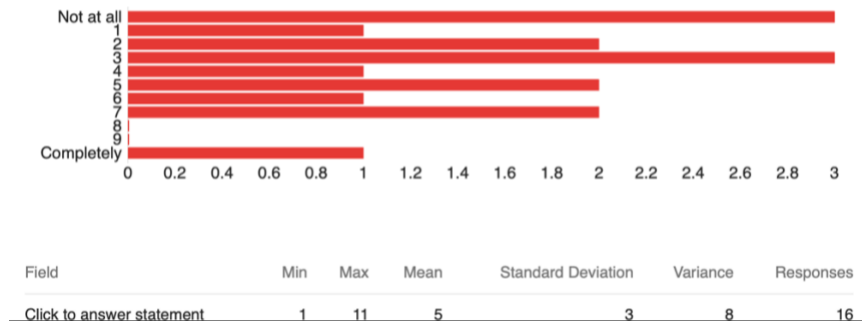
On the contrary, Question 12 regarding how often participants feel lonely at work was among the few questions that yielded an average of sub-standard functioning among participants. Considering the contradictory positive responses to participants also seeing deep meaning and experiencing their workplace as an overwhelming positive environment that didn't hinder their well-being in the workplace, it's worth examining factors related to loneliness. Though 10 of 16 participants indicated hardly or never feeling lonely at work, 4 individuals indicated they usually or completely do feel lonely. There wasn't an opportunity to gather more qualitative data from the participants regarding such. Therefore, one can infer that it would be beneficial to dive deeper into how loneliness factors into one's overall sense of well-being.

Figure 30

To What Extent Do You Feel Appreciated by Your Coworkers?

Field	Min	Max	Mean	Standard Deviation	Variance	Responses
Click to answer statement	4	11	8	2	3	16
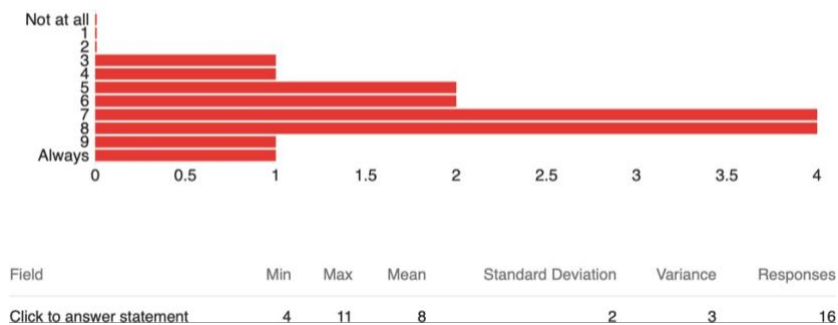
Question 15 regarding the extent participants felt appreciated, and the 2 individuals who indicated they rarely feel appreciated, brings to mind other elements that may factor into one feeling lonely in the workplace. Unlike, the other core pillars of PERMA, which had 3 questions included in the Profiler instrument, loneliness only included a single question. There was no indication as to the reasoning for such. Furthermore, it could also be noted that unless in a co-teaching model, most teachers interact with only students and not their peers or others at a similar intellectual or emotional level—so loneliness for some could also be due to the teaching model itself. More information would be needed to draw conclusive results regarding the loneliness of participants, or the best way to address and improve such.

Figure 31

How Often are You Able to Handle Your Work-Related Responsibilities?

Field	Min	Max	Mean	Standard Deviation	Variance	Responses
Click to answer statement	6	10	8	1	1	16

However, all of these variables directly contribute or hinder individual's sense of meaning, positive emotions, and relationships as well, which are all core pillars of PERMA to achieve well-being. Furthermore, all of these variables directly contribute to a teacher's ability to effectively engage their work responsibilities, evidenced by Question 16. On average, participants indicated a score of 8 out of 10 regarding their ability to handle work tasks. Such supports previous research regarding the interconnectedness of well-being and achievement, and specifically why concepts like SEL were introduced and prioritized—due to having a keen awareness that while learning and education is an intellectual sport, one's social and emotional well-being directly impacts one's ability to learn effectively and wholly engage in the educational experience. Therefore, the more intangible benefits not as easily measured, should not be overlooked when considering all that ultimately shapes and elevates teacher well-being in the workplace.

Workplace PERMA Profiler Considerations

Butler & Kern (2016) offer additional considerations when evaluating results of the PERMA Profiler. The considerations include:

1. "People love to use numbers that are continuous in nature, and include things like response biases, to define dichotomous cut off points. Numbers quickly become labels, creating a very fixed state, even as well-being is very fluid in nature.

2. It perpetuates a push toward constant improvement, which can be problematic. If a person scores in normal to high range, that's probably quite adaptive. It may actually be dysfunctional to be at the highest level. There are times when accomplishments are high, but other areas suffer, such that individuals are really not flourishing holistically. The goal is achieving and maintaining consistently healthy levels in every area.

3. It's possible for different domains to matter more to a person at different times than others. The measure can be most useful for self-insight, to get a sense of where one scores across different domains, and whether they are happy with that profile, or an area is much lower or higher than preferred.

4. Results are dependent on those that ended up in the sample, which may be biased. It's also possible the PERMA model may resonate more deeply and different with individuals of different cultures and backgrounds. There is no universal internal metric for assigning value, so such can shift based on culture and other factors.

5. Some profiles may be more or less adaptive for long term outcomes."

Conclusions

There were three primary conclusions that were made in this study which are supported by the literature review and the participants' experiences.

Figure 32

Workplace Perma Profiler Results

Conclusion One. School-based social emotional learning programs for students positively benefits teacher well-being. The workplace well-being of most teachers whose students participated in a social emotional learning program improved or remained the same. Study findings reveal the well-being of majority of study participants was above-average. These results are consistent with research suggesting school-based interventions supporting holistic student well-being may also aid in supports and improving teacher well-being in the workplace. These results are consistent with researchers affirming positive education focuses on education empowering individual skills and happiness. Furthermore, there exists both a need and an opportunity to focus on well-being specifically within an educational context, so empowering educational progress through strengthening the health, safety, and moral development of

educators at all levels is both needed and desirable (Land et al., 2001; Martens & Witt, 2004; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000).

The participants also identified instances where there well-being either improved or remained the same after their students engaged in the SEL program. Participant 4 reinforced that in sharing, "I'm not sure if it changed because I have regular self-care practices to stay balanced and better support my students and colleagues. However, social emotional supports for my students certainly helps to alleviate stress because it frees me to focus on teaching without having to manage poor behavior and attitudes that may spill over from home." Similarly, Participant 5 asserts, "I don't always notice change right away. It happens incrementally.

Generally, I'd say when students return to class after social emotional learning activities, they appear more calm and balanced—which helps the quality of instruction and positive classroom culture." This comment highlights how the observation isn't always swift and may in fact require additional research as well school-based evaluation metrics on well-being specifically.

Furthermore, it is important to consider that even in instances where a teacher's overall well- being may not have increased, value and benefit as a result of the SEL program could still be meaningful for both the learning process and future state of well-being. Such is affirmed in Participant 10 noting "I am more aware that students' may be enduring tough situations outside of school" in response to the semi-structured question regarding how their workplace well-being changed since their students engaged in the SEL program.

Figure 33

In General, to What Extent Do You Feel That What You Do at Work is Valuable and

Worthwhile?

Field	Min	Max	Mean	Standard Deviation	Variance	Responses
Click to answer statement	4	11	9		2	3	16
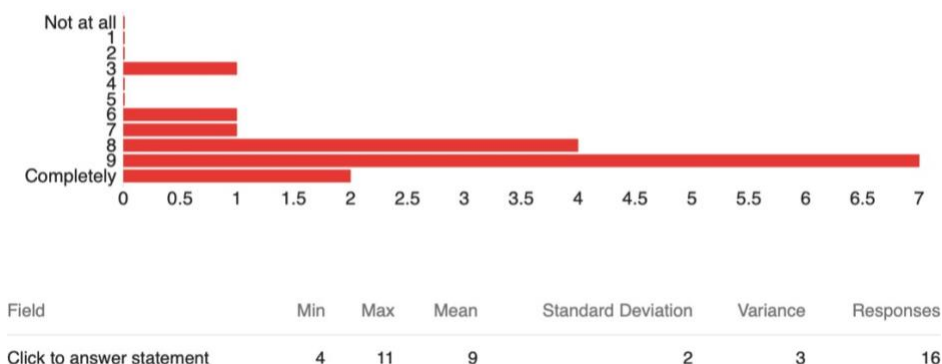
Conclusion Two. Access to social emotional learning resources and other wellness

positively benefits teachers and students**.** Some of the findings in this study were affirmed in

the literature; however, other findings were unique to this study and may help inform future

research or practices. For example, both Question 2 and Question 8 aim at measuring

accomplishment, a core pillar of well-being in the workplace. In Question 2, participants

indicated an average score of 8 out of 11, which is above-average. In the Question 8,

participants indicated an average score of 9 out of 10, which is also above-average and

contributes to a higher functioning well-being.

Figure 34

How Often Do You Feel You are Making Progress Towards Accomplishing Your Work-Related

Goals?

Field	Min	Max	Mean	Standard Deviation	Variance	Responses
Click to answer statement	1	11	8	2	5	16
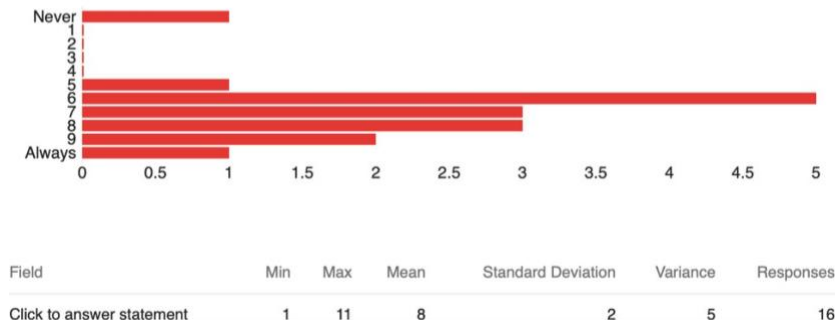
Figure 35

How Often Do You Achieve the Important Work Goals You Have Set for Yourself?

Q8 - How often do you achieve the important work goals you have set for yourself?

Field	Min	Max	Mean	Standard Deviation	Variance	Responses
Click to answer statement	7	10	9	1	1	16

Existing research supports the relationship between wellness and social and emotional learning (SEL; Cohen, 2006; Elias, 2003; Payton et al., 2000). Teachers with greater emotional exhaustion may lack necessary resources needed to provide high-quality instruction, deliver curriculum and critical learning contents to students (Chang, 2009; Klusmann et al., 2008), and should be given greater consideration as a key educational outcome among students. Study

findings revealed educational leaders should lean more toward examining and building social emotional learning and wellness intervention models that help to alleviate teacher burnout. Per Oliveira et al. (2021), a plethora of literature support burnout is heightened as teachers experience exceptionally high social and emotional demands like classroom management, key decision making, and workload-specific time management and exceptionally low social and emotional resources and supports similar to the SEW-NOLA program and others addressing the lack of institutional support and lack of time to connect and collaborate with other teachers to build a healthy more holistic workspace (McCarthy et al., 2016; Roeser et al., 2013). Study results also show one of the greatest benefits SEL interventions have for teachers include the development of an increased sense of confidence in their ability to cope with the demands of the job.

Conclusion Three. A healthy workplace culture and individual self-care practice positively support teacher well-being. Eva and Thayer (2017) suggest looking beyond academics and focusing on the emotional life of the classroom to address emotional wellness to reinvigorate teachers and students. Furthermore, they assert that utilizing less traditional models that may include core teachings and components of positive psychology and PERMA, as well as pro-social behaviors fostering resilience and growth may help to build greater social-emotional skills and competencies that will support academic improvement and well-being. Participant 4 wrote "I have regular self-care practices to stay balanced and better support my students and colleagues." Such suggests a healthy workplace culture that values self-care supports overall teacher well-being. Another example of such is in Question 6 exploring the extent participants could receive help and support from co-workers when needed. The mean score was 8 out of 11, which was an above-average response supporting healthy relationships and cultivating collaboration among

colleagues in supporting each other holistically. Existing research supports how high stress

correlates with lower job satisfaction (Jalongo & Heider, 2006; Markow et al., 2013; Kidger et

al., 2016). Therefore, such is consistent in affirming teachers need professional development and

school supported programs directly addressing their psychological well-being and development

of effective daily coping strategies to combat common stressors within the profession.

Furthermore, such development programs and interventions should also provide tools to build or

sustain individual self-care practices to support teacher wellbeing in the workplace.

Figure 36

To What Extent Do You Receive Help and Support from Coworkers When You Need it?

Field	Min	Max	Mean	Standard Deviation	Variance	Responses
Click to answer statement	1	11	8	2	6	16

Recommendations

This study was designed to examine the workplace well-being of elementary school

teachers whose students whose students are engaged in an SEL intervention using the Positive

Emotion, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, and Accomplishment (PERMA) model as a

framework. The following recommendations based on study findings will support the continued

impact of SEL programs to improve overall well-being and flourishing of teachers:

Recommendation One

Invest in school-based social-emotional learning programs that support the workplace well-being of teachers.

Future research and practice should lean more toward examining and building social-emotional learning and wellness intervention models that help to alleviate teacher burnout. Per Oliveira et al. (2021), a plethora of literature support burnout is heightened as teachers experience exceptionally high social and emotional demands like classroom management, key decision making, and workload-specific time management and exceptionally low social and emotional resources and supports similar to the SEW-NOLA program and others addressing the lack of institutional support and lack of time to connect and collaborate with other teachers to build a healthy more holistic workspace (McCarthy et al., 2016; Roeser et al., 2013).

Recommendation Two

Expand student and teacher resources and support. Provide ongoing resources and invest in programs, trainings and other interventions that support social-emotional learning of students and the overall wellness of students and staff.

Future research could benefit from expanding student and teacher resources and support. Over 500,000 teachers leave the profession each year, which costs the country over $2 billion and cost students even more (Haynes et al., 2014; Trinidad, 2021). Teacher stress, burnout and frequent transitions, regardless of reason, impacts students. The lack of consistency, and heightened burnout in teachers due to expectations and a workload that frankly doesn't align with the actual demands and current needs of students cannot afford to go unaddressed (Helou et al., 2016; Richards, 2012). Zinsser et al. (2016) unveils many school lack adequate resources and supports to develop the social and emotional learning skills of students and not only do

students suffer but teachers as well. Moreover, the study highlighted how increasing SEL resources and supports for students also supported greater job satisfaction for teachers. Teaching and learning aside, teachers are tasked with navigating challenging working conditions, workplace relationships, managing student behaviors, as well as their physical and mental health. Programs like SEW-NOLA and others whose mission aims to strengthen student social and emotional competencies are worth consideration and investing. The mental health and well-being of teachers impacts their ability to support the SEL of students (Friedman-Krauss et al., 2014; Barry et al., 2017; Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). Therefore, educational leaders are presented with an opportunity to align priorities, professional development resources, and budgets strategically and proactively to holistically support teachers in holistically supporting students.

Recommendation Three

Prioritize cultivating and maintaining a healthy and positive workplace culture, and consistent self-care.

Per Eva and Thayer (2017), shifting our focus as educational leaders beyond academics alone, and focusing on the emotional life of the classroom to address and cultivate emotional wellness helps to reinvigorate teachers and students. This also contributes to a healthy workplace climate. The study highlighted how the individual self-care practices of teachers had the power to positively shift and transform the classroom climate to support student learning. Furthermore, it highlights how the mindfulness of teachers hold a transferable presence, keen sense of awareness and attention to their classroom and students to cultivate opportunities for greater engagement. Multiple study participants highlighted the importance of a healthy workplace culture and individual culture of self-care as central factors to their well-being. Accomplishment is what human beings free of coercion do for its own sake (Seligman, 2011), and when placed in

a learning environment that prioritizes building and sustaining a healthy and positive workplace culture, that also encourages self-care—teachers have demonstrated well-being isn't merely able to be accomplished, flourishing is possible (Diener et al., 2010; Seligman, 2011; Webster, 2014).

Recommendations for Further Research

There were three recommendations for further research identified in this study.

Expand research exploring the connection between student well-being, teacher well-being, programs and practices supporting such, and the impact. While an abundance of research examining programs and practices that positively benefit student well-being and teacher well-being exists, research is lacking examining the interconnectedness of these variables. Study findings revealed that there is indeed a connection between student well-being, programs and school-based cultural practices that support such, and the overall well-being of teachers.

Therefore, there is an opportunity to dive deeper into holistic well-being, as measured through PERMA or similar instruments, and explore both direct and indirect benefits of implementing social emotional learning programs into school offers and integrating such into the school curriculum and overall school culture.

Conduct a comparative analysis of both student and teacher well-being utilizing PERMA before and after participation in a social emotional learning program. Due to both time constraints and obtaining the necessary permissions needed to conduct a more in-depth study, the relationship between more variables and factors over longer periods of time was not explored. Future research could benefit from a study presenting a comparative analysis of student and teacher well-being, before and after participation in a social emotional learning program. It could also be beneficial to conduct interviews or engage in other research methods to gather even more qualitative data to explore any changes or impact revealed by the study.

Study the impact of Covid-19, a global pandemic, and an abrupt widespread shift to remote learning models on the well-being of teachers and students. Though this research started prior to global pandemics, school closures, a national shift to remote learning, and an unavoidable discussion on education, equity, and effective strategies to practice self-care and support mental health, it is impossible to ignore the massive opportunity a pandemic such as this provides for research on public education in this country. Specifically, research examining the impact and learnings from Covid-19, a global pandemic, and the widespread shift to remote learning on the well-being of students and staff.

Figure 37

At Work, How Often Do You Feel Anxious?

Field	Min	Max	Mean	Standard Deviation	Variance	Responses
Click to answer statement	3	11	7	3	7	16
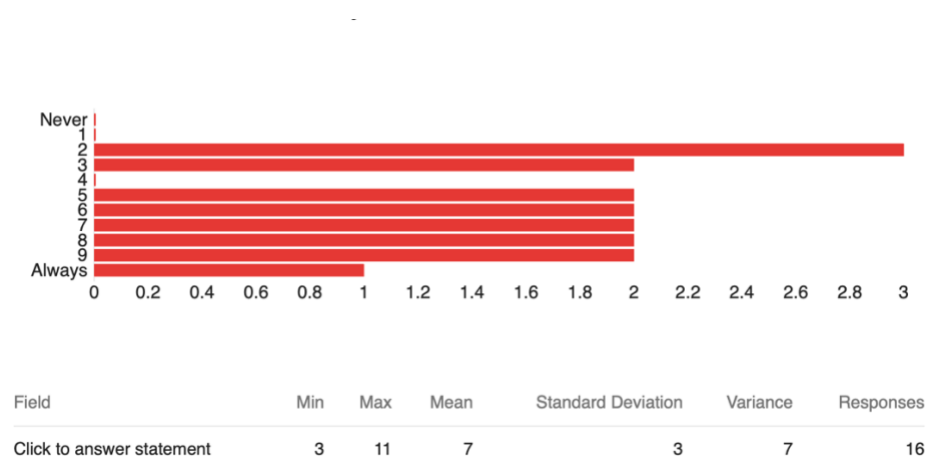
One particularly interesting finding in the study was Question 7, regarding how often individuals feel anxious at work. 9 of 16 participants indicated regularly or always feeling anxious at work. There is no additional data regarding any pre-existing health conditions with anxiety or other challenges, nor is there data regarding the impact of external factors such as the COVID-19 pandemic and how such prompted several major changes in the flow, delivery and execution of education and teaching for participants the past two years. Nonetheless, enough

participants indicated feeling anxious at work to warrant additional research, as well as increased resources to relieve stress and anxiety of teachers innovatively and effectively in the workplace to attain greater well-being for all involved.

Final Thoughts

After taking an in-depth look into study findings, engaging in deeper discussion regarding how these findings relate to the literature review, unpacking implications, conclusions, and reviewing recommendations for future practice and research, it is worthwhile to return to the beginning. Chapter 1 opens with Zins & Elias (2006), introducing SEL in the nineties when schools traditionally only emphasized academics and neglected the emotional and social learning requirements of pupils. We have seen a shift in SEL the past decade, with many schools within the United States centering school-based guidance services on social and emotional learning practices. My suggestion to return to the beginning wasn't merely a request to return to the beginning of this dissertation study, but the beginning of social emotional learning altogether.

SEL is defined as "the process by which students gain awareness, arrangement skills, social relationships and emotions hence becoming better at managing their lives successfully" (Kabasakal & Totan, 2013). While Zins and Elias (2006), assert that SEL is "the process by which students gain awareness of their emotions and manage them, start taking other individuals into account, make better decisions, display moral and responsible behavior, develop positive relationships, and avoid negative behavior." Both definitions and descriptions of social emotional learning and its core factors include positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning, accomplishment, negative emotion—all pillars of PERMA and necessary to flourish and have optimal well-being, within and beyond the workplace. Therefore, when one connects the root of social emotional learning and the root of PERMA, it becomes evident that majority of

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the core elements and variables necessary to achieve social emotional learning directly benefits and supports PERMA and well-being. Conclusively, social emotional learning programs and integrating such into the schoolwide culture and curriculum can not only positively benefit student wellness, but also teacher wellness and the overall school culture.

The participants in this study shared a glimpse into what they believed helped and hindered their overall well-being in the workplace. Overwhelmingly, there was mention of continued and additional resources for both students and staff directly building capacity of social, emotional, mental health and holistic wellness of all—since our individual behaviors and experiences can become interconnected when co-existing in the same space over extended period of time. Participant 14 expressed that "I grow as my students grow. A less chaotic classroom helps me to reach benchmarks and achieve goals quicker. This also helps with work-life balance." While it cannot be said for certain that the SEL program for students is the driving factor of most study participants' overall well-being categorized as healthy and high functioning, the inverse is also true. As referenced by this participant who indicating their students' involvement in the SEL program as a benefit to their overall work-life balance, the potential impact of such programs to be even greater than a study like this is able to quantify is also possibility.

It is impossible to overlook that this research was conducted during a global pandemic, that presented many unexpected challenges—wellness related and otherwise—to students and staff in schools throughout the country. First, some students and teachers may have experienced abnormal amounts of stress and burnout during this period of deep uncertainty and abrupt changes to the flow of academic instruction and everyday life. On the contrary, because this was a global pandemic, a global and national discussion regarding many topics including mental

health, self-care and wellness were highlighted and prioritized for some individuals and institutions in ways greater than they have been prioritized historically. Therefore, many factors we have and haven't thought to consider, can impact the study. What's less unambiguous is that the wellness of students, teachers and other school leaders have the power to impact the larger school community positively or negatively ranging from effective instruction to healthy school culture.

Over five-hundred thousand teachers move or leave the profession every year, which costs the United Stated over $2 billion (Haynes et al., 2014; Trinidad, 2021). Such contributes to elevated stress in students due to frequent transitions and failed consistency, as well as increased burnout in teachers due to unrealistic heavy workloads, substandard pay, lack of resources, accountability pressures, hostile environments, and other factors inherent in the work of teaching (Helou et al., 2016; Richards, 2012). According to Trinidad (2021), when the pandemic began in 2020, teacher stress and burnout was intensified by the external Covid-19 crisis. Furthermore, teachers were increasingly exhausted and understandably experiencing even greater demands and even higher levels of stress during the early part of the pandemic (Sokal et al., 2020). The increased stress of the pandemic, uncertainty and confusion birthing from rapid and ongoing school closures and reopening, as well as the abrupt transition to remote learning without adequate resources or updated technology and training posed even greater threats to teacher burnout, stress, and diminished well-being (Kim & Asbury, 2020). Not to mention the fact that all of this is underscored by great political and racial tensions likely permeating the learning experiencing as well (Galea & Abdalla, 2020). Covid was a time of great transition, but it was and can still be a time of great opportunity—to examine schools, systems, learning models, curriculum, resources, and supportive services that benefit holistic learning and wellness in

schools. In order to seize this opportunity and learn from these valuable experiences, we must not merely see the findings and information gathered from the study but heed them as well. This is done by continuing to interrogate these questions and derive solutions to ensure elementary school students have access to the one thing nearly every public school in this country purports to provide—a safe learning environment. A learning environment absent of true well-being for students, and in turn teachers and other school staff, is unsafe and threatens a student's ability to learn and thrive in society. Minimally, additional research diving even deeper into the concepts presented in this study, as well as new yet interconnected variables is necessary. However, true transformation could and potentially will continue to occur the more we dive deeper into all hindering educational progress, invest the proper time, energy, and resources to implementing and perfecting the various models and recommendations put forth in such studies to help cultivate a learning environment that benefit students and educators between and beyond school bells ringing.

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Participant Survey Instrument

The Workplace PERMA Profiler <u>Measure Overview</u>

In his 2011 book *Flourish*, Dr. Martin Seligman, Distinguished Professor of Psychology at the University of Pennsylvania and founder of the field of positive psychology, defined 5 pillars of wellbeing, PERMA (positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning, accomplishment). We originally developed the PERMA-Profiler to measure these five pillars, along with negative emotion and health. This version was later created, which adjusts the questions to the workplace context.

P and N = Positive and Negative emotions

Emotions are an important part of our well-being. Emotions can range from very negative to very positive, and range from high arousal (e.g., excitement, explosive) to low arousal (e.g., calm, relaxed, sad). For **Positive emotion**, the PERMA-Profiler measures general tendencies toward feeling contentment and joy. For **Negative emotion**, the Profiler measures tendencies toward feeling, sad, anxious, and angry.

E = Engagement

Engagement refers to being absorbed, interested, and involved in one's work, and is a key measure for workplaces today. Very high levels of engagement are known as a state called "flow", in which you are so completely absorbed in an activity that you lose all sense of time.

R = Relationships

Relationships refer to feeling connected, supported, and valued by others in the organization. Having positive relationships with others is an important part of life feeling good and going well. Other people matter!

M = Meaning

Meaning refers to having a sense of purpose in one's work. Meaning provides a sense that your work matters.

A = Accomplishment

Accomplishment can be objective, marked by honors and awards received, but feelings of mastery and achievement is also important. The Profiler measures subjective feelings of accomplishment and staying on top of daily responsibilities. It involves working toward and reaching goals and feeling able to complete tasks and daily responsibilities.

H = Health

Although not part of the PERMA model itself, physical health and vitality is another important part of well- being. The Profiler measures a subjective sense of health – feeling good and healthy each day.

Use of the Measure
Two versions of the measure are provided below: the first is for presenting the items one screen at a time, or as a full measure as part of a paper questionnaire; the second groups questions together with the same response scales, to reduce the number of pages needed. The questions should be presented in the order noted. The health and negative emotion questions act as filler questions and provide more information; for briefness, the 16 PERMA questions (3 per PERMA domain plus a single overall question) could be used, but we recommend using the full measure.

Question Administration
The questions should be presented either with radial buttons or on a slider scale, with only the end points labeled. Note that this is an 11-point scale, ranging from 0 to 10.

	Not at all 0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Completely 10
In general, to what extent do you feel contented?	◉	◉	◉	◉	◉	◉	◉	◉	◉	◉	◉

Scoring:
Scores are calculated as the average of the items comprising each factor:

Positive Emotion: Engagement: Relationships: Meaning Accomplishment Overall Well- being Negative Emotion: Health = Loneliness

Sample Scoring Presentation
Positive Emotion: P = mean(P1,P2,P3) Engagement: E = mean(E1,E2,E3)
Relationships: R = mean(R1,R2,R3)
Meaning: M = mean(M1,M2,M3) Accomplishment: A = mean(A1,A2,A3)
Overall Well-being: PERMA= mean(P1,P2,P3,E1,E2,E3, R1,R2,R3, M1,M2,M3,A1,A2,A3,happy)
Negative emotion: N = mean(N1,N2,N3) Health: H = mean(h1,h2,h3)
Loneliness: Lon (single item)

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Version 1: presented as a single question per page

#	Question	Response Anchors	Label
1	To what extent is your work purposeful and meaningful?	0 = notatall, 10 = completely	**M1**
2	How often do you feel you are making progress towards accomplishing your work-related goals?	0 = never, 10 = always	**A1**
3	At work, how often do you become absorbed in what you are doing?	0 = never, 10 = always	**E1**
4	In general, how would you say your health is?	0 = terrible, 10 = excellent	**H1**
5	At work, how often do you feel joyful?	0 = never, 10 = always	**P1**
6	To what extent do you receive help and support from coworkers when you need it?	0 = notatall, 10 = completely	**R1**
7	At work, how often do you feel anxious	0 = never, 10 = always	**N1**
8	How often do you achieve the important work goals you have set for yourself?	0 = never, 10 = always	**A2**
9	In general, to what extent do you feel that what you do at work is valuable and worthwhile?	0 = notatall, 10 = completely	**M2**
10	At work, how often do you feel positive?	0 = never, 10 = always	**P2**
11	To what extent do you feel excited and interested in your work?	0 = notatall, 10 = completely	**E2**
12	How lonely do you feel at work?	0 = notatall, 10 = completely	**Lon**
13	How satisfied are you with your current physical health?	0 = notatall, 10 = completely	**H2**
14	At work, how often do you feel angry?	0 = never, 10 = always	**N2**
15	To what extent do you feel appreciated by your coworkers?	0 = notatall, 10 = completely	**R2**
16	How often are you able to handle your work-related responsibilities??	0 = never, 10 = always	**A3**
17	To what extent do you generally feel that you have a sense of direction in your work?	0 = notatall, 10 = completely	**M3**
18	Compared to others of your same age and sex, how is your health?	0 = terrible, 10 = excellent	**H3**
19	How satisfied are you with your professional relationships?	0 = notatall, 10 = completely	**R3**
20	At work, how often do you feel sad?	0 = never, 10 = always	**N3**
21	At work, how often do you lose track of time while doing something you enjoy?	0 = never, 10 = always	**E3**
22	At work, to what extent do you feel contented?	0 = notatall, 10 = completely	**P3**
23	Taking all things together, how happy would you say you are with your work?	0 = notatall, 10 = completely	**hap**

Participant Questionnaire

Qualitative interview questions for teachers included:

1. How do you think your workplace well-being has changed, if at all, since working with the students in the social-emotional learning program?

2. What else do you feel could be done at school to improve your workplace well-being?

APPENDIX C

SEW-NOLA Overview and Evaluation

Year 1 Overview

In its first year, SEW-NOLA implemented social and emotional learning and small group therapeutic interventions in two schools, Crocker College Prep and Sylvanie Williams College Prep. The SEW-NOLA intervention consists of weekly classroom-based sessions to improve academic and behavioral outcomes as well as social emotional outcomes like focus, empathy, attention, and self-regulation. SEW-NOLA participants rotate among three stations (yoga/meditation, technology, and skills) to ensure engagement across learning styles and attention spans; all sessions are led by a masters-level social worker and a trained yoga teacher. The intervention also includes periodic art, nutrition, and physical education sessions provided by skilled facilitators. Small group therapeutic interventions are also offered as an additional service to partner schools to provide targeted therapeutic groups for students identified by the school social worker. Groups are facilitated by masters-level social workers and are organized around topics like aggression, grief, coping skills, and impulse control. These groups are designed and offered not only increase the emotional well-being of student participants, but also to lighten the case load of school mental health staff. Though the SEW- NOLA project is designed to run from October to May, the pilot year was slightly truncated, and interventions were implemented from January to May 2017.

Demographics of Participants – Total Sample
- 178 students were served, including:
  - 110 students who received the SEW-NOLA intervention
  - 67 students from 1st to 8th grade who participated in small group therapeutic interventions
  - 1 student who received individual therapeutic attention

Figure C1
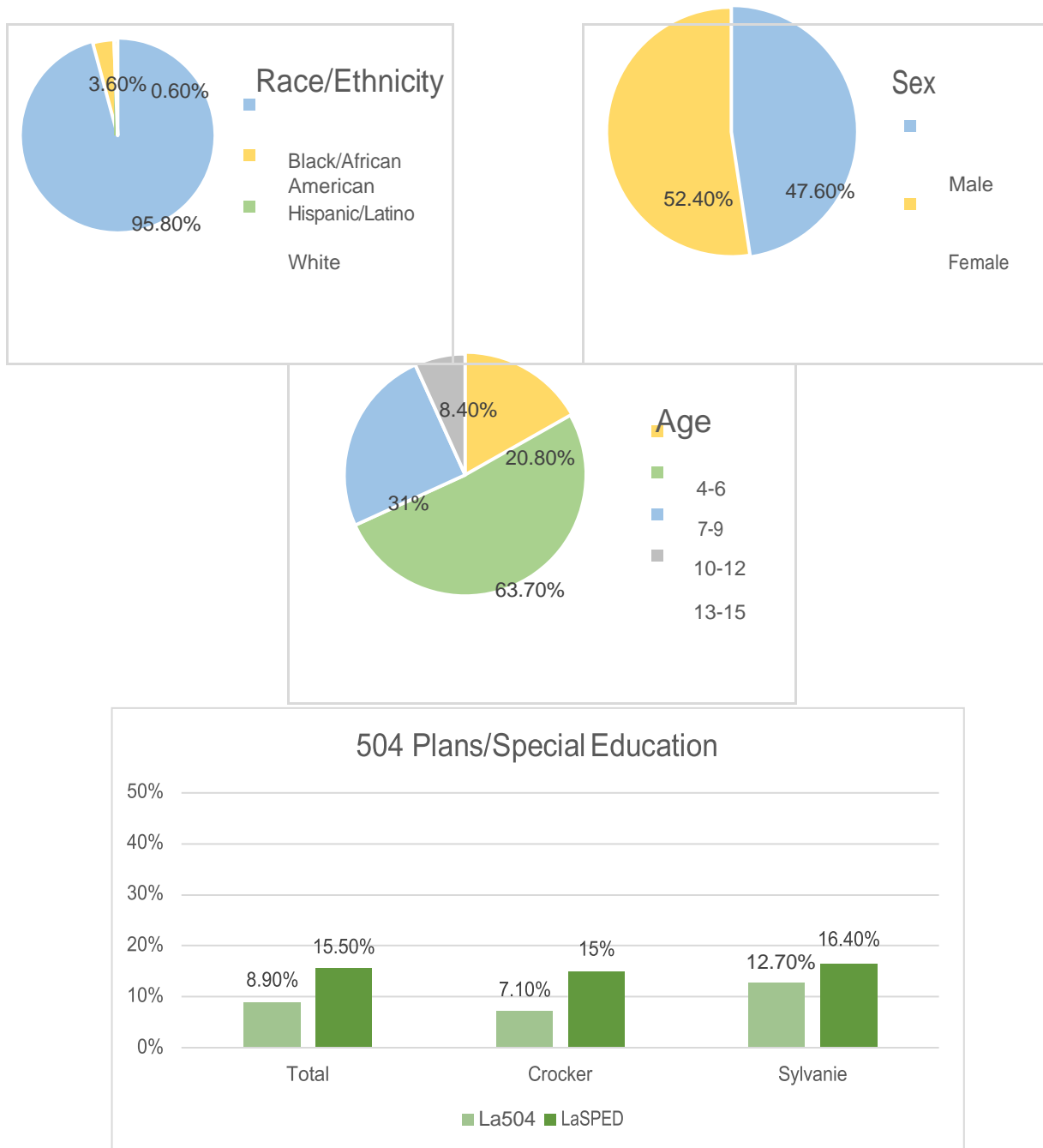
Academic, Behavioral, and Social Emotional Growth Indicators

SEW-NOLA participant data was sourced via a data sharing agreement with New

Orleans College Prep, the charter management organization that administers Crocker

and Sylvanie Williams. New Orleans College Prep shared demographic, academic, and behavioral data that they collect from their students for SEW-NOLA to explore any associations between program participation and changes in academic and behavioral performance. Additionally, teachers whose classrooms participated in the SEW-NOLA intervention were asked to rate their students on several social emotional growth indicators at the outset and the end of the program. Due to the lack of an appropriate control group, which SEW-NOLA is exploring for future implementation years, it is not possible to conclusively associate the changes in student indicators with participation in the program. However, the growth evidenced in the student data coupled with qualitative data gathered from teachers and school leaders provides a picture of participants who experienced positive change, growth, and learning over the course of time in which the program was implemented. [1]

II.   Academic Indicators

Figure 1A represents the percentages of students who experienced academic growth in the second semester (during program implementation), and Figure 1B shows changes in proficiency in each subject from the first to second semester. For the purposes of this report, proficiency refers to students achieving a "basic", "advanced", or "mastery" designation.

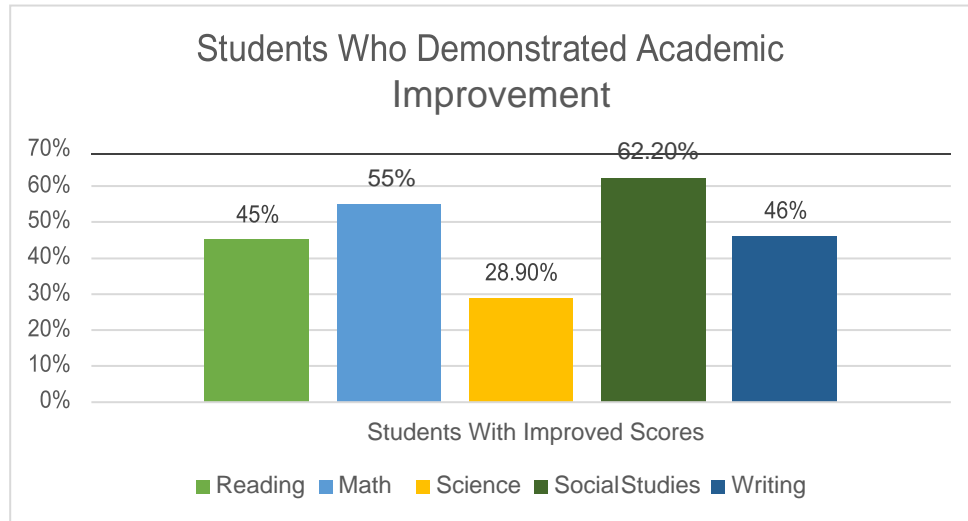[1] For all data presented in this section, n=168

Figure C2

Students Who Demonstrated Academic Improvement

Students With Improved Scores

Reading 45% · Math 55% · Science 28.90% · SocialStudies 62.20% · Writing 46%

Figure C3

Changes in Proficiency

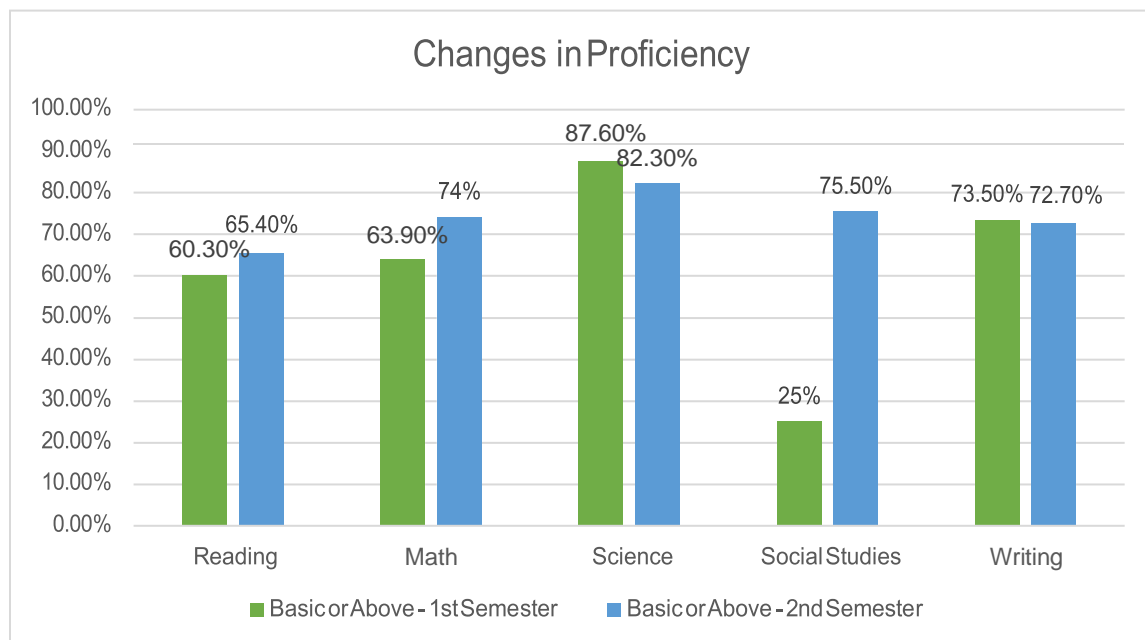|	Reading	Math	Science	Social Studies	Writing
Basic or Above - 1st Semester	60.30%	63.90%	87.60%	25%	73.50%
Basic or Above - 2nd Semester	65.40%	74%	82.30%	75.50%	72.70%

III.   Behavioral Indicators

Figure 2A depicts first and second semester averages of detentions, demerits, and unexcused absences. Additionally:

- ☐ 51.3% of students had fewer detentions in the second semester than the first semester
- ☐ 67.3% of students had fewer demerits in the second semester than the first

semester
- 36.3% of students had fewer unexcused absences in the second semester than the first semester

Figure C4

Relative Averages of Detentions, Demerits, and Absences
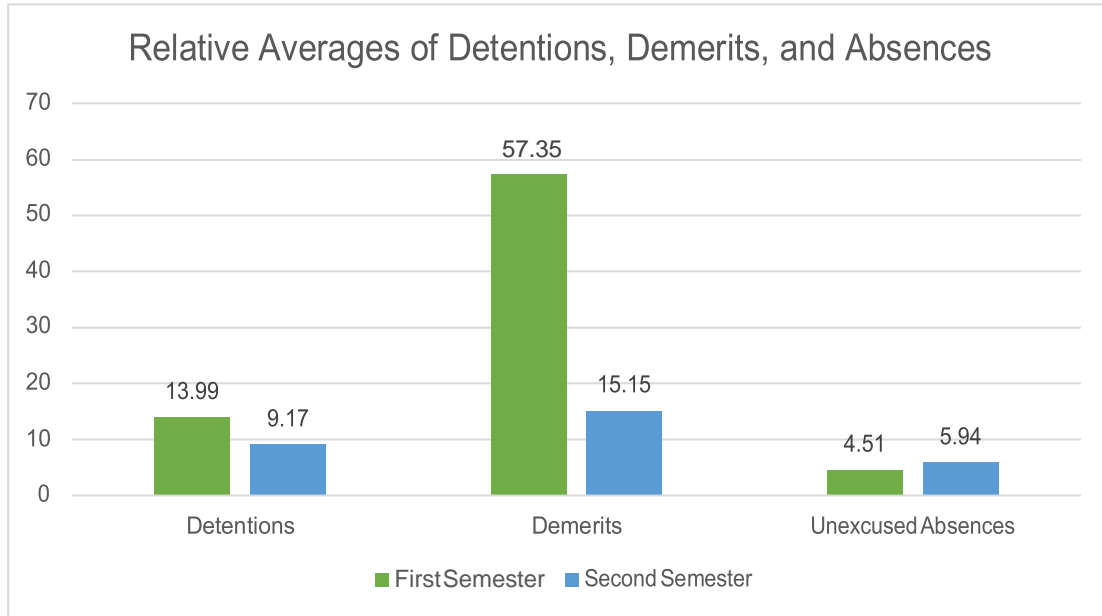
lV.   Social Emotional Indicators

Social and emotional learning programs seek to improve focus, attention, emotional regulation, and empathy. More nuanced feedback from teachers can be found in the section on qualitative data, but teacher ratings on these indicators from Crocker show perceived improvements in social emotional indicators for their students.[2]

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[i] Figure 2A Additional Data:
- Detentions Semester 1 (0-185), average 13.99, std. dev 26.85; Detentions Semester 2 (0-176), average 9.17, std. dev 21.526
- Demerits Semester 1 (0-440), average 57.35, std. dev 76.07; Demerits Semester 2 (0-165), average 15.15, std. dev 25.985 Unexcused Absences Semester 1 (0-22), 4.51 mean, std. dev 4.03; Unexcused Absences Semester 2 (0-31), 5.94 mean, std. dev 5.02 [2] For all data presented in this section, n=50. Only teachers who led classrooms in which the SEW-NOLA intervention was implemented were asked to complete this assessment, and teachers from Sylvanie Williams did not complete the assessment because they no longer worked at the school when the data was requested.

Figure C5

Average Scores - Social Emotional Indicators
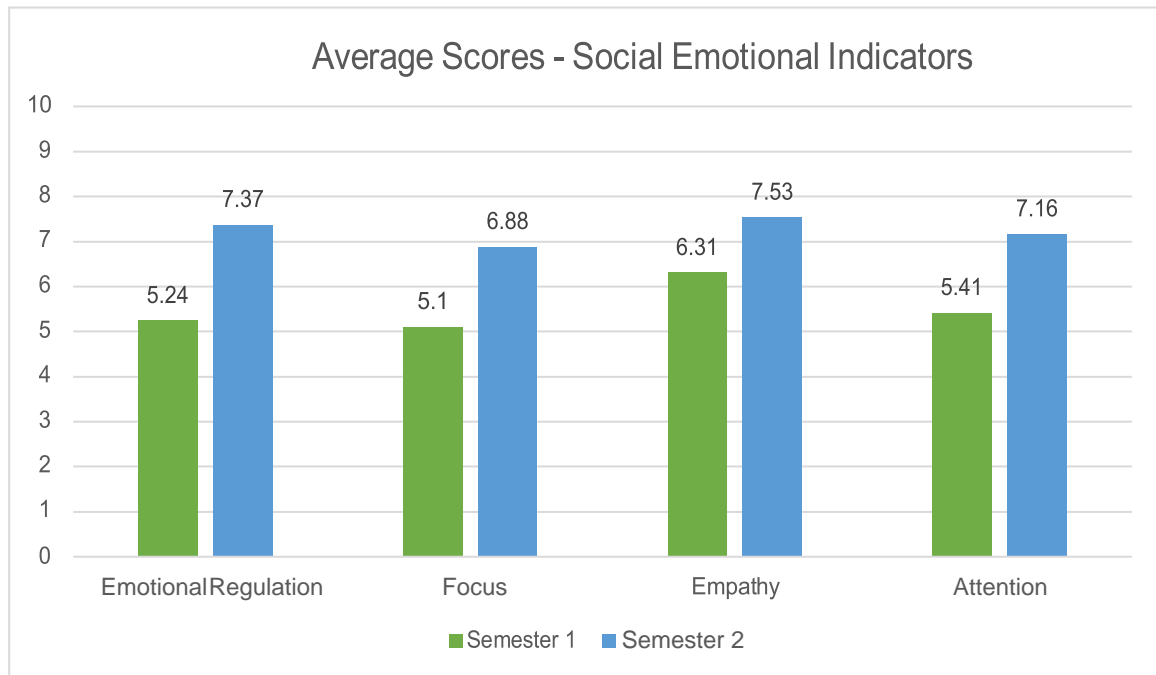
- 66% of students improved in emotional regulation
    - Average growth was 86%
- 70% of students improved in focus
    - Average growth was 85%
- 54% of students improved in empathy
    - Average growth was 41%
- 64% of students improved in attention
    - Average growth was 75%

Qualitative Data

Interviews were conducted with four teachers whose classrooms participated in the

SEW-NOLA intervention at the close of implementation. In future implementation cycles,

interviews are conducted at the midpoint as well as the endpoint to allow for course

correction mid-year. Interviews were recorded, transcribed verbatim, and analyzed using

QDA Miner Lite. Transcripts were analyzed first using open coding, and two charts are

included below that show the distribution and frequency of open codes.

Figure C6

Figure C7
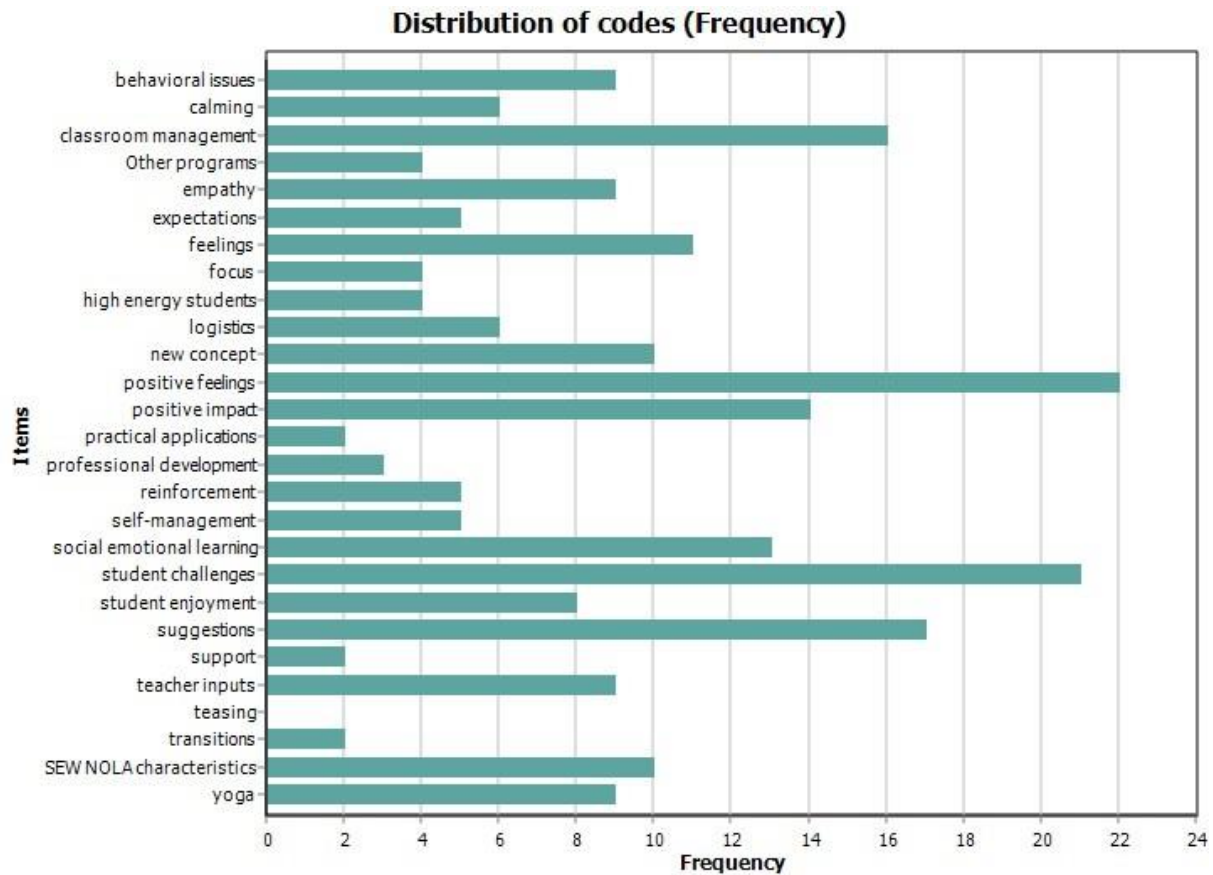
Core themes were developed through axial coding or relating the categories and concepts that emerged through open coding to one another to find commonalities and organize the qualitative data. The core themes that emerged were:

- Components of SEW-NOLA were helpful and produced positive impacts on social and emotional learning goals
  - "There was definitely, in empathy, changes in…them"
  - "They definitely all did leave with how to name feelings…and read other people's body language"
  - "I have seen a lot of changes in my students with how they react to things"
  - "It turned some students' behavior around"
- Students enjoyed SEW-NOLA and teachers thought it was useful
  - "Students were definitely excited for Tuesdays; engagement was high"
  - "I thought the stations were really cool and effective"
  - "I liked that the different components activated all the senses"
- Students need social emotional programming, teachers support it, and they feel that SEW-NOLA is complementary to their work
  - "Self-regulation is something that I work with them on all year"
  - "I think it's really important for the students I serve to have social emotional learning"
  - "You covered a lot of topics we don't have time to go into"
- Teachers thought that the program was smooth logistically, but recommended that SEW-NOLA staff access capacity-building around classroom management and communicate directly with teachers rather than school leaders
  - "One thing that might need a little tweaking is the behavior management…I think if you started in September it would be better"
  - "It would be cool if you guys would come in for our summer [professional development]…so those little tips you'll pick up like behavior management"
  - "I think the program ran smoothly"
  - "We were just really happy to have [the program] here"

These findings are consistent with staff experiences of implementation but provide concrete guidance on future implementation. For example, staff social workers have expressed a desire to participate in classroom management trainings to build their capacity to manage a class of over 25 students, and teachers echoed that as an area for growth. Additionally, all teachers who participated in interviews expressed an interest in more information and communication on the program so they could reinforce the work of SEW-NOLA staff throughout the week in their class. To that end, SEW-NOLA has changed the dissemination plan from the initial structure in which weekly reports on implementation and student/group progress were sent to school leaders, to include teachers directly on those reports as well as to share the lesson plans and learning objectives with teachers each week in advance of implementation.
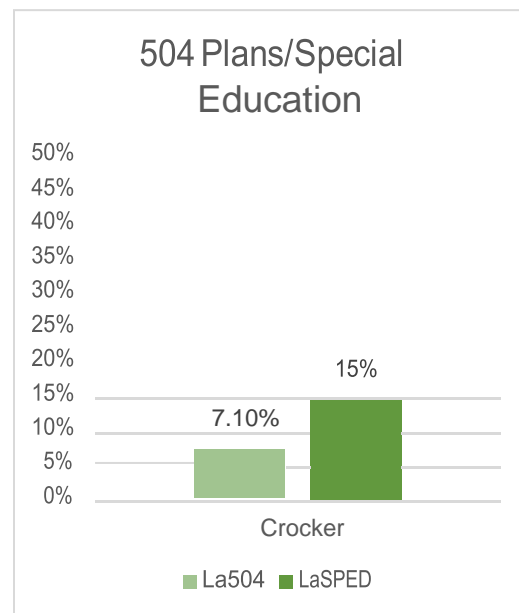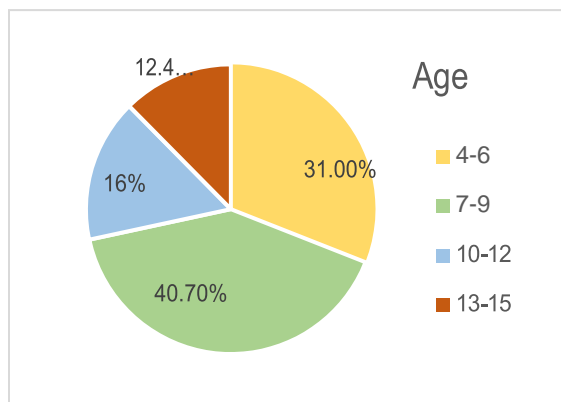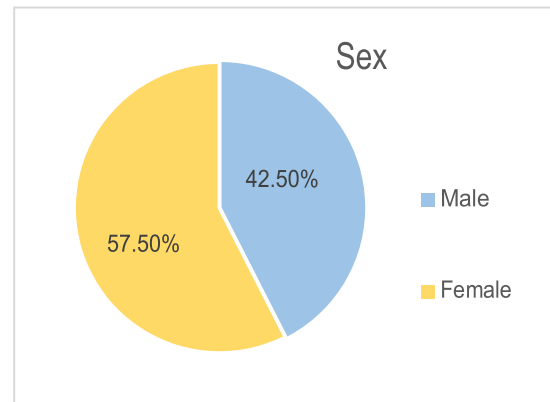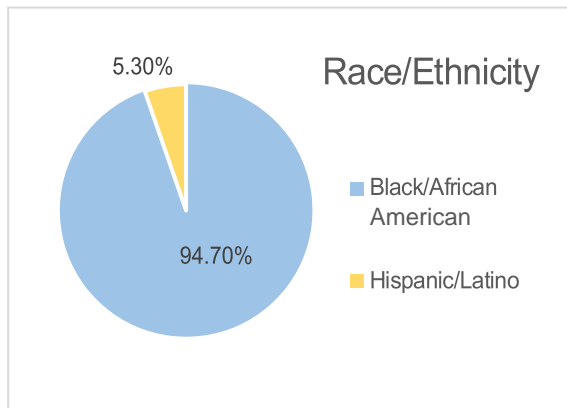
Additionally, SEW-NOLA staff will meet monthly with teachers to share progress and discuss strategies that should be tailored to each individual class.

Teacher feedback was overwhelmingly positive as to the content and structure of the curriculum and its effect on students. They shared the challenges their students face, emphasizing difficulties with bullying and teasing, inability to empathize or identify their own emotions or the emotions of others, and physical aggression. Interviewees felt that SEW-NOLA fit their students' needs and effectively addressed them over the course of implementation. In addition, teachers shared that the interactive structure of the program increased engagement and addressed different student learning styles. Several teachers shared stories of individual student progress in emotional vocabulary, self-management, and other areas of growth that they observed and attribute to social emotional learning (both SEW-NOLA and lessons implemented by teachers). They also felt that SEW-NOLA content reinforced lessons they work on all year, as they work to emphasize the same skills that SEW-NOLA is focused on building. This information supports the structure and content of the program and helps to guide the development of future content.

Demographics of Participants – Crocker
- 123 students were served, including:
    - 55 1st grade students who received the SEW-NOLA intervention
    - 67 students from 1st to 8th grade who participated in small group therapeutic interventions
    - 1 student who received individual therapeutic attention

Figure C8

Race/Ethnicity
- 5.30% Hispanic/Latino
- 94.70% Black/African American

Sex
- 42.50% Male
- 57.50% Female

Age
- 31.00% (4-6)
- 40.70% (7-9)
- 16% (10-12)
- 12.4% (13-15)

504 Plans/Special Education
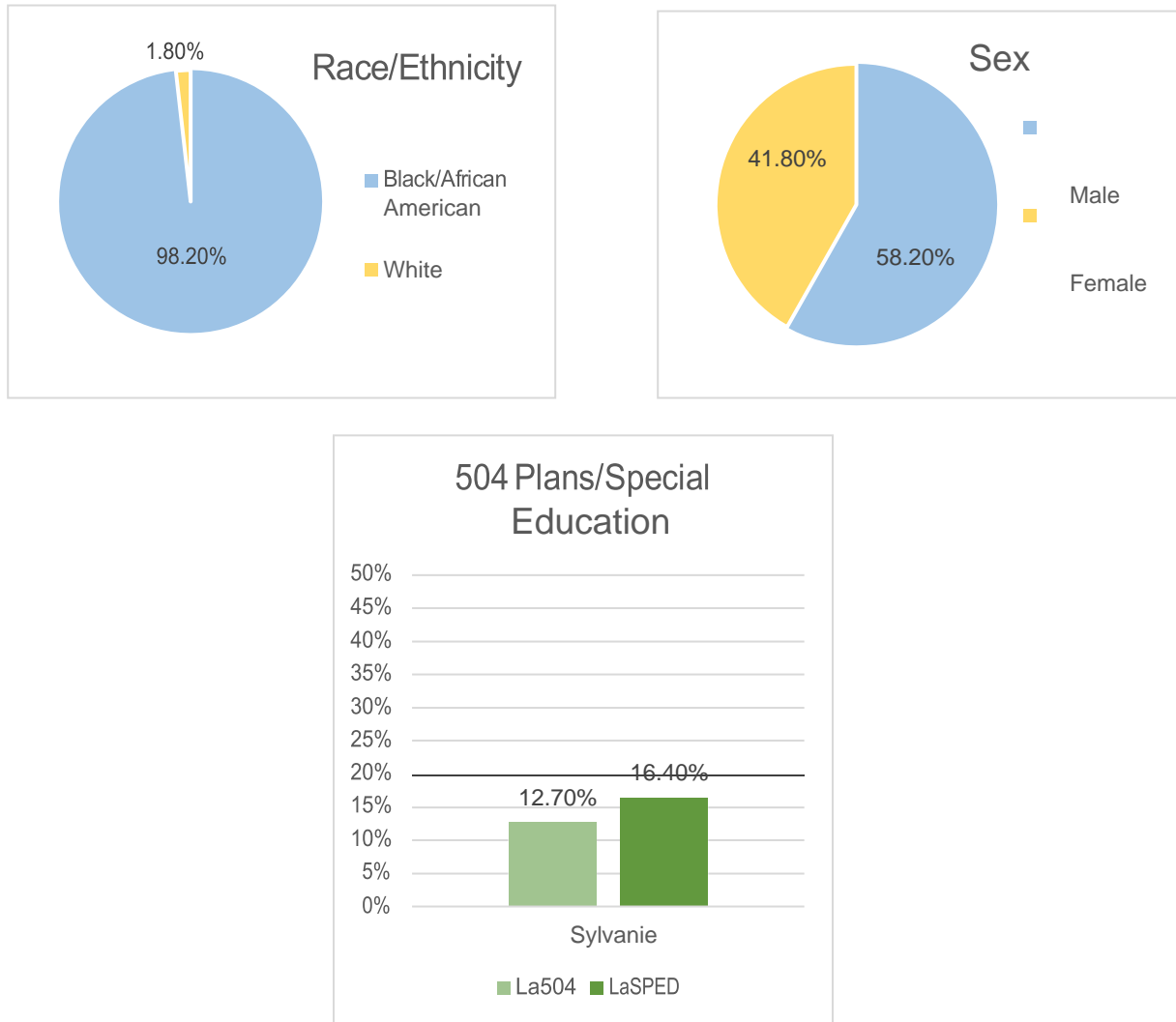- La504: 7.10%
- LaSPED: 15%
- Crocker

Demographics of Participants – Sylvanie Williams

☐ 55 4th graders between the ages of 9 and 11 received the SEW-NOLA intervention

Figure C9

Race/Ethnicity

1.80%

98.20%

- Black/African American
- White

Sex

41.80%

58.20%

- Male
- Female

504 Plans/Special Education

50%
45%
40%
35%
30%
25%
20%
15%
10%
5%
0%

12.70%

16.40%

Sylvanie

- La504
- LaSPED

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Informed Consent

PEPPERDINE
— UNIVERSITY —

WEB/EMAIL INFORMED CONSENT

IRB Number # 20-08-1429

Study Title:

Examining the workplace well-being of elementary school teachers whose students

participated in a social and emotional learning program.

Dear Participant,

My name is Yorri Berry, and I am a doctoral student in the School of Education and Psychology at Pepperdine University. I am conducting a study to examine the self-assessed well-being of teachers who work with elementary school students participating in a social and emotional learning (SEL) program, and to explore teacher perspectives regarding (a) how, if at all, teacher well-being has changed over one academic semester since the implementation of the SEL program for students, and (b) what else do teachers believe could be done to improve their well-being? If you are 19 years of age or older and a teacher whose students participated in a social and emotional learning program, you may participate in this research.

What is the reason for doing this research study?

This is a research project that focuses on the workplace well-being of elementary school teachers whose students participated in a social and emotional learning program. In order to participate you must be 19 years of age or older and be a teacher working in one of the New Orleans elementary schools whose students have participated in the social and emotional learning program for a minimum of one academic semester.

What will be done during this research study?

> *The procedures of the study include completing a 23-question questionnaire and 2 additional short answer questions.*

Participation in this study will require approximately 20 minutes. You will be asked to review an informed consent form, and upon agreeing to the informed consent be taken to a link to complete a 23-question survey and 2 additional short answer questions. Participation will take place virtually.

What are the possible risks of being in this research study?

> *It is anticipated that any potential risks related to participation in the study will be minimal. Potential risks may include minor mental fatigue, loss of personal time, and re-surfacing of emotions resulting from recollection of experiences. In order to prevent and/or minimize any risks, the researcher has a structured instrument so that participants may complete responses in approximately twenty minutes. The researcher will remind participants that they make take breaks if needed if they experience fatigue and that they may choose not to answer any questions that create discomfort.*

What are the possible benefits to you?

There are no direct benefits to the participants in this study, but there may be indirect benefits regarding the importance and educational contributions to inform future research and interventions supporting improved teacher well-being. Additional benefits include opportunities for positive self-reflection and expression and an opportunity to contribute to research intended to cultivate discussion and programming that may enhance well-being and flourishing of teachers and school staff.

How will information about you be protected?

Data collection will be anonymous to ensure the identity of study participants is protected. Data will also be stored both physically and electronically in secured locations requiring password and/or keys to access. The researcher will destroy study data three years after study is completed by delete all electronic and shredding all physical files. Coding will not be necessary, and therefore, privacy and identity of participants will be protected. Additionally, no identifying information will be asked of study participants to maintain anonymity and reduce potential risks for harm. Furthermore, no participants will be identified during the study. This information is communicated to participants prior to agreeing to join the study. Data will be analyzed at the group level to further keep the identity of participants anonymous. Such will also be clearly communicated to participants prior to participation.

What are your rights as a research subject?

You may ask any questions concerning this research and have those questions answered before agreeing to participate in or during the study.

For study related questions, please contact the investigator(s):
[Yorri Berry, yorri.berry@pepperdine.edu].

For questions concerning your rights or complaints about the research contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB):

- Phone: 1 (310) 568-2305
- Email: gpsirb@pepperdine.edu

What will happen if you decide not to be in this research study or decide to stop participating once you start?

You can decide not to be in this research study, or you can stop being in this research study ("withdraw') at any time before, during, or after the research begins for any reason. Deciding not to be in this research study or deciding to withdraw will not affect your relationship with the investigator or with Pepperdine University and your school.

You will not lose any benefits to which you are entitled.

Documentation of Informed Consent

You are voluntarily making a decision whether or not to participate in this research study. By completing and submitting your survey responses, you have given your consent to participate in this research. You should print a copy of this page for your records.