Infusing Well-Being Into Public Education: A Case for Living It

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Abstract
Public education is our greatest asset for global thriving. The majority of youth in North America will be educated through publicly funded schools; positive psychology, positive education, and all models of whole-school well-being and resilience need to be accessible, adaptable, and affordable. This is particularly urgent given the rising rates of mental health concerns and illness worldwide. Geelong Grammar School in Australia identifies four interconnected processes for effective implementation of whole-school well-being: Learn It - Live It - Teach It - Embed It. Live It is described as “enacting evidence-based well-being practices in an individual's unique way in their own lives” (Hoare et al., 2017, p. 60). Drawing on research in education and psychological and organizational well-being, I argue that this concept of living it is the essence of effective, sustainable cultures of well-being. By living the practices of well-being science, ourselves and within our schools, we learn, teach, and embed them in our families, communities, and institutions. Value for well-being needs to be intentional and prioritized. I propose three pillars to strengthen a culture of living it: authenticity, proactivity, and sustainability, each with supporting skills, behaviours, and mindsets from well-being science. This paper lays the groundwork to build grassroots momentum for well-being in public education, and to support research that operationalizes this essential aspect of school well-being. Living it can be a catalyst to drive social and educational change, and to create conditions for optimal learning and thriving.

Keywords
well-being, public education, positive psychology, positive education, positive mental health, grassroots, school culture, capacity building, community of practice, sustainable

Disciplines
Education | Educational Administration and Supervision | Educational Leadership | Educational Psychology | Health and Physical Education | Industrial and Organizational Psychology | Other Education | Other Psychology | Psychology | Secondary Education | Student Counseling and Personnel Services | Teacher Education and Professional Development

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Infusing Well-Being into Public Education: A Case for Living It

Dana Fulwiler

University of Pennsylvania

A Capstone Project Submitted
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Applied Positive Psychology

Advisor: Alejandro Adler, PhD

August 1, 2019
Infusing Well-Being into Public Education: A Case for Living It
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Preface: Hope for the Future

*What gives you hope for the future?* Dr. Jane Dutton posed this question to me during the beginning stages of this paper. It stopped me in my tracks. Perhaps she could hear defeat in my voice as I tried to articulate my vision for a stronger public education system through investment in well-being. How had my own hope been lost? How could I advocate through cynicism? Her question prompted me to take a bird’s-eye view of the current context and my own role in it. Through this process I renewed my own sense of hope, purpose, and belonging in this field.

Like most teachers, I started my career with the highest of hopes for the impact I could make and the bright future I would empower my students to cultivate. Over a 13-year career this *why* never wavered; my own well-being and energy to realize it did. I felt a heaviness building within myself and among the broader teaching profession over perceived increases in workload, pressure and complexity, disconnection with leadership, workplace toxicity, public scrutiny and misunderstanding, and increases in mental health challenges without adequate proactive investment in staff well-being and comprehensive student development (CSD, Stafford-Brizard, 2016; a research-based model emphasizing equal value across six areas of student learning and well-being: academic, cognitive, identity, social-emotional development, and mental and physical health – through relationships, community, and environment). Beyond anecdotal, this heaviness is echoed in research from teachers across Canada (Froese-Germain, 2014).

What started as my ideas for how to create another well-being program in education, has evolved into an existential *and* practical conversation about strengthening the foundational conditions upon which those programs may sustainably thrive and cultures of well-being can emerge. This paper is my evolving response to Jane’s question. It is grounded in science through the perspective of a passionate educator, Canadian, and realistic optimist.
To me, hope for the future lies in action. When I see people showing up for others, investing in themselves, exploring solutions, and living their meaning and purpose for the greater good, I feel hopeful. As citizens of this planet we are all responsible to contribute and are even motivated to do so if we have autonomy over our what, why, and how (Ryan & Deci, 2000). We are powerful, not powerless. We need to acknowledge the subtle impact of our everyday actions.

Hope also lies in the practice of well-being, which I believe, along with Aristotle (Ross, n.d.), Seligman (2011), Indigenous cultures (Manitowabi, 2017), and many other sources, is not an end to be achieved, but rather a way of being to be lived. There are no magic bullets or quick-fixes; we live well-being through practice. Our capacity to act is fueled by our health, our connection to self and to others, and our ability to add value and feel valued (Prilleltensky, 2016). When I see people strive to bring out the best in themselves and others, I feel hopeful.

Growth gives me hope. When we openly listen and learn, acknowledge areas to improve, pursue change opportunities and track our progress, I feel hopeful. Without this we may spin our wheels, make fear-based decisions, place blame, and become complacent through ignorance.

Education cultivates hope, growth, action, and well-being. It is oxygen for our society, determining personal, community, economic, environmental, and global potential to survive and thrive. It is a privilege to work within this field; I feel hopeful when I’m on the frontlines.

Living It has become my ultimate source of hope. I feel most hopeful for the future when we authentically live and sustain a proactive practice of well-being, generosity, and growth in pursuit of the greater good. I believe this is the hardest, yet most impactful piece of the puzzle.

My goal for this paper is to establish a core value for living it in education. I explore research-based strategies to overcome barriers and harness opportunities, and advocate for authentic, proactive, sustainable practices of well-being science in public education.
The Why and What of Living It

Yesterday I was clever, so I wanted to change the world. Today I am wise, so I am changing myself.

- Rumi

The ultimate opportunity to create a stronger tomorrow is found within ourselves. Sir Ken Robinson, an innovator in modern education, suggests “our only hope for the future is to adopt a new conception of human ecology, one in which we start to reconstitute our concept of the richness in human capacity” (Robinson, 2006, 17:34). Within this richness lies our innate desire to better ourselves and others (Ryan & Deci, 2000, 2001, 2019). Robinson (2006) realizes we cannot fight for something we do not believe exists. How do we help ourselves, each other, and our youth discover and cultivate the inner resources of our own human capacity to flourish, and then actually follow through and put them into practice? I believe addressing this question is an essential step toward more proactive and sustainable approaches to mental health and well-being.

Urgency and Opportunity

The World Health Organization (WHO, 2017) reports that worldwide rates of anxiety and depression are on the rise, estimating that over 300 million people suffer from depression. The highest rates of anxiety are in the Americas (Ruscio et al., 2017; WHO, 2017). Suicide is the leading cause of death worldwide in 15-29 year olds (WHO, 2018b), and second in Canada, where there are almost 11 suicides per day (Statistics Canada, 2018c). Youth mental health problems are particularly on the rise (Canadian Institute of Health Information, 2015; Twenge, Joiner, Rogers, & Martin, 2018). American youth ages 13 to 18 have experienced increased rates of depression and suicide since 2010, highest among girls (Twenge et al., 2018). Similarly, 17% of Canadian youth ages 12-19 have experienced a major depressive episode, and over 1 million are living with a mental illness (Mental Health Commission of Canada [MHCC], 2013). If
nothing significant changes, the Mental Health Commission of Canada (MHCC; 2013) projects that 20.5% of Canada’s population will be living with a mental health problem or illness by 2041. This describes languishing, not flourishing.

The workplace of education is also a concern. Marko’s (2015) study shows 73% of teachers experienced psychological distress since becoming a teacher, with stress, avoidance, and disengagement contributing to burnout. Approximately 30-50% of overwhelmed Canadian teachers leave their positions within the first five years (Reichel, 2016). In a 2014 study, 80% of teachers in Canada reported a significant increase in stress over the previous 5 years (Froese-Germain, 2014), and 46% of American teachers report high daily stress (Gallup, 2014). Educators are not only reporting an increase in their own stress, they also feel ill-equipped to meet their students’ mental health needs (Ott, Hibbert, Rodger, & Leschied, 2017).

This has economic and academic implications. Teachers’ stress-related leaves in British Columbia cost $3.4 million in one year (Naylor & Vint, 2009). In the United States, teacher turnover is estimated to cost over $7 billion per year (Greenberg, Brown, & Abenavoli, 2016). Beyond this preventable economic loss, evidence links higher rates of teacher turnover to lower levels of student achievement (Greenberg et al., 2016). Research supports what we know intuitively: teachers are the most important in-school contributor to student achievement, engagement, belonging, and flourishing (Allen, Kern, Vella-Brodrick, Hattie, & Waters, 2018). Teachers’ emotional exhaustion and burnout have been correlated with higher levels of student chronic stress (Oberle & Schonert-Reichl, 2016) and lower academic performance and school engagement (Arens & Morin, 2016). Proactive, whole-school well-being in public education stands to benefit its two main stakeholders: youth and educators (Roffey, 2012).

Well-being is described as feeling good and functioning well (Keyes & Annas, 2009;
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Waters, 2017). It is not a fad, but rather foundational to a life well-lived. We may take it for granted; our well-being is what allows us to do everything else. However, advocating for its investment in education remains a challenge (Ott et al., 2017; White, 2016). Non-cognitive skills, sometimes referred to as soft skills are often considered less valuable than academic skills of literacy, mathematics, and science (Golinkoff & Hirsh-Pasek, 2016; Stafford-Brizard, Cantor, & Rose, 2017). The skills of well-being fall into this category, including self-regulation/awareness/efficacy, resilience, optimism, engagement, growth mindsets, etc. (Stafford-Brizard et al., 2017).

According to White (2016), critics argue that investing resources into these skills of well-being costs too much and takes away from core academics, and/or more serious issues in education and policy. I have heard similar arguments in my own school hallways. While robust causal evidence is limited, Morrison and Schoon (2013) highlight longitudinal studies that correlate non-cognitive skills like self-control and engagement measured in youth, with future positive outcomes including academic achievement, financial stability in adulthood, and lower incidents of crime. At the same time, White (2016) cautions against the silver-bullet ideal of well-being; it is not a cure-all to save education and the world. It is a tool we can leverage to enhance education and developmental outcomes. If science suggests a path to tackle global concerns with mental health, why wouldn’t we explore it?

The science we can leverage is found in positive psychology’s strength-based, proactive approach to well-being that strives to create thriving individuals and institutions (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). It invites us to reframe obstacles as opportunities and strengthen our inner, relational, and organizational resources to manage and enjoy daily life. By translating well-being theory and science into practice, this paper suggests a way of being for public education stakeholders and schools. Framed around well-being science and my experience as a
teacher in Canada, I present a case for authentic, proactive, and sustainable cultures of living well-being. First, I introduce the history and relevance of positive psychology, followed by my conception of living it. Second, I establish public education as an essential context for living well-being and explore worldwide evidence of impact. Third, I propose authenticity, proactivity, and sustainability as a three-pillar framework through which a practice and culture of well-being can be effectively cultivated. Fourth, I discuss grassroots strategies to strengthen the pillars in public education. In the final section, I suggest next steps to build upon this groundwork.

Why Positive Psychology and Well-Being

Positive psychology is the scientific study of well-being. It explores both theory and application of our human capacity to thrive and invites us to proactively cultivate positive traits, experiences, and institutions (Seligman, 1998, 2011; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2001). Noticing a deficit-focused trend in psychology’s emphasis on the pathologies of mental illness, Dr. Martin Seligman (1999), in his 1998 American Psychological Association (APA) Presidential Address, proposed a positive psychology or a “new science of human strengths” (p. 560). Seligman stated (1999):

Psychology is not merely a branch of the health care system. It is not just an extension of medicine. And it is surely more than a tenant farmer on the plantation of profit-motivated health schemes. Our mission is much larger. We have misplaced our original and greater mandate to make life better for all people - not just the mentally ill. (p. 562)

He also discussed the historical context, claiming that psychology’s main focus had been on healing since World War II (Seligman, 1999). Seligman (1999) argued that the dominant disease model was too focused on survival without adequate attention toward our potential to thrive.

Positive psychology is not intended as a replacement for traditional psychology or
psychotherapy; instead, it emphasizes that we should be just as concerned with what goes right with people as we are with what goes wrong (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000).

Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000) list several target areas of this new field in their seminal paper, including subjective well-being, contentment, and satisfaction with the past, hope and optimism for the future, and flow and joy in the present. I think a less widely known aspect of positive psychology is its focus on groups and organizations. Even in their original conception of the field, Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000) specify this focus “at the group level, …is about the civic virtues and the institutions that move individuals toward better citizenship: responsibility nurturance, altruism, civility, moderation, tolerance, and work ethic” (p. 5).

Positive psychology’s empirical evidence is growing, along with its subfields, due to its emphasis on scientific approaches (Seligman, 2011; White, 2017; White & Kern, 2018). The Penn Resiliency Program (PRP) is a powerful example. Developed at the University of Pennsylvania and rigorously studied in youth populations, the curriculum teaches well-being and resilience skills including optimism, relaxation, creativity, communication, decision making, assertiveness, problem solving, etc. (Seligman, Ernst, Gillham, Reivich, & Linkins, 2009). Study results have included a reduction in symptoms of depression and anxiety across ethnic backgrounds (Brunwasser, Gillham, & Kim, 2009). In one study the program reduced depressive symptoms by half, even two years later, and in another it prevented anxiety and depression diagnoses among youth admitted to primary care (Seligman et al., 2009). Supporting these results in other contexts, a meta-analysis of positive psychology interventions by Bolier et al. (2013) shows the field’s impact on reducing depressive symptoms and enhancing subjective and psychological well-being. These examples illustrate positive psychology’s impact and concurrent efforts to prevent ill-being and promote well-being.
Positive psychology subfields now include positive neuroscience, psychotherapy, humanities, organizations, and most relevant to our topic of *living it* in schools, positive education (Pos Ed). Even in the late 90s Seligman (1999) described a “sea of change [that has] taken place in the mental health of young Americans over the last 40 years” (p. 560). He also described the prevalence of depression in teenagers as “the single largest change in the modern demographics of mental illness” (Seligman, 1999, p. 560). Pos Ed advocates for learning environments in which students, staff, leaders, parents, and communities can thrive (Seligman et al., 2009). Pos Ed combines the sciences of well-being, teaching, and learning, using scientific data to drive what, why, how, and track impact (Seligman et al., 2009; White, 2014). It took shape after Geelong Grammar School in Australia pursued a whole-school approach to well-being in partnership with Seligman (Seligman & Adler, 2019), and has been further informed by research linking whole-school well-being to improved mental health and academic outcomes (Adler, 2016; Dix, Slee, Lawson, & Keeves, 2012; Shoshani, Steinmetz, & Kanat-Maymon, 2016).

As humans we want more than to just survive (Aristotle, as cited in Melchert, 2002; Ryan & Deci, 2019; Seligman, 1999). Positive psychology does not advocate for blind positivity, rather individual and collective thriving (Seligman, 2011; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). While well-being science is rife with psychological insight, translating that theory into practice can be a challenge (Duckworth, Milkman, & Laibson, 2018; Stafford-Brizard, 2016; Stafford-Brizard et al., 2017). If we establish value for well-being and live it in practice, perhaps Gable and Haidt’s (2005) prediction will become reality: positive psychology will morph into “just plain psychology” (p. 108), building an understanding of, and tools for, the “complete human condition” (p. 108).
Defining well-being. Several definitions and frameworks exist to conceptualize well-being. Keyes and Annas (2009, p. 199) present a eudaimonic, Aristotelian view of well-being by conceptualizing hedonia as “having good feelings, getting what you want, or enjoying something you are doing” - or feeling good; and eudaimonia as “the quality of your life as a whole” - or functioning well. My use of the term well-being throughout this paper is synonymous with eudaimonia. Seligman’s (2011) PERMA theory of well-being includes both hedonic and eudaimonic elements: positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning, and achievement. These five conditions are cultivated through inner resources of character strengths, and social and environmental factors (Niemic, 2017; Seligman, 2011). Research shows that we can enhance our strengths and levels of PERMA, leading to greater meaning, subjective and physical well-being, academic achievement, and engagement (Boehm & Kuzansky, 2012; Friedman, & Kern, 2014; Howell, Kern, & Lyubomirsky, 2007; Tangney, Baumeister, & Boone, 2004). PERMA is one of many well-being models that can be taught and tracked, and is the foundation of Pos Ed programs (Waters, 2011).

Prilleltensky (2016) also presents a model of interconnected, research-based elements called I-COPPE: interpersonal, community, occupational, physical, psychological and economic. Tal Ben-Shahar (2019) advocates for a conception of whole-being through SPIRE: spiritual, physical, intellectual, relational, and emotional. The plethora of models can be overwhelming, but in this case, the more really is the merrier. This is particularly true because they are all grounded in science. There is no one-size-fits-all; we are better served to choose the best personal fit (Bao & Lyubomirsky, 2014; Schueller, 2014; Sin & Lyubomirsky, 2009) and define well-being for ourselves. Whole-school approaches benefit from variety, tailoring a framework to context, culture, and needs that resonate with members of the school community (A. Adler,
personal communication, March 25, 2019). I believe this builds authenticity and sustainability in a culture of well-being.

**A Practice of Living Well-Being**

I learned to teach by teaching. My reactions during my first years involved instinct, adrenaline, and ego. Later, these reactions turned to responses, listening, and growth. It only took a few challenging situations to realize that the learning is in the doing. I agree with Aristotle (as cited in Ross, n.d.), “for the things we have to learn before we can do them, we learn by doing them” (p. 1). Is there anything we truly learn without doing?

I agree with Aristotle (as cited in Melchert, 2002) - we become brave by being brave, just by being just, virtuous by acting virtuously. By challenging our comfort zones and applying new skills or mindsets, we learn. We also learn by failure, readjustments, reverse engineering our wins, and building effective habits of mind and action as a result. This is not easy. I do believe we can make it *easier* by tapping into our personal and collective wellspring of why. At its best, our *why* takes shape through meaning, purpose, relationships, positive emotions, etc. (Dutton & Heaphy, 2003; Berg, Dutton, & Wrzesniewski, 2013; Fredrickson, 2009). At its worst, it may be driven by fear, guilt, envy, anger, resentment, etc. In education, we need to harness the former.

A switch flipped for me when I started to see well-being as an ongoing lifestyle practice rather than a goal to be achieved, and as a whole school culture rather than just a curriculum or program. I believe Western society’s social-comparison, instant-gratification culture can confuse the meaning and goals of well-being and the good life, and the path toward fulfillment. All of the self-help books on the shelf will do nothing without action. I have come to believe that the hardest and most impactful thing we can do is develop a practice of *living* our most authentic, healthy, compassionate selves in pursuit of the greater good. Well-being can be considered a
series of habits that require practice. An isolated action does not result in a habit, continuous practice does (James, 1892/1984). We need the practice of well-being itself to become habitual.

What does it actually mean to live it? In education the concept emerged from Geelong Grammar School’s 4 process, cyclical model for fostering whole-school well-being (Hoare, Bott, & Robinson, 2017). Hoare et al. (2017) identify 4 interconnected processes for effective implementation based on Geelong’s experience: Learn It - Live It - Teach It - Embed It. They define the Geelong Live It process as “enacting evidence-based well-being practices in an individual’s unique way in their own lives” (p. 60). Put another way, it is the ability to translate well-being theory into an ongoing practice in one’s own life and work. Geelong’s strategy to support this has included staff trainings and refresher workshops in well-being, promotional materials for the community, and activities to build a community of practice including discussion groups and a journal club (Norrish et al., 2013). In the absence of living it, perceived hypocrisy can result, followed by frustration, resentment, and resistance toward whole-school well-being (Hoare, Bott, & Robinson, 2017). This emphasizes the need to build human capital and capacity among staff; individual action creates a culture.

Research in Canada shows similar resistance if a value for living it is absent. In a Quebec study of 250 K-12 public schools, Deschesnes, Trudeau, and Kebe (2010) found three significant predictors of pursuing and sustaining whole-school well-being: educator attitudes toward a) well-being and its perceived benefits, b) the school’s investment in, and value for, well-being, and c) personal and collective self-efficacy. Even if teachers were engaged and eager, the absence of positive leadership carried a heavier weight in preventing the adoption and long-term potential of whole-school initiatives (Deschesnes et al., 2010). Clearly the organization itself needs to live it (White, 2016), and establish value for others to live it.
I believe living it may also be the easiest process to overlook in building school well-being, not only because we might assume practices of well-being cannot be addressed at an organizational level since it’s often thought to be a personal pursuit, but because it can be hard to do, measure, and quantify. Behaviour change in well-being is a topic that goes beyond the scope of this paper; my focus is on cultivating environments in which well-being is noticeably valued and alive, and therefore habitual and embedded in the culture. On an individual level the “doing” or practice of well-being builds new neural pathways of habit, and at an organizational level it builds supportive routines and culture.

With this in mind, living well-being in schools requires a shift from programs and curriculum to practice and culture (Waters, 2011, 2017). Programs can be prescriptive, costly, and resisted as one more thing to implement (Ott et al., 2017). Even a program with the purest of intentions - unless it is generated by the people within the community itself - risks excluding key perspectives, being irrelevant, or impeding well-being and productivity (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2001; Dutton & Heaphy, 2003). School culture depends on its people, which is why living it will take on different shapes. Like trying to fit a square peg into a round hole, our time is better spent building an adequately sized peg; in this case, practices of well-being that are tailored to context.

Living it is the practical, personal integration and application of well-being theory and science. To me, learning and living the science are part of a cyclical process and work in tandem. We may need to experience the payoff of living it to truly buy in and engage, learn from the experience, and build a self-determined practice that is autonomous and intrinsically motivated; in other words, leverage the science of self-determination theory (SDT; Ryan & Deci 2001).

According to Ryan and Deci (2001), an individual experiencing eudaimonic well-being is self-realized, fully functioning, and engaged in behaviours they chose themselves. SDT posits
that intrinsically motivated behaviour is cultivated by our innate need for competence, autonomy, and relatedness (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Activities that cultivate these three psychological needs are then intrinsically motivated and more likely to be enjoyed and sustained (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Empirical research shows that fulfilling these needs are essential to well-being (Ryan & Deci, 2019). Brown and Ryan (2015) warn that non-autonomous motivation is associated with stress, anxiety, and low resilience, regulated by compliance, external rewards, and ego. Living well-being in schools will benefit from leveraging this science and inviting students and staff to personalize their own well-being actions, and co-construct interventions for the school.

Self-efficacy is also a mobilizing resource for living it. As the belief in our own ability to achieve set outcomes, self-efficacy can inform our goals and boost self-regulation and agency (Bandura, 1997; Maddux, 2009). Strong self-efficacy allows effective problem solving, decision making, and perseverance through challenges (Maddux, 2009). The resulting success then fuels our efficacy. Maddux describes how high self-efficacy encourages sustainable healthy behaviours including exercise, diet, and stress management, which enable us to amass well-being resources. We create confidence and capacity within ourselves through each new experience (Maddux, 2009), reinforcing engagement. By living it, we build our own capacity to live it in an upward spiral.

I believe the live it process is the essence of effective, sustainable cultures of well-being. By living the well-being science ourselves, and in our schools and communities, we learn, teach, and embed it in our families, communities, and institutions. While we may not be able to control whether individuals live a personal practice of well-being (Hoare et al., 2017), we can create conditions through which they feel it is valued and prioritized. This is a culture of well-being. We can have programs, books, and professional learning opportunities, but without establishing
an authentic value for well-being through which all stakeholders feel it matters, the *live it* process will suffer (Hoare et al., 2017). Among the cited reasons for ineffective or unsustainable whole-school approaches are a lack of leadership support and teacher engagement (Ott et al., 2017). Without practicing what we preach, I think we are wasting resources and missing out on opportunities to build meaningful, sustainable well-being practices for the betterment of our students, teachers, communities, and future.

**Applied Well-Being Science**

The skills, behaviours, and mindsets of well-being science are the *it* in *living it*, generating both a practice and culture of well-being. These research-based applications of positive psychology are measurable, malleable, and meaningful; we can track the progress (*measurable*) of tangible, changeable skills (*malleable* – they can be learned and developed) that contribute to and/or predict positive life outcomes (*meaningful*; A. Adler, personal communication, July 8, 2019). These essential characteristics ensure that the *what* of living well-being is impactful. According to A. Adler (personal communication, July 8, 2019), the following list of 41 have been established through rigorous research across academic disciplines to meet these three criteria:

1. **Active constructive responding**
2. Adaptability/Flexibility/Adjustment/Agility
3. **Character strengths**
4. Conflict resolution
5. Creativity/Creative thinking/Inventive thinking
6. Critical thinking
7. Curiosity
8. Decision making
9. Empathy and compassion
10. Engagement/Communication skills/Collaboration skills
11. Equality/Equity
12. Global mindset
13. Goal orientation and completion
14. Gratitude
15. Growth mindset
16. **High Quality Connections**
17. Hope
18. Human dignity
19. Identity
20. Integrity
21. Intrinsic Motivation
22. Justice
23. Manual skills for information and communication technology
24. Manual skills for the arts, music, and physical education
25. Meta-learning skills
26. Mindfulness
27. Motivation
28. Open mindset (to others, new ideas, new experiences, etc.)
29. **Optimism**
30. Perspective-taking and cognitive flexibility
31. Proactiveness
32. Problem solving skills
33. Purposefulness
34. Reflective thinking/Evaluating/Monitoring
35. **Resilience**
36. Respect (for self, others, cultural diversity, etc.)
37. **Responsibility (including locus of control)**
38. Risk management
39. Self-awareness/Self-regulation/Self-control
40. Self-efficacy/Positive self-orientation
41. Trust (in self, others, or institutions)

These can be cultivated by individuals on a psychological or physical level, by organizations on a collective or relational level, or all of the above. Next, I provide a brief snapshot of the evidence for 6 of the 41 (bolded) skills and mindsets (see section on Next Steps for recommended expansion on the remainder of the list).

**Psychological well-being science.**

**Character strengths.** Peterson and Seligman (2004) published a classification of 24 character strengths in a “manual of the sanities” (p. 3) that includes descriptions with supporting research and measurement tools for each strength. The 24 strengths and six corresponding virtues are a common presence across history and cultures (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). The VIA
Institute on Character\(^1\) has since created a hub, common language, and forum for education and research on these strengths (Niemiec, 2017). Building from the specific metrics Peterson and Seligman (2004) originally presented for each strength, we can now understand our personal constellation of character strengths using the VIA Survey: “the only free, psychometrically valid, online test measuring the 24 character strengths” (Niemiec, 2017, p. 4). Participants receive an immediate ranking of their 24 strengths, building self-awareness.

Strengths are meaningful, each with its own connection to positive life outcomes. For example, studies show zest and hope to be the most significant strengths linked to happiness (Niemiec, 2017; Park, Peterson, & Seligman, 2004; Proctor, Linley, & Maltby, 2009), perseverance predicts academic achievement and self-efficacy (Niemiec, 2017; Park & Peterson, 2009), and individuals high in gratitude experience less depression and envy, and greater well-being and prosocial behaviour (Emmons & McCullough, 2003; McCullough, Emmons, & Tsang, 2002; Niemiec, 2017). Strengths are positive traits that are personally fulfilling, valued across cultures, and produce positive outcomes for self and others (Niemiec, 2017). Research connects the use of strengths to subjective well-being, resilience, productivity, PERMA, and overall life satisfaction (Niemiec, 2017; Seligman, 2011; Wagner, Gander, Proyer, & Ruch, 2019). Research also recognizes that we can have too much of a good thing; overuse and underuse of character strengths can predict lower life satisfaction, greater depression, mental illnesses like OCD, poor mental and physical health, and less frequent proactive health behaviours (Bergen, 2019; Littman-Ovadia & Freidlin, 2019; Niemiec, 2019).

Given the above evidence, character strengths clearly help to build a practice of living it.

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\(^1\) Visit www.viacharacter.org for more information on strengths, research, resources, or to take the VIA Survey. There are specialized surveys for youth and professional teams. For free access to the VIA and other metrics, create a free account at www.authentichappiness.sas.upenn.edu.
Each has specific research-based interventions that we cultivate through awareness, exploration, and application (Niemiec, 2017). Our top 5 signature strengths reflect our identity and build self-awareness (Seligman, Steen Park, & Peterson, 2005). Character strengths, identity, and self-awareness foster a culture of living it because they invite us to acknowledge our own and each other’s capabilities, recognize when we are living inauthentically, and establish a shared language and proactivity of strengths rather than deficits. Research on character strengths’ impact in public schools is underway; the VIA Institute has collaborated on a project called Thriving Learning Communities which builds character strengths programming into public schools in Ohio (Niemiec, 2017). Early results show increases in social-emotional learning, self-awareness, engagement in school, higher GPAs, improved attendance, and lower disciplinary issues (Darwish, as cited in Niemiec, 2017). Dr. Angela Duckwork’s non-profit, Character Lab\(^2\), is also leading the way in character research and application, focused on translating theory into manageable, research-based practice in schools.

**Resilience.** Resilience is a meaningful “quality that enables people to thrive in the face of adversity” (Peterson, 2006, p. 247). Since adversity is inevitable, resiliency is essential. It allows us to experience hope in hardship (Fredrickson, 2009). Uses of resilience include overcoming life trauma, steering through and managing regular life stressors, bouncing back from hardship, and reaching out to take positive risks (Reivich & Shatte, 2002). Protective factors of resilience include self-awareness, self-regulation, mental agility, optimism, self-efficacy, connection, positive institutions, and our own biology and physical capacity (J. Saltzberg, personal communication, January 13, 2019).

Reaching out resilience is “a mindset that enables us to seek out new experiences and

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\(^2\) Visit www.characterlab.org for free teaching resources and more research information.
view life as a work in progress” (Reivich & Shatte, 2002, p. 26). This is essential to living well-being and to capacity building, as it invites us to see possibilities, acknowledge our own potential, and not settle for mediocrity. It involves asking others for help and leveraging resources. Those who reach out are “good at assessing risks; they know themselves well; they find meaning and purpose in their life” (Reivich & Shatte, 2002, p. 28). Resilience can also be learned and taught (Seligman, 2006). For example, resources and skills to cultivate reaching out resilience are optimism, self-awareness, and connection (Reivich & Shatte, 2002). In school communities these protective factors of resilience can be taught and measured (Reivich & Shatte, 2002; Seligman et al., 2009; Windle, Bennett, & Noyes, 2011), enabling a culture of living it by creating ideal conditions for sustainable well-being despite daily challenges.

**Responsibility (locus of control).** Locus of control (LOC) is a mindset of responsibility. It describes the extent to which we feel responsible for our successes and failures (Ng, Sorensen, & Eby, 2006; Rotter, 1966). Individuals with an internal LOC take responsibility for the events in their lives and own the consequences of their actions, for better or worse (Rotter, 1966). As a result, they confidently and proactively act on their external environments (Ng et al., 2006). Conversely, an external LOC is a passive mindset that attributes responsibility for life and events to factors beyond one’s control (Ng et al., 2006).

Research links LOC to well-being, job and life satisfaction, and prosocial behaviours (Ng et al., 2006), making it a meaningful mindset to build in a school culture of well-being. It is also important for a proactive practice of living it since those with internal LOCs have self-efficacy; they believe their actions make a difference, which further strengthens their motivation to act (Maddux, 2009; Rotter, 1966). Rotter (1966) developed the first LOC scale3, and since then, new

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3 Free access to Rotter’s LOC scale can be found here: www.psych.uncc.edu/pagoolka/LocusofControl-intro.html
LOC metrics and studies have shown it to be a malleable trait (Nowicki & Duke, 2016).

**Optimism.** Optimism is a powerful mindset for *living it*. Research suggests that in addition to connection, we are hardwired for hope: “the optimism bias...is one of the most consistent, prevalent, and robust biases documented in psychology and behavioural economics” (Sharot, 2011, p. 941). Optimism and pessimism are “broad versions of confidence or doubt” (Carver, Scheier, Miller, & Fulford, 2009, p. 303). Seligman (2006) discusses pessimistic versus optimistic explanatory styles. His research suggests that pessimistic people tend to view and explain the causes of unavoidable negative events as *personal, pervasive, or permanent*.

Conversely in an optimistic explanatory style they are viewed as *external, specific, and temporary* (Seligman, 2006). This resilience factor fosters a culture of *living it* by managing inevitable challenges, embracing change and opportunity, and aspiring to set and reach new goals. In Seligman’s view (2006), an optimistic mindset still acknowledges reality, but does not allow the individual or group to give up when life gets hard. Pessimism leaves people feeling dejected, and optimism energizes (Seligman, 2006); the important work of *living it* requires the latter.

Research indicates that optimistic people have better physical health outcomes (Boehm & Kubzansky, 2012; Peterson, Seligman, & Valliant, 1988), problem solving skills, achievement, popularity, stronger immunity (Peterson & Steen, 2009), and even longevity (Giltay et al., as cited in Peterson & Steen, 2009). Optimists are also more proactive about health behaviours, whereas pessimists are more likely to engage in health-defeating behaviours like substance abuse (Carver et al., 2009). Relevant to building school cultures of well-being, in studies by Greenaway, Cichocka, van Veelen, Likki, and Branscombe (2016), experiencing the emotion of hope was a consistent predictor of an individual’s support and motivation for social change.
Skills of optimism can be learned and measured (Seligman, 2006). For example, cognitive behavioural therapy can challenge our inner dialogue. By identifying the ABCs of a situation – Antecedent or Adversity, Belief, and Consequence (resulting feeling or behaviour) - we begin to change habitual pessimistic beliefs through distraction or disputation (Seligman, 2006). Seligman (2006) presents four ways to effectively dispute our own beliefs, or argue with ourselves: evidence, alternatives, implications, and usefulness. Since many of us catastrophize after an adversity (Reivich & Shatte, 2002; Seligman, 2006), we need to present ourselves with the evidence of reality to dispute those anxiety and depression-producing thoughts because “learned optimism is about accuracy… [it] works not through an unjustifiable positivity about the world but through the power of ‘non-negative’ thinking” (Seligman, 2006, p. 221). I think a barrier to living a practice of well-being is the time wasted on catastrophizing, or pessimistic beliefs about ourselves, our situation, our capabilities, etc. Given its malleability, measurability, and potential to produce positive physical and mental health outcomes, optimism should be cultivated in teacher and leadership education, and in school cultures of well-being.

Organizational well-being science.

A strong organization is an essential condition for adopting an effective, sustainable whole-school approach to well-being (Deschesnes et al., 2010). Individuals and organizations need to live it. I agree with several researchers of whole-school well-being who advocate for designing schools to be positive institutions in which the skills, behaviours, and mindsets of well-being are a part of the living culture of the building (Adler, 2016; Peterson, 2006; White, 2014; Waters, 2011; White & Kern, 2018). This does not happen by accident. Below is a snapshot of organizational well-being science that can help to intentionally cultivate authentic, proactive, sustainable “enabling institutions” (Seligman, Steen, Park, & Peterson, 2005, p. 410).
**High quality connections.** According to pioneering researcher Dr. Jane Dutton (2003), high quality connections (HQC) involve trust, mutual positive regard and responsiveness, and respectful engagement between people. In a social ecosystem like a school, HQCs can be considered the life-giving oxygen that nourishes all people and practices within it (Dutton & Heaphy, 2003). Relationships (the “R” in PERMA) are foundational to well-being (Dutton & Heaphy, 2003; Seligman, 2011). The mutual energy of HQCs is in contrast to the low-quality connections we’ve likely all experienced that simply go through the motions of communication, but can be draining (Dutton & Heaphy, 2003). In a school we connect with people all day, every day. Even a brief interaction can be an HQC and potentially provide a boost to both parties’ energy to live it – and on the simplest level, their likelihood of having a good day.

Research offers compelling value for HQCs in the workplace. Dutton (2019) shares that they can broaden our thinking, enhance self-image, and increase adaptability, cooperation, job satisfaction and commitment, and organizational citizenship. Several studies also illustrate the physiological effects of social interactions at work, including strengthening our immune system capacity (Heaphy & Dutton, 2008). One study shows that just the perception of emotional support at work makes a person 2.4 times more likely to live over a 20-year period than those who do not feel they have emotional support (Shirom, Toker, Alkalay, Jacobsen, & Balicer, 2011). Building on research that links social relationships to mental health, Holt-Lunstad, Smith, and Layton (2010) share data across 148 studies and over 300,000 people that indicates a “50% increased likelihood of survival for participants with stronger social relationships” (p. 1). HQCs can also build creativity, resilience, authenticity, and learning outcomes (Dutton & Heaphy, 2003; Dutton, 2019). Pathways to build and design for HQCs include task enabling, respectful
engagement, trust, and play (Dutton, 2019); these could be weaved into existing school routines like staff meetings, parent council, intramurals, student leadership, curriculum, etc.

Active constructive responding. Active constructive responding (ACR) describes an active, authentic, positive way of responding to others’ good news, rather than destructive or passive responses (Gable & Reis, 2010; Gable, Reis, Impett, & Asher, 2004). Consider this scenario: I share with a colleague that a struggling student wrote me a thoughtful note of gratitude, confiding how honoured I feel that she took the time to write such specific, meaningful words. An active deconstructive response from that colleague might be, “She must be buttering you up to give her a good grade!” This response risks diminishing my positive experience by minimizing the students’ intent and authenticity. An active-constructive response, on the other hand, shows interest and helps me to capitalize on this positive emotional experience (Gable & Reis, 2010, Gable et al., 2004): “That’s wonderful! Thank you for sharing this with me - how did it make you feel to be acknowledged and thanked? Is there a part of the letter that is most meaningful to you?” ACR invites the person who shared good news to re-live and savour the experience and capitalize on the well-being benefits of the positive emotions. I have definitely hesitated to share positive events at school and other places. I don’t think I’m alone. Remember that we can have an over- or under-use of certain character strengths? This may be an overuse of humility! Earlier I shared statistics that shine a light on the toxicity and stress of teaching - ACR may be a beneficial tool to dilute this negativity and capitalize on the good.

In fact, Geelong Grammar School teaches ACR to staff and students as part of Pos Ed, illustrating the malleability of ACR in a school context. They report that ACR is “invaluable in nurturing supportive communication and positive social interactions” (Norrish, Williams, O’Connor, & Robinson, 2013, p. 155). ACR is a well-being skill that can enhance HQCs, trust,
and a culture of well-being. Potential benefits include increased positive affect, life satisfaction, sense of belonging (Reis et al., 2010; Strachman & Gable, 2007), enhanced memory and savouring (Gable & Haidt, 2005), and strengthened relationships (Gable et al., 2006; Reis et al., 2010). How we respond to others matters, and living ACR in practice has the potential to transform relationships within a school, and as a result, its overall culture.

The empirically supported tools discussed in this section are needed to combat the barriers to living it in schools, including teacher stress. Greenberg et al. (2016) share three main reported causes of teacher stress: 1) School organizations lacking strong leadership, a healthy school culture, and collegial support; 2) Work resources that limit a sense of autonomy and value for decision-making; and 3) Teachers’ ability to manage stress and create a healthy classroom. These are barriers to an authentic, proactive, sustainable culture of well-being. However, Greenberg et al. also identify interventions to reduce teacher stress: 1) Organizational interventions: changing the organization’s culture to prevent distress; 2) Organization-individual interventions: building relationships and support; and 3) Individual interventions: building individual practices of well-being. These solutions require well-being science. Since teacher and student well-being and achievement are inextricably linked (Hattie, 2009; Roffey, 2012; Roorda, Koomen, Spilt, & Oort, 2011; Spilt, Koomen, & Thijs, 2011; Zee & Koomen, 2016), we need to be intentional in applying and living the well-being science in public education.

**Who: Living It in Public Education**

Human flourishing is not a mechanical process; it's an organic process.

And you cannot predict the outcome of human development. All you can do, like a farmer, is create the conditions under which they will begin to flourish.

- Sir Ken Robinson
Given the strong link between health and education outcomes, schools are the most effective settings to promote well-being (Bonell et al., 2014; WHO, 1997, 2014). In what ways do public education conditions support the 41 well-being tools? How can we effectively build and strengthen these conditions? Intentional, sustainable well-being initiatives belong in education because they enhance cognitive, academic, social, emotional, physical, and identity development (Stafford, 2016; Stafford-Brizard et al., 2017). In a time when “mental health crisis” returns 4.7+ million results in a Google search (as of July 10, 2019), we need to be proactive.

I have noticed a demand for positive, proactive mental health strategies among students, colleagues, parents, and community members. Each semester my grade 12 psychology students ask, “Why don’t we learn this sooner”? Similar questions emerge among my colleagues. What does the elusive concept of *teacher wellness* really look like and can we sustain energy in our home and school lives for the full year? Researchers and educators worldwide are responding to mental health alarms by seeking to infuse well-being into schools, informed by the WHO’s (1997, 2014) health-promoting schools (HPS) model. In Canada this is widely referred to as Comprehensive School Health (CSH; Pan-Canadian Joint Consortium for School Health [JCSH], 2008). The shared goal is to build a culture of well-being in schools through a) teaching and learning, b) the social and physical environment, c) partnerships and services, and d) healthy school policy (Langford et al., 2015; Morrison & Peterson, 2013; WHO, 1997, 2014).

Seligman (2011) asks his audiences, “In one or two words, what do you most want for your children?” Usual responses include “happiness, confidence, contentment, fulfillment, balance, good stuff, kindness, health, satisfaction, love, being civilized, meaning…” (Seligman, 2011, p. 78). He poses a follow-up question, “In one or two words, what do schools teach?”
Responses often include “achievement, thinking skills, success, conformity, literacy, math, work, test taking, discipline…” (p. 78). These lists are not in competition. Research on optimal learning continues to advocate for skills that move beyond traditional math, literacy, and science; well-being skills, behaviours, and mindsets work in service of whole-child development, rather than against (Hattie, 2009; Stafford-Brizard, 2016, Stafford-Brizard et al., 2017). Either/or thinking impedes progress of living well-being in schools (White, 2016). The International Positive Education Network (IPEN, 2019) suggests a double helix approach in which the goals of education include both academic and well-being skills. We can have our cake and eat it, too.

Evidence of Impact

Langford et al. (2015) conducted meta-analyses of 67 K-12 HPS trials worldwide, with health promotion interventions that met three criteria: “input into the curriculum; changes to the school’s ethos or environment; and engagement with families and/or local communities” (p. 1). While positive effects were found for targeted behaviours like tobacco use, nutrition, exercise, etc., few studies showed impact on academic outcomes or attendance, and no effect was found on mental health, alcohol or drug use, or bullying (Langford et al., 2015). HPS models, including CSH, may fall short in providing evidence of sustainable impact on academic and mental health outcomes (Dassanayake, Springett, & Shewring, 2017; Langford et al., 2015; Ofosu et al., 2018).

Conversely, Pos Ed shows promising long-term impact (Adler, 2016), which I believe may be an indicator of authentic, proactive, sustainable cultures of living it. Adler’s (2016) experimental studies span the globe, including Bhutan, Mexico, and Peru, and include sample sizes in the hundreds of thousands. In these studies, educators received training in the science before delivering the co-constructed well-being curriculum to treatment groups (Adler, 2016). They were first invited to live it themselves. In Bhutan, topics included mindfulness, self-
awareness, communication, relationships, creative thinking, critical thinking, decision making, etc. (Seligman & Adler, 2019) - elements from the list of 41 well-being practices. Students in Bhutan who received 15 months of the well-being curriculum reported higher well-being on the EPOCH measure of adolescent well-being, and achieved significantly higher academic results:

On average, students who were performing at the 50th percentile before the intervention performed at the level of students in the 60th percentile after the 15-month intervention.

That is roughly equivalent to a gain of a full academic year. (Adler, 2016, p. 24)

These improvements remained consistent one year after the program ended. Adler (2016) reports that engagement, perseverance, and connectedness were the strongest predictors. This research is evidence that infusing well-being into schools is both relevant and impactful across cultural and economic contexts (Adler, 2016; Seligman & Adler, 2018, 2019).

Seligman and Adler (2019) share two particularly powerful and relevant quotes from the Head of School who participated in one of these studies in South America. In 2014, before participating in Pos Ed training and implementation, the Head of School stated:

If you want to train someone with these well-being skills that you speak of, teach them directly to the students. They are the intended beneficiaries… why would you bother to train the teachers? And why would you train a principal like me? I am pretty good at my job, which is much more about leadership and keeping everybody in line than about teaching. (Seligman & Adler, 2019, p. 63)

Four years later after receiving training and playing an active role in the implementation of Pos Ed, the same Head of Schools shared:

All adults in the school, from the principal to the teachers to the staff members, are the people who define the general culture and behaviours in the school. They are the ones who
should be trained to be able to have a real, sustained change. (Seligman & Adler, 2019, p. 63)

This inspiring personal, professional, and philosophical transformation illustrates the power of living it. After four years, this Head of School clearly lived and observed the impact of engaging in well-being skills as a collective, and how that translates into sustainable change.

Adler’s (2016) research emphasizes the importance of intentionality. Explicit curriculum and targeted training were hallmarks of the experimental groups, which yielded strong, long-term results (Adler, 2016). Staff training in well-being skills sends a message that their well-being matters (Prilleltensky, 2016) and is recognized as an integral conduit of impact on students. We could argue that this happens naturally in whole-school models, but based on the current state of mental health and the lack of impact results, we need to do better. Well-being interventions are most effective when they are relevant and accessible to individuals, groups, or organizations across contexts and cultures (Bao & Lyubomirsky, 2014; Schueller, 2014). The value of living it must be intentional.

Public and Private

Quality education is our most powerful platform for global progress and potential to thrive (United Nations, UN, 2019). Well-being investment in public education will benefit the majority. Over 5 million students are enrolled in public schools across Canada, and under 400,000 in private/independent schools (Statistics Canada, 2018c). As of 2015, 50.4 million students in the United States were enrolled in public schools compared to only 5.8 million in private/independent (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2015). According to the United Nations (1989) Convention on the Rights of the Child, both health and education are rights. Additionally, Cohen (2006) advocates for school cultures of well-being, learning, and democratic
participation, arguing that social, emotional, ethical, and academic education “is a human right that all students are entitled to” (p. 201). Ignoring these competencies in schools, he adds, is a social injustice and “violation of human rights. Our children deserve better” (Cohen, 2006, p. 228).

Positive psychology and well-being science must not be limited to the well-resourced. Publicly funded schools have unique strengths and challenges over their privately funded counterparts. Both need to infuse well-being for the benefit of all children and youth, and we can learn from well-being successes within each. Many of the more prevalent whole-school success stories in Pos Ed reflect independent, private, and higher-resourced schools, including Geelong Grammar School, The Shipley School in the United States, and Ridley College in Canada. Public schools may find it more relatable to consider Adler’s (2016) studies in Bhutan, Mexico, Peru, and worldwide. In Canada I believe we need more experimental studies that meld different models and approaches to help strengthen the case and impact of whole-school well-being.

We also need affordable strategies that are not prescriptive. This is outlined in the first four stages of Pos Ed implementation: 1) contextual and cultural immersion and understanding; 2) multi-stakeholder engagement; 3) needs and goals assessment; and 4) quantitative baseline measurement (Seligman & Adler, 2019). Well-being conditions won’t be improved or sustainably lived through a siloed focus on academic rigor, social-emotional learning, character development, resilience, or growth mindsets. We need a menu of strategies that are equally organic and adaptable as they are proactive and grounded in evidence. For this to be achieved in a publicly funded and government-allocated institution like public education, all stakeholders need to live it. To use health as a political unifier we all need to be informed, empowered, and organized (Meili, 2012). Most importantly, we need to actually live what we are trying to embed.
*Living it* means acting and being in ways that will create positive growth within ourselves, our schools, and our communities.

**How: Part 1 | Pillars of Living It**

What is *required* to truly live a sustainable practice of well-being? How do we activate a culture of *living it*? This section focuses on creating environments in which well-being is valued through a model and strategy for mobilizing the science in public education. I propose three pillars of *living it*. I believe these practical, interrelated elements can help to support schools in building a culture that effectively values, fosters, and lives a practice of well-being: *authenticity*, *proactivity*, and *sustainability*. In this section I will introduce the rationale (why) and content (what) of this framework and suggest specific well-being practices to inform and enhance each domain. In the section How Part 2, I propose research-based grassroots strategies to build the pillars and school cultures of living well-being (how).
Figure 1. Three pillars/elements of living it.

1. Authentic

**Rationale.** I believe we need an ongoing attunement to authenticity in order to truly live and create value for a practice of well-being. According to Thacker (2016), authenticity is about “human possibility, creativity, expression and freedom” (p. ii). Authenticity is being true to ourselves through genuine emotion and psychological depth (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). It involves identifying our inherent nature and living, or actualizing, our self-determined motivation and moral virtues (Maslow, 1968; Peterson & Seligman, 2004; Ryan & Deci, 2000; Thacker, 2016). This means authenticity is also connected to self-determination theory (SDT), which is integral to motivating well-being actions (Ryan & Deci, 2000, 2019). Conversely, acting against our nature, or inauthentically, can hinder our well-being and is linked to symptoms
of depression (Erickson & Wharton, 1997; Wharton, 2009). Inauthenticity can therefore make it even harder to foster a personal or organizational practice of *living it*.

SDT posits that authentic, autonomous action feels internally motivated (Ryan & Deci, 2001). Indicators of inauthenticity, on the other hand, include behaviour that feels externally caused, as though we did not choose it (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). SDT suggests that in social contexts where minimal choice is provided and people’s perspectives are not valued, inauthentic behaviour prevails (Ryan & Deci, 2000). This is particularly relevant to fostering a *living it* culture in schools; students and staff should be encouraged to co-create a shared value and vision, and personally relevant perspectives of well-being to root a practice in authenticity.

Kernis and Goldman (2006) conceptualize authenticity through a 4-component psychological model: 1) *self-awareness* - motivation to understand and trust the reality and fluidity of our own motives, feelings, abilities, desires; 2) *unbiased processing* - responding to situations as objectively as possible, acknowledging one’s own strengths and weaknesses and therefore not responding with defensiveness or self-aggrandizement; 3) *behaviour* - acting according to your values and needs; not being fake to please others or reap external rewards; and 4) *relational orientation* - genuine value, openness, and honesty in close relationships. While these may seem obvious, I would argue that they can be challenging to live in practice.

Thacker (2016) poses an important question, “How do we move from an idealistic understanding of authenticity to a pragmatic, applied view of authenticity?” (p. 74). Self-awareness itself is complex (Kernis & Goldman, 2006; Peterson & Seligman, 2004; Thacker, 2016), and is a key component of SDT (Ryan & Deci, 2000, 2019). Realistically, authenticity is not just about being yourself, but rather being yourselves with skill (Goffee & Jones, as cited in Thacker, 2016). We have multiple selves that make up who we are; situational contexts can
determine which ones show up as we decide which impression to give (Goffman, 1959/1978; Little, 2014). Building an authentic school culture of well-being may need to embrace this challenge of self-awareness and allow people to consider which selves are present at school and at home. How do we determine which tools of well-being are personally relevant in each context?

In addition to employing authenticity to enhance our practice of living well-being, research suggests that acting authentically itself impacts well-being. Those who are higher in authenticity respond less defensively to self-esteem threats (Kernis, 2003), may experience higher life satisfaction and lower levels of distress (Boyraz, Waits, & Felix, 2014), and have a stronger self-concept, identity, and beliefs that they can change through their own efforts (Kernis & Goldman, 2006; Rogers, as cited in Peterson & Seligman, 2004). This belief in our own capacity to change, and effect change, ignites the self-efficacy to drive a sustainable practice of well-being and collective social change. Authenticity offers a cycle of well-being benefits.

This is important for schools as workplaces. Studies using validated workplace authenticity measures reveal a positive correlation between authenticity and employee well-being and engagement, and a negative correlation with burnout (Van den Bosch & Taris, 2014, 2018). The more authentic the employee, the greater her/his well-being and lower chances of burning out. This is reflected in teachers’ experiences, too. Wang, Hall, and Taxer (2019) report that teachers’ emotional labour in faking or hiding their genuine emotions can hinder their mental and physical health and lead to burnout. Based on the science, authenticity can become a proactive buffer against teacher illness, burnout, and attrition.

I believe authenticity also builds collective identity through local context, culture, and strengths. In tandem with ongoing measurements of whole-school well-being, it helps to keep us
honest and humble as we acknowledge pitfalls and leverage strengths to overcome them.

Without authenticity built into the fabric of the school community, we not only miss out on opportunities to build intrinsic motivation for a practice of living it, but we may also lose sight of reality. In this case, whole-school interventions may do more harm than good if they require more workload on teachers, for example, or do not move beyond lip-service and inactive policies.

**Indicators and strategies.** Authenticity clearly strengthens self-determined, intrinsic motivation, which, if connected to the value and benefits of well-being, may increase the likelihood that our lives and schools will reflect an active practice of well-being. In a living it culture, authenticity can be found in practices that are tailored to context - individually and collectively. Specifically, this could include an ongoing focus on identity, meaning, and strengths to cultivate the four components of authenticity (Kernis & Goldman, 2006). A teacher professional growth plan could include annual job-crafting (Berg et al., 2013), through which teachers are invited to consider their own evolution of meaning, strengths, relationships, and reframe/realign their work activities accordingly (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). Evidence-based tools that enhance a sense of identity, mattering, shared vision, generosity, and purpose can be applied to cultivate authenticity.

While specific content and processes to strengthen each pillar should reflect community voice and context, similar question prompts, indicators, and strategies may be meaningful across schools. I propose preliminary resources to support schools in building each of the three pillars, starting with authenticity. These charts and visuals should be built upon, adapted, and developed over time through local collaborative processes and research (see How Part 2 and Next Steps sections).
Table 1

**Building Authenticity - Proposed Prompts and Indicators for Public Schools**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pillar</th>
<th>Prompts</th>
<th>Indicators</th>
<th>Strategies from Well-Being Science</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Authentic</td>
<td>What does well-being mean to our school community? What do we value? How do we know? In what ways do our current practices and goals reflect those shared values? Does our current approach to living well-being resonate with our students, teachers, etc.? What actions do we take to support them? Whose voices have been included in our whole-school well-being approach? To what extent are we monitoring our progress, and ensuring we act in the best interest of our community? Logistically, do we dedicate adequate time into our pre-scheduled professional development for well-being science, practice, value, etc.?</td>
<td>Staff &amp; students report a sense of belonging. Clear, visible value for living well-being and “practicing what we preach”. Leadership encourages community to cultivate identity, purpose, and personal well-being. Reflective of and tailored to context &amp; culture. Progress is effectively tracked, and results/measurements are reviewed and discussed collectively, and used to develop a growth plan. Equity and integrity are open discussions in planning and progress meetings - we follow through and live a “wellness as fairness” mindset (Prilleltensky, 2012).</td>
<td>1. Conduct strengths assessments; create strength profiles using the VIA Survey; build strengths-spotting into meetings, apply strengths alignment or mental contrasting (Niemiec, 2017). 2. Host an Appreciative Inquiry to discover shared values, vision, and plan for school well-being (Cooperrider &amp; Whitney, 2001). 3. Build a job-crafting exercise into teachers’ annual professional growth plans to encourage connection to meaning, purpose, &amp; authenticity (Berg, Dutton, and Wrzesniewski, 2013). 4. Build a culture of compassion and generosity through a reciprocity ring that targets well-being related wishes (Grant, 2013).</td>
</tr>
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</table>

2. Proactive

**Rationale.** I believe a second component to the living it process is proactiveness.

Proactiveness, or preventative initiative-taking rather than reactive responses (Cangiano & Parker, 2016), is essential to create and maintain a practice of well-being in individuals and schools. Otherwise, we wait until something goes wrong before we act. Stakeholders in education see the need for proactive mental health that builds resilience and coping strategies rather than waiting until anxiety and depression are a problem (Kempf, 2018; Morrison & Peterson, 2013; Ott et al.,
In addition to psychological gains, proactive well-being offers economic returns. Reacting to mental health concerns in Canada cost at least $50 billion per year (Lim, Jacobs, Ohinmaa, Schopflocher, & Dewa, 2008; Smetanin et al., 2011). It is estimated that treatment and support services over the next 30 years will exceed $2.5 trillion (MHCC, 2013). In a country with universal healthcare, we are all stakeholders. If we can infuse more proactive strategies into education and model a living it lifestyle as educators, we may be able to change that projection.

Mental health literacy has emerged in the Canadian lexicon of school health. Literacy in mental health means having the knowledge and skills to proactively understand, access, and apply mental health resources and information (Marcus & Westra, 2012). Beyond the motivating science of proactivity and its reciprocal benefits to well-being, its meaning in the wider community demands inclusion as a pillar of living it. People light up at the mention of “proactive mental health”; it is recognizable and desired. We can leverage proactivity to mitigate the rates of mental health problems in youth and create sustainability in the teaching profession.

Cangiano and Parker (2016) identity two common features of proactive behaviour present in the research: 1) it is anticipatory and requires prospection, or envisioning the future based on the past and present (Parker et al., 2006; Seligman, Railton, Baumeister, & Sripada, 2013; Seligman & Tierney, 2017), and 2) it initiates change by taking control of a situation. Self-initiative is inherent in both of these core elements (Cangiano & Parker, 2016), and is needed to truly live a practice of well-being.

Like authenticity, this means proactive action is also rooted in SDT (Cangiano & Parker, 2016). Being told what to do, such as a prescribed well-being curriculum or professional learning independent of teacher input, is not proactivity (Cangiano & Parker, 2016). According to Parker (as cited in Cangiano & Parker, 2016), proactiveness invites people to take on greater
responsibility, experiment with new skills, and as a result, expand their self-efficacy.

Considering common resistance to whole-school well-being at teacher or policy levels (Stolp, Wilkins, & Raine, 2015; Storey et al., 2016; White, 2016), proactivity can invite stakeholders to identify concerns (e.g., our students are lacking resilience) and explore strength-based, proactive strategies together. A resulting well-being strategy may mimic that which a researcher or external agency offers, but the act of initiating the change may satisfy the proactive pillar among staff and therefore fuel a sense of autonomy and intrinsic motivation to implement and sustain the solution (i.e., live the well-being tools). Again, self-efficacy mobilizes us (Maddux, 2009); a belief that we can make change happen is necessary to keep hope and motivation alive (Kernis & Goldman, 2006; Rogers, as cited in Peterson & Seligman, 2004; Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Proactivity also enhances innovation (Unsworth & Parker, 2008). I believe this is important for a cultural shift in a system as complex as public education. Since proactiveness is also action-oriented, it moves innovative ideas into practical application. Cangiano and Parker (2016) explain the process as a) envisioning and planning a proactive goal (i.e., whole-school well-being), and b) enacting and reflecting. Innovation and action are a powerful combination.

Research indicates that positive affect further determines our ability to envision and implement proactive goals (Bindl, Parker, Totterdell, & Hagger-Johnson, 2012), and by pursuing proactive goals, we engage in an upward spiral of positive affect (Fredrickson, 2001; Grant & Ashford, 2008; Strauss & Parker, 2014). Well-being stimulates proactivity, which in turn drives more living of well-being. Motivation has the same reciprocal relationship; it is both a driver and outcome of proactivity (Cangiano & Parker, 2016). ACR and HQCs can help to capitalize on the positive affect (Dutton & Heaphy, 2003; Gable & Reis, 2010), and as a result, the enhanced trust and autonomy further motivate proactivity (Cangiano & Parker, 2016; Deci & Ryan, 2000).
This means proactivity is not only beneficial to driving a culture of living it, engagement in proactive behaviours contributes to higher levels of well-being (Cangiano & Parker, 2016). Research even links proactivity with lower absenteeism in the workplace (Greenglass & Fiksenbaum, 2009), and as such, indicates it may be a tool to mitigate teacher absenteeism. Miller, Murnane, and Willett (2008) present longitudinal research that correlates teacher absenteeism with lower student academic outcomes. The role of this pillar extends beyond ‘proactive mental health’, although that is part of it. We need proactive action to initiate and sustain whole-school well-being. In turn, the sole act of taking that initiative can elicit expansive benefits to individual and collective well-being, autonomy, efficacy, and likelihood of engagement and sustainability. Although our future is uncertain, we are wired to imagine and predict it (Gilbert & Wilson, 2007; Seligman, et al., 2013). Proactiveness allows us to learn from the past and grow into a stronger future. I believe this is an essential feature of sustainable cultures of living well-being in settings as dynamic and complex as schools.

**Indicators and strategies.** Parker, Bindl, and Strauss (2010) identify three types of motivational mindsets that engage people in proactive behaviour: can do, reason to, or energized to, all of which connect to Ryan and Deci’s (2000) elements of self-determination and to Seligman’s PERMA (2011) model of well-being. A can do mindset results from self-efficacy. We might assume that a reason to mindset would be at least partially driven by fear, e.g., rising rates of anxiety and depression would give us a reason to act proactively. However, the research links a reason to mindset to SDT’s competence, autonomy, and relatedness (Ryan & Deci, 2000), and to three of the four elements of PERMA: positive emotions, engagement, and meaning (Seligman 1999, 2011). An energized to mindset is even more affect-dependent, drawing on cognitive and action-broadening power of positive emotions (Fredrickson, 2001). We
can cultivate all three of these proactivity motivations using well-being science (explained further in the next section). Below are my proposed prompts, indicators, and strategies to help build this essential pillar:

Table 2

**Building Proactivity - Proposed Prompts and Indicators for Public Schools**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pillar</th>
<th>Prompts</th>
<th>Indicators</th>
<th>Strategies from Well-Being Science</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Proactive</strong></td>
<td>In what ways are we proactive versus reactive when it comes to well-being and mental health? How are we encouraging staff, students, and stakeholders to innovate and take initiative? How will we know if individuals in our school community feel that their ideas are valued? To what extent are we effectively fostering a culture of positive dialogue of solutions that moves beyond complaints? To what extent do we challenge ourselves and each other to take risks in experimenting with new ways to promote well-being? What are our procedures to track progress of goals (i.e., metrics)? How is this built into our school development plan in an authentic way (i.e., measurement moves beyond participant numbers, and explores measures of subjective well-being).</td>
<td>Presence of both prevention and promotion strategies for well-being, with a focus on strengths and inner resources. Well-being strategies target the entire school population on a continuum of need (i.e., tangible/visible strategies in place to support students and staff with mental health concerns and illness; tangible/visible strategies in place to promote mental health and well-being for all, etc.). A forum exists to dialogue new ideas; respect is an expectation to which the community holds each other accountable. Individual and collective well-being goals are valued by school leadership. Language of strengths and positive habits of mind and action are part of the school community’s lexicon.</td>
<td>1. Enhance goal orientation through promotion of WOOP goals - woopmylife.org (Oettingen, 2012; Oettingen &amp; Mayer, 2002; etc.) 2. Understand and build your team’s creative capacity with the Torrance Test of Creating Thinking; build it with a Creative Gym approach (Kienitz et al., 2014). 3. Build design thinking skills and creative capacity among staff and students (e.g., access and apply Stanford’s free d.school resources: d.school.stanford.edu/resources; or: dl/library.stanford.edu) 4. Explore decision-making literature in a book club (ex: “Paradox of Choice” by Barry Schwartz - discuss presence of maximizing and how decision making impacts well-being) (Schwartz, 2004). 5. Build a growth mindset by creating mentorship and coaching opportunities among stakeholders - provide a forum to explore ideas, discuss feedback, etc. (Dweck, 2008). 6. Build daily HQC practices into the fabric of the culture (e.g., Haubrich’s (2014) 2 sec - 2 min - 2 hr strategy.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3. Sustainable

**Rationale.** The sustainability I refer to is the likelihood that a school culture will maintain a living habit of well-being, and/or an authentic perception that well-being is valued, encouraged, and modeled, regardless of funding and turnover. It also reflects the sustainability of individual stakeholders’ practices of well-being. I believe this is the most challenging and necessary element to cultivate in public education. Life will throw curveballs and a practice of well-being allows us to bend, not break, then continue to grow; we need this same strength in a community that visibly values living it. Policy at district and government levels help to achieve this sustainability (Rowling & Samdal, 2011). However, hope is not lost in the absence of these supports. I expand upon this rationale in How Part 2, and advocate for grassroots galvanizing.

**Indicators and strategies.** Stolp, Wilkins, and Raine (2015) identify two essential conditions for a sustainable healthy school community: 1) stakeholder buy-in; and 2) adequate human resources, partnerships, and peer support. These categories reflect living it through action and connection. Educator buy-in was identified as action-oriented and a contributing factor to well-being sustainability (Stolp et al., 2015). “Buy-in,” the authors noted, “was exemplified by teachers who were embedding wellness-related practices… [they were] role models of healthy practices and supported the actions of the school health champion” (Stolp et al., 2015, p. 303).

Additional contributors to effective whole-school well-being and sustainability include student voice driving the initiatives (Samdel & Rowling, 2011; Stolp et al., 2015), school leadership support (Cushman, 2008; St Leger, 2000), and school district support (Stolp et al., 2015).

Building a whole-school culture of well-being takes time, especially with adequate attention to sustainable infrastructure including strong leadership, planning and assessment, and educator buy-in (Bassett-Gunter, Yessis, Manske, & Gleddie, 2016). I believe buy-in can be
challenging to cultivate and sustain because *living it* can be challenging to cultivate and sustain. Like many teachers, I have struggled to practice what I preach and live a sustainable practice of well-being. It is *because* it is hard that living the skills of well-being demands emphasis.

Table 3

*Building Sustainability - Proposed Prompts and Indicators for Public Schools*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pillar</th>
<th>Prompts</th>
<th>Indicators</th>
<th>Strategies from Well-Being Science</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sustainable</td>
<td>In what ways are we set-up to maintain momentum and continue to grow our culture of well-being? Are any of our practices dependent upon particular individuals, or financial resources? How can we leverage our community strengths to proactively prepare for limited resources? In what ways are we being reflective? How are we evaluating and monitoring progress? How are we building mutually beneficial partnerships with community members and organizations? Who are the key contacts at the nearest university with a teacher education program? How can we access and involve them? How does our community share knowledge, resources, and success stories? In what ways can we boost its visibility in our school environment and wider community?</td>
<td>Well-being practices and overall culture continues, even if funding or external resources change. Capacity building and change initiatives rely upon stakeholder engagement and collaboration. Communities of practice, youth voice, and preservice education are invested in well-being capacity building. Intentionality is valued by leaders: well-being is part of the short and long-term school development plans, and words translate into action (as measured by impact, not just numbers of participants, and by stakeholders themselves, not just leaders). Well-being team is a giant HQC - hopeful, celebrates successes, displays resilience, practises gratitude and ACR, cultivates growth mindsets.</td>
<td>1. Invite stakeholders who are passionate about well-being (i.e., “Health Champions”) to design their own Community of Practice (Wenger, 1998). 2. Through a university-to-public education partnership, train interested educators and students as researchers (Garnett et al., 2019). 3. Those individuals become the experts of their own community, engaged in future planning; implement an ongoing Appreciative Inquiry (AI; Cooperrider, 2012) with set check-points to track progress, and a culture of mattering by generating a collective long-term school community development plan in which everyone is held accountable for follow-through and impact metrics. 4. Well-being team book club: i.e., Facilitating teacher teams and authentic PLCs: The human side of leading people, protocols, and practices (Venables, 2018). 5. Design a growth mindset workshop for stakeholders (Dweck, 2016). 6. Develop ACR practices to build HQCs (Gable &amp; Reis).</td>
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</table>
I propose the following visual as an adaptable tool for school health champions to personalize and communicate the three pillar model, prompts, and indicators to the school community:

![Diagram of 3 Pillars Applied in a Public School Setting](image)

**Figure 2.** Adaptable visual - condensed version of proposed model, prompts, and indicators.

**Strengthening the Pillars**

The intention of the three pillars is to enhance a school culture of well-being. I believe the pillars work in reciprocity with the well-being skills, behaviours, and mindsets that I outlined on page 18. The pillars create a foundation upon which these well-being tools can be lived, and by living them, the pillars are strengthened. This generates an upward spiral of living well-being. While all 41+ boost a living it practice and culture, I believe the following are particularly important across all three pillars to foster an effective school culture of living well-being.
(adapted from full list of 41; A. Adler, personal communication, July 8, 2019):

- Engagement, Collaboration, Communication
- Growth Mindset
- High Quality Connections
- Intrinsic Motivation
- Optimism
- Respect (for self, others, cultures, etc.)
- Responsibility (locus of control)
- Self-Awareness, Regulation, Control
- Trust (in self, others, and institutions)

School leaders and all stakeholders can create opportunities to learn, develop, and most importantly, *live*, these capacities at school, initiating a ripple effect of positive impact. These are not magic bullets, rather accessible research-based tools that we can each cultivate.

On a granular level, the illustration below highlights specific well-being practices that I propose may be particularly meaningful in strengthening each pillar:
Figure 3. Logic model reflecting the application of well-being skills, behaviours, and mindsets in the cultivation of the three pillars. Adapted from personal communication with A. Adler, July 8, 2019.

Schools can create their unique upward spiral of living it through informed, empowered, organized well-being strategies within each pillar, guided by evidence. To expand upon the rationale for each corresponding tool is beyond the scope of this paper; please see Next Steps for relevant recommendations.

**Importance of Evidence**

Evidence and measurement are essential to living well-being in education. I refer to two elements of evidence: 1) the application of well-being science supported by empirical research
(i.e., the glue that holds a living it practice together); and 2) measurement of impact of those applications and interventions (i.e., tracking progress, making adjustments, building strong empirical support, and creating a ripple effect of impact by sharing documented successes and pitfalls). The application of the science informs our practice of living it, personally and at the school level. In turn, our practice of living it can inform the science. This is the reason for the dual direction arrows in the visual model (see Figure 1).

As a trailblazer in well-being research, Carol Ryff (1989) started measuring what she called psychological well-being in the late 1980s. Well-being measures used before and after Ryff continue to be subjective as they measure an individual’s perspectives and judgments of their functioning in life, and their feelings toward their life (Keyes & Annas, 2009). Measurement in schools is essential if we want to create waves at a policy level and understand the impact our interventions are having (or not having) on our community (White & Kern, 2017). White and Kern (2017) perhaps say it best, “if you treasure it you will measure it” (p. 50).

I believe authenticity, proactivity, and sustainability can be bolstered by building research capacity among education stakeholders. While not everyone has the desire or ability to conduct a rigorous experimental study, several approachable metrics exist for teachers, students, parents, principals, and school boards to employ. From my own experiences as a teacher and the volume of requests I have received from colleagues, schools are curious about how to track well-being. Research skills would help to foster both authenticity (relevant to context) and proactivity (taking initiative). As Cangiano and Parker (2016) assert, proactive actions are not viewed as one more thing, they are viewed as a way of being; we can harness this opportunity and equip interested educators with research tools. Additionally, research designed within the living culture of a school may be more relevant, and therefore contribute to sustainability (Kern et al., 2019).
Well-being measurement in schools continues to be a challenge, with a lack of awareness of existing tools (Bassett-Gunter, et al., 2015; Kempf, 2018). Kempf (2018) overviews the barriers to measuring well-being in Canadian schools, and claims that “the jump from the promotion of well-being to the measurement of well-being is challenging and complicated...even if it were a good idea, it may not be possible at this time” (p. 8). Schools can actually leverage several validated well-being measures (Kern, Waters, Adler, & White, 2014, 2015), including the EPOCH Measure of Adolescent Well-being which assesses engagement, perseverance, optimism, connectedness, and happiness (Kern, Benson, Steinberg, & Steinberg, 2015).

While challenges to measurement certainly exist, it is not an impossibility, and surely it is a good idea. Public schools and community partners can participate in this evolution of best practice. If we are serious about whole-school well-being, we need to know what is working and what isn’t. Strengthening the case for evidence deserves attention beyond the focus of this paper; please see the “Next Steps” section.

**How: Part 2 | Building a Culture of Living It**

Just as ripples spread out when a single pebble is dropped into water, the actions of individuals can have far-reaching effects.

- Dalai Lama

I believe these pillars are strongest when operating together, and a broad approach to implementation (how) that includes all three would be most effective. Therefore, the strategies I propose involve grassroots capacity-building to create: 1) authenticity - decisions are made from the inside out and reflect the context; 2) proactivity - generates can-do, reason-to, and energized-to motivations based on strengths and needs of the community (Cangiano & Parker, 2016)); and
3) sustainability - involves all stakeholders to create a ripple effect that spreads and sustains impact regardless of external resources. The focus is on what we can do.

We can create communities of practice that do not rely on champions alone, and instead build capacity in the wider community. We can invite the diverse voices within the school community to the table and leverage organizational science to equip everyone with well-being tools to thrive both individually and collectively. Ott et al. (2017) specifically advocates for well-being investment for all stakeholders: “schools cannot be settings that promote mental fitness for students if they are not psychologically healthy settings for educators” (p. 13). I would extend educators to include all of the adults who influence our children and their development.

These grassroots approaches are rooted in the reality of public systems - in the absence of funds for formal training or time to create new well-being curriculum (learn it - teach it processes; Hoare et al., 2017), we still have access to the inner and relational resources of living it. We can approach grassroots galvanizing with a humble acknowledgement that we are all flawed and strengthened by our human condition, and more powerful when we stand together.

**Grassroots Capacity-Building**

Previous attempts to reform public schools highlight the necessity of grassroots approaches and community engagement. One example exists in the Newark Public School system. Newark, New Jersey residents heard about the plan for their own transformation on The Oprah Winfrey Show, when three affluent men announced their pledge of over $100 million to turn the system around (Barnes & Schmitz, 2016). Among several lessons to be learned, they appointed a superintendent and board from outside the Newark community and adopted a top-down approach (Barnes & Schmitz, 2016). It did not go well. The initiative created a toxic community environment, prompting 77 local ministers to plead for its elimination (Barnes &
Schmitz, 2016). The science of authenticity and proactivity makes clear that autonomy and voice elicit engagement, and engagement builds sustainability (Cangiano & Parker, 2016; Thacker, 2016). Instead of relying upon experts, we can instead leverage their knowledge and resources to build local grassroots experts.

The impact of grassroots galvanizing and community engagement in education is supported by research. People don’t resist change, they resist being changed (D. Cooperrider, January 12, 2019). In Building Communities from the Inside Out: A Path Toward Finding and Mobilizing a Community's Assets, McKnight and Kretzmann (1993) advocate for leveraging a community’s inherent leadership and connectedness as assets for solving problems, rather than undermine them by hiring external experts. Grassroots initiatives start with a shared mission, and as such are internally motivated (Grabs, Langen, Maschkowski, & Schäpke, 2016). In this case, our shared mission would be to strengthen whole-school well-being and public education through well-being science. Research suggests that grassroots projects can stimulate collective action, social learning, and become role models for societal change (Grabs et al., 2016). Stakeholder identity, capacity, buy-in, and partnerships are key elements of sustainability (Stolp et al., 2015).

White (2016) advocates that advancing whole-school well-being will require partnerships and policy, two of the four elements of CSH in Canada. Currently, there is a lack of cohesion among stakeholder groups at the local level (Ott et al., 2017). For example, a school board may adopt a whole-school approach, but without a specific implementation strategy or engaged leadership, efforts are inconsistent and often left to a select few to champion (Bassett-Gunter et al., 2015). According to White (2016), there is a disconnection between “research in well-being, the relationship of well-being and public policy, and grassroots community support” (p. 11).
Regardless, sustainable impact is happening in grassroots initiatives that are democratic, spontaneous, and driven by like-minded community members with a commitment to systems-change (White, 2016). Unlike some policy that is enacted and placed upon schools and teachers, grassroots projects stick (White, 2016).

Within the CSH model in Canada, I believe we have initiatives moving in both directions. From health champions who lead this work in schools, to the Pan-Canadian Joint Consortium for School Health who connects a national community, Canada is already a leader in this work. While health champions are an essential aspect of effective whole-school well-being (Bassett-Gunter et al., 2015; Morrison & Peterson, 2013) who adopt the role because they are personally invested in it (Stolp, Wilkins, & Raine, 2015), I advocate along with White (2016) for everyone to share responsibility for well-being as a worthy pursuit in itself. In my own health champion experience, a whole-school approach was sustained by including students, school health nurse, staff, community members, school leaders, etc. in its implementation. Ten years later it is still going and growing.

What does this look like in practice? Each stakeholder in public education contributes to student, school, and community potential to thrive. Capacity-building at each level starts a ripple effect toward sustainable positive change. When we live well-being and track our progress, these ripples become impact. I think the hierarchy of education stakeholders (e.g., superintendent, principal, teacher, etc.) can hinder a sense of collective responsibility. Students, educators, leaders, and parents especially need to come together as frontline advocates and teammates to become informed, empowered, and organized in the pursuit of well-being (Meili, 2012).
Figure 4. Ripple effect of grassroots capacity-building.

Green represents grassroots stakeholders. These frontline members of a school community remain relatively consistent - we always have parents, students, educators, and community members/organizations. *Educators* is used instead of teachers, because there are often *teachers* in a school who may not teach in a classroom (counsellors, learning leaders, educational assistants, coaches, etc.); “educators” is inclusive. I believe this grassroots group can spark authentic, positive change in terms of building living it cultures in school communities. We all have a stake in public education and well-being. I believe a unified value of well-being among this group will ignite proactivity and fuel sustainability as we start to see evidence of the impact of living the tenants of well-being science, and how that evidence can influence healthy school policy. This work is already happening by educators.

The role of policy makers (see purple stakeholders in Figure 4) is to lift up and create conditions upon which the grassroots stakeholders can flourish. These leaders influence macro-
level decisions and policy, prioritize programs, funding allocations, and strategic plans for the growth and sustainability of our communities and the field of education. Philosophies of these groups evolve as leadership changes; however, decisions always need to be evidence-informed. While each stakeholder group has the potential to create positive ripples, we are stronger together. Proactive well-being as a shared goal in education is more likely to be sustainably realized and generate maximum impact if we join forces.

In the following sections I present research-based grassroots strategies for building and strengthening the pillars of living it: communities of practice, youth voice, and leadership and change. I present the science of these strategies and propose future applications in the Next Steps section, including opportunities for partnerships across stakeholder groups.

**Communities of Practice**

There is no greater power than a community discovering what it cares about.

- Margaret Wheatley

I believe a cultural shift is needed to enact and strengthen the three pillars. What makes good change stick? I believe good educational change is a combination of science and local voice. It sounds simple, yet change is so often prescriptive. Unfortunately, organizational research on embedding optimal school well-being is limited (Deschesnes, Drouin, Tessier, & Couturier, 2014; Samdal & Rowling, 2011; White, 2016). Existing research suggests that voice, autonomy, and positive leadership help to drive the potential of living, embedding, and sustaining well-being in schools (Basset-Gunter et al., 2015; Deschesnes et al., 2014; Hoare et al., 2017; Kempf, 2018; Morrison & Peterson, 2013; Ott et al., 2017; White, 2016). Prioritizing a cultural shift based on authentic values and priorities can create an opportunity for stakeholders in schools to proactively design and research positive change, bolstering the body of evidence for
the unique organizational setting of public education.

To build this potential I envision collaborative school cultures of growth mindsets and HQCs. Frey, Lohmeier, Lee, and Tollefson (2006) present a five-point scale to indicate a group’s level of collaboration, from 1) networking, 2) cooperation, 3) coordination, and 4) coalition, to the full level of 5) collaboration. Indicators at this level include trust, frequent communication, generosity, and consensus decisions (Frey et al., 2006). These are also hallmarks of HQCs and strong organizational cultures (Dutton & Heaphy, 2003; Cooperrider & Whitney, 2001; Grant, 2013). I propose that a community of practice (CoP) is an effective strategy to reach this ultimate goal of authentic, proactive, and sustainable collaboration.

CoPs were originally introduced by anthropologist Etienne Wenger (1998) to apply both psychological and organizational science in education. CoPs are similar to professional learning communities, or PLCs, which are used by schools to develop collegiality, reduce isolation, foster collective learning, and drive school change (Blankenship & Ruona, 2007). There are key differences between the two models. PLC participation is often mandatory and includes an appointed leader (e.g., principal, department lead, etc.), and CoP participation is voluntary with a more grassroots structure (Blankenship & Ruona, 2007). Knowing the science of SDT (Deci & Ryan, 2000) and the nuanced goal of building sustainable habits of living well-being, the CoP model may be an effective way to galvanize, empower, and spread well-being science in public education.

According to Wenger-Trayner (2015), “communities of practice are groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do, and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly” (p. 1). Three essential elements, working together, cultivate an effective CoP. Wenger-Trayner (2015) describes these element as 1) a shared domain of interest and value; 2)
an interactive community marked by joint activities, discussion, generosity, and a value for maintaining member relationships to drive the domain forward; and 3) a shared practice that transforms a community of interest into action. The third element is grounded in action, developing what Wenger-Trayner (2015) notes is “a shared repertoire of resources, experiences, stories, tools, and ways of addressing recurring problems” (p. 2). The most exciting aspect of an effective CoP is that it can “innovate, solve new problems…invent new practices, create new knowledge, define new territory, and develop a collective and strategic voice” (Wenger-Trayner, 2015, p. 8). It is not just a group of people sharing existing knowledge - although that can be part of it. In short, CoPs foster authentic belonging and further inspire proactivity.

In a synthesis of CoPs’ impact, Pyrko, Dörfler, and Eden (2017) suggest that CoPs and their knowledge sharing is a process: “CoPs come to life from the transpersonal process of thinking together, rather than…a community being ‘set up’ first” (p. 390). Effective CoPs are created organically when a community thinks together and shares an authentic vision (Wenger-Trayner, 2015). Brown and Duguid (as cited in Pyrko et al., 2017) posit that our knowledge sticks to our practice when the potential action is developed in our own social context, and that it can leak through our practice when we learn from practitioners in different contexts who are trying to address similar problems. Pyrko et al. (2017) call this shared indwelling; when individuals share the learning that they have personally lived. The authors further elaborate:

Thinking together entails interlocked indwelling...it is a trans-personal process through which people intensively learn together and from each other in practice, and in this way they become more competent practitioners...[with] an emphasis on the possibility of developing learning partnerships and a sense of community. Such learning partnerships can be achieved through mutual identification when individuals’ indwelling is
interlocked: people engaged in thinking together guide one another through their understanding of the same problem. (Pyrko et al., 2017, p. 394)

Mutual engagement is necessary to establish and sustain an effective CoP (Iverson & McPhee, 2008; Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002).

In a living it culture of well-being, this might look like people coming together, incubating ideas, and proposing and implementing well-being practices and supportive policy and infrastructure that benefit the collective. We can also dig deeper into each other’s narratives and learn from our application of the science. CoPs may take shape in different ways depending on context, resources, and intentions. As discussed above, there is evidence to indicate that this model could be an effective avenue to cultivate each pillar of living it.

An Appreciative Inquiry (AI) may be an effective way to establish direction for a CoP. AI is a framework for organizational change that satisfies two essential conditions for school change: 1) a collaborative approach (Waters, Murray, & White, 2012) and 2) a more positive approach to change (Fullan, as cited in Waters et al., 2012). AI uses a constructivist approach to organizational change using a 4-D process: Discovery, Dream, Design, and Destiny (Cooperrider, 2012; Cooperrider & Whitney, 2001). Cooperrider and Whitney (2001) explain:

AI is about the co-evolutionary search for the best in people, their organizations, and the relevant world around them… it involves systematic discovery of what gives ‘life’ to a living system when it is most alive, most effective, and most constructively capable in economic, ecological, and human terms. AI involves, in a central way, the art and practice of asking questions that strengthen a system’s capacity to apprehend, anticipate, and heighten positive potential. (p. 3)
Having personally experienced an AI Summit with almost 1000 people at an International Positive Education Network event, the process may need to be lived to be fully understood and appreciated. It provides a powerful exchange of ideas and collective hope for the future, and a process of designing and prototyping a practical plan to turn that hope into action (Cooperrider, 2012; Cooperrider & Whitney, 2001). AIs are a tool for authentic organizational change, as well as a conduit for action research (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 2008). As I previously stated, building evidence is an essential aspect of living it and strengthening the three pillars. The AI model can be a useful intervention to continually track and grow a culture of sustainable well-being.

One example of a school-based AI is from St. Peter’s College in Adelaide, Australia. All school staff participated in an AI Summit after senior leaders identified six goals for a new direction: academic performance, well-being, co-curricular activities, culture, infrastructure and financial sustainability (Waters, Murray, & White, 2012). Waters et al. (2012, p. 62) followed the AI 4-D process asking the following specific questions:

- What are we most proud of at St Peter’s College? (Discovery)
- What are our greatest strengths? (Discovery)
- What do we deeply care about at St Peter’s College? (Discovery/Dream)
- What are our most exciting opportunities at St Peter’s College? (Dream)
- What would success look like for the boys, staff and parents? (Design)
- How would we know that we are succeeding? (Delivery/Destiny)

The experience yielded many benefits, including integration of the work into their strategic plan, positive feedback from staff and engagement in change initiatives, and staff-initiated groups and initiatives (Waters et al., 2012).

Students seem to be a missing voice in this success story. I agree with Cook-Sather
that “there is something fundamentally amiss about building and rebuilding an entire system without consulting at any point those it is ostensibly designed to serve” (p. 3). A school is a unique context. Its unwritten hierarchy of stakeholders places students at the center of the system, yet they may not be consulted in decisions that impact them. Inclusion of youth in a collaborative way is worth exploring in sustainable systems change. According to Kempf (2018), these teacher-student partnerships are mutually beneficial to well-being:

Teachers have a harder time the further they are from serving students and from accessing the moral rewards of their work; we must take a relationship approach to promoting and measuring well-being which understands that teachers and students co-experience and co-create the conditions for their mutual well-being. (p. 14)

The next section provides further evidence to advocate for youth inclusion in CoPs, AIs, and any collaborative whole-school well-being initiative.

**Youth Voice**

Youth are an invaluable resource for building authentic, proactive, sustainable change in public education. When my profession comes up in conversation, people sometimes share their perception of “kids these days”. It can be negative, judgmental, or turn to a reflection of “the good old days” before technology. Emerging data does link increased screen time to the rise in youth depression and anxiety (Twenge et al., 2018), and I think that is a very serious topic we should be addressing through education. I also want to shine a different light on youth today. My true feelings about kids these days based on 13 years of teaching is that they are inspiring.

The majority of students I have had the privilege of teaching are curious, generous and optimistic, which is also reflected in a survey by Ipsos (2018) that highlights the prevalence of youth optimism worldwide. In my experience, youth show a strong work ethic when called to
rise to their potential. Rather than become discouraged and defeatist with childish politics, they ask important questions about how to engage their strengths to make an impact and create a better world. They are craving a stronger, more unified and equitable existence (Statistics Canada, 2018c) while valuing education and acknowledging that it is the path toward thriving for everyone. Kids these days embody two of the sources of hope I described at the outset: action and growth. As adults we need to offer support of this action and growth, and of the other two I identified: well-being and education.

Statistics Canada (2018c) released *A Portrait of Canadian Youth* that summarizes this generation as more diverse, educated, connected, and socially engaged than previous generations, reporting that youth contribute 29% of all volunteer hours in Canada, claiming “in many ways they are well positioned to succeed in today’s complex global society” (p. 35).

Challenges Canadian youth face include employment, social exclusion, cyberbullying, mental health challenges, addiction, and higher risk of obesity (Statistics Canada, 2018c). Research suggests that teaching skills of well-being can help to combat these challenges (Adler, 2016; Stafford-Brizard et al., 2017), including employment, as research by Nelis et al. (2011) links emotional competence to both psychological well-being and employability.

Laurence Steinberg (2014) refers to adolescence as the *age of opportunity*. As the second major period of developmental neural plasticity (after infancy), the adolescent brain experiences a heightened susceptibility to influence from both positive and negative experiences, creating both vulnerability and opportunity (Steinberg, 2014). Steinberg (2014) reports that the period of adolescence is lasting longer than it ever has before, which he suggests could be a great thing if we recognize it as a time to thrive, rather than survive. The highly influential period of
adolescence is ideal to encourage initiative-taking, self-awareness and determination, and preventative practices of well-being. These align with the science of authenticity and proactivity.

This is particularly important as the current generation is taking fewer risks (Steinberg, 2014), making them more vulnerable to anxiety and depression because they lack the tools to handle challenges (Lukinoff & Haidt, 2018). Steinberg himself, an expert in adolescent development, has his doubts that the increases in mental health problems are linked to social media (L. Steinberg, personal communication, October 27, 2018). Lukinoff and Haidt (2018) argue that youth are ill-equipped to manage the lows in life because adults protect them from living through the potential fallout of risk-taking. We can encourage youth to take more positive risks by valuing their voice and including it in the design process for a culture of well-being (Beattie & Rich, 2018). These are safe risks with informed guidance from adults, yet as a result they will experience failures and successes and build resilience resources that will transfer to other situations in their lives. I previously proposed that resilience is a well-being skill that strengthens the sustainability pillar; this relationship is important when stakeholders in a culture of living it, including youth, experience setbacks in implementation. Youth resilience both contributes to, and is cultivated by, their direct involvement in school well-being initiatives.

School well-being projects that harness youth voice provide further evidence. For example, Getting to “Y”: Youth Bring Meaning to the Youth Risk Behaviour Survey (GTY) is a “positive youth development/youth participatory action research initiative, whereby students analyze their school health data and use [it] as a starting point to create change in their school community” (Garnett et al., 2019, p. 1). The program empowers youth-as-researchers and adult-youth partnerships. It facilitates youth engagement in their own health data story, teaches research skills including data analysis, synthesis, and dissemination, and validates their own
voice in designing an action plan to improve school well-being (Garnett et al., 2019). Change becomes an authentic reflection of the community while empowering youth for future citizenship and social action (Garnett et al., 2019). Feedback from youth participants and adult coordinators emphasized four processes that were particularly impactful: training, data analysis, a community dialogue event, and action orientation (Garnett et al., 2019). Youth want to participate in school well-being projects (Garnett et al., 2019) and developing research skills may nudge them toward taking more positive risks – experimenting with innovative ideas to create positive change.

Additionally, research suggests that youth-to-adult partnerships can proactively improve academic achievement, renew hope, promote ownership that sparks motivation, boost citizenship and feelings of mattering in the community, and cultivate agency (Beattie & Rich, 2018). According to Beattie and Rich (2018), partnering with youth to create a school culture change in well-being empowers proactivity, impacts well-being, and positions youth as active stakeholders in public education (strengthening both authenticity and sustainability). Youth-to-youth partnerships in well-being promotion are equally impactful. Research by the Behavior Change for Good Initiative suggests that involving youth in an advisor/mentorship role may result in reciprocal benefits (Eskreis-Winkler, Milkman, Gromet, & Duckworth, 2019). In a study of nearly 2000 high school students, students who provided advice to other students on academic and psychological/motivational skills earned higher grades in math and other subjects (Eskreis-Winkler et al., 2019).

Youth are at the center of our collective why. In tandem with our psychological and organizational resources, our ultimate resource for building meaningful, sustainable practices of well-being in public education lives among the students. This demographic makes up the majority of a school’s population; if they are living it, that is grassroots power at its best.
Leveraging student voice in creating a culture of well-being has reciprocal benefits, as the mere act of participation can enhance youth well-being (Beattie & Rich, 2018). Efforts to strengthen a school culture are bolstered by authentic youth participation (Beattie & Rich, 2018). Change must reflect their identities and needs, which requires their input for success and sustainability. To further strengthen all three pillars, processes need to proactively plan for expected student cohort turnover (i.e., every three to five years as students move toward graduation) and ensure recurring opportunities for new student input and ownership. This also highlights the importance of CoPs and AIs as vehicles for collaboration between all stakeholders, including youth.

**Enabling Leadership and Change**

Christopher Peterson (2006), a founding member of the positive psychology movement, believed that the field and its interventions should move beyond the individual and cultivate *enabling institutions* at the organizational level. He discusses *The Good School* that enables the building of character, responsibility, and well-being. The evidence discussed throughout this paper illustrates the positive impact of an enabling environment. I believe it can make or break a sustainable school culture of well-being, and school leadership is the driving force behind it. As White (personal communication, June 25, 2018) notes, “the role of leadership is one of the most underrated elements of growing well-being in schools. If you have it, you’ll find evidence of transformation; if you don’t have it, it can crumble your efforts.”

A colleague of mine recently completed her Master of Educational Leadership, generally considered a requirement to become a Principal or Assistant Principal in Canada. I asked if well-being was part of the content in her graduate program, or if she was familiar with Positive Organizational Scholarship (POS). POS is a field of research focused on building conditions of organizational flourishing for the benefit of both the individual and the collective (Cameron,
Dutton, & Quinn, 2003; Dutton & Glynn, 2008). She responded “no” to both. Given the state of mental health, we have a responsibility to infuse well-being and establish the pillars in leadership education. This can be achieved by presenting POS and positive psychology/well-being science to current and future leaders in education; they are integral grassroots stakeholders who are or will be in a position to build the three pillars of living it for an entire school ecosystem. The engagement of this stakeholder group is critical.

Building a whole-school culture of well-being does not need to be either top down or bottom up, but rather all of the above and everything in between (L. Waters, personal communication, June 25, 2018). The key is that it happens together; staff engagement in whole-school well-being is critical (Deschesnes et al., 2014; Deschesnes, Martin, & Hill, 2003; Hoare et al., 2017). At the same time, with or without leadership support, building a sense of value for living it requires proactive initiative (Cangiano & Parker, 2016), as well as the motivating and unifying powers of authenticity (Kernis & Goldman, 2006; Ryan & Deci, 2001; Thacker, 2016).

In a Canadian study exploring teachers’ experiences of power structures, Martin (2009) reports three common influences on school workplace dynamics: competition, patriarchy, and neo-liberal education policies. While these may be uncomfortable to call out, they can be barriers to an educator’s capacity to thrive in their workplace and to strengthening the pillars of an inclusive culture of well-being. Schools are workplaces, and the culture of that workplace matters. We need educational leaders who are equipped to build a positive work culture in one of the most, if not the most, important and impactful workplaces in our society.

If school leadership is disengaged or part of the problem, there are still ways to do the right thing and initiate change. Positive deviance is a concept from POS research which, in contrast to the negative intentions of traditional deviance, refers to voluntary, honourable
behaviours that substantially deviate from organizational norms (Spreitzer & Sonenshein, 2004). Subjective well-being may even be a potential outcome of positive deviance (Spreitzer & Sonenshein, 2003). Three forces drive positive deviance: positive emotions, positive meaning, and positive relationships; these unlock capacity-building and optimal functioning (Dutton & Glynn, 2008). While uncovering further POS research is beyond the scope of this paper, it has much to offer the discussion of effectively living well-being science in schools.

Practical wisdom may also enable the three pillars of living it as a driver of positive deviance. Aristotle’s practical wisdom, or phronesis, refers to making the morally right decision according to context and common good (Schwartz & Sharpe, 2006). Put another way by Schwartz and Sharpe (2006), it is the moral will to do the right thing, and the moral skill to figure out what that is; “the virtue without which other virtues or character strengths fail to produce effective action” (p. 379). In the pursuit of public whole-school well-being, the initiation of culture change and application of strategies may run into bureaucratic barriers that will require stakeholders to employ practical wisdom in judging the right thing to do, at the right time, in the proper context (Schwartz & Sharpe, 20016).

A transformation is necessary in order for practical wisdom to be nurtured in teachers, students, leaders, and education policy makers, inviting rule-bending and improvising in service of others (Schwartz & Sharpe, 2006). As teachers we may know the right thing to do, and want to do it, but are restricted by rigidity in curriculum, policy, or societal expectations. For example, the Psychology 30 curriculum in Alberta has not been updated since 1985. Psychological science has advanced since then. I applied practical wisdom in my own classroom context and chose to teach beyond the prescribed curriculum for the benefit of students’ learning and well-being.
According to Schwartz and Sharpe (2006), when bureaucracy takes a backseat, practical wisdom and well-being can be cultivated more authentically; I believe this is necessary to establish a school culture of *living it.* “You cannot,” Schwartz and Sharpe (2006) argue, “have a positive psychology without paying special attention to practical wisdom, and you cannot cultivate practical wisdom without paying special attention to the shaping of positive social institutions” (p. 391). As I have advocated throughout this paper, our teachers, students, schools, and communities deserve this shift.

A culture of well-being is a culture of mattering. Prilleltensky (2012, 2016) describes mattering as *adding value* (impact) and *feeling valued* (recognition). Mattering is foundational to well-being and cannot be experienced in isolation (Prilleltensky, 2016). To create a culture of mattering, all voices of a community need to be heard and recognition is necessary to avoid feeling invisible (Prilleltensky, 2012, 2016). Ideally, school leaders make a concerted effort to establish a culture in which staff feel recognized for their impact. In the absence of recognition from a principal, we can focus on both impact and recognition directly with students and colleagues. Shifting the source creates a buffer against external factors that block our ability to add value, including autonomy restrictions. This may in turn fuel proactivity. Two questions can be asked of individuals to quickly gauge the mattering climate: “Do you feel valued at work?” and “Do you add value at work?” (I. Prilleltensky, personal communication, November 16, 2018)

According to Prilleltensky (2016), a sense of mattering at individual, relational, and organizational levels elicits engagement. A wider sense of group mattering is also important to personal well-being because when the collective adds value and feels valued, the individuals do too (Prilleltensky, 2012, 2016). Therefore, a culture of mattering will bolster the likelihood that
students and teachers will engage in proactive action and well-being practices of a *living it* culture together – for their own sake, and for the sake of the school community.

Leadership, positive deviance, practical wisdom, and mattering work together to initiate and sustain change within a school culture. Each contributes to the pillars because they include all voices in creating a shared vision that reflects and values community context (authentic) and empower the creative capacity of stakeholders (proactive) which generates an ongoing commitment to the implementation and growth of living well-being (sustainability).

**Next Steps**

Below I identify three areas for future research, application, and conceptualization of *living it*: strengthening the case for the three pillars model, creating a pilot CoP starting in pre-service teacher education, and generating a resource of the 41+ well-being skills, behaviours, and mindsets that includes a menu of relevant measurements and applications.

**Three Pillars Research**

Further empirical evidence is needed to explore the impact of authenticity, proactivity, and sustainability on a school culture of living well-being. Exploration of relevant measures, and a more sophisticated and thorough understanding of their potential interaction is important. How do we measure a culture of *living it*? In what ways could the pillars be operationalized for research? Future research could investigate how specific well-being skills, behaviours, and/or mindsets effectively cultivate *living it* in schools; i.e., how does the well-being science correlate with each pillar of *living it* and which tools are deemed to be most effective in cultivating whole-school well-being? To what extent does their presence and/or impact shift if there is a community of practice, or if youth voice is involved, or if the local pre-service teacher education program infuses well-being into its curriculum?
To date, metrics for living it in a whole-school well-being approach are limited. Further research needs to track the impact of various strategies, on school staff, students, leaders, etc. Authenticity means we cannot just share the good news. We need frontline public school stakeholders to feel comforted by the collective approach, acknowledging that this work is not necessarily easy, but accessible and worth the investment of time, energy, and resources. It is important to learn from others who have persevered through the challenges and found affordable, authentic, sustainable ways to cultivate proactive well-being. I also believe that these three pillars are integral to an individual’s personal practice of well-being, and to contexts beyond an educational institution. I think there is value in exploring this possibility and the role of adapting these three elements in a personal practice of well-being.

**Teacher Education and Community of Practice**

Educators are identified in the research as key determinants of effective school cultures of well-being (Jourdan, Samdal, & Diagne, 2008; St. Leger, 2000). Their engagement is a critical element (Jourdan et al., 2008; Stolp, Wilkins, & Rain, 2015) and needs to address relational and identity factors (J. Dutton, personal communication, June 14, 2019). I believe the well-being of educators also creates the most impactful ripple effect. They are the common denominator, acting as a liaison between students, parents, principals, community, school board, university, and government. Since well-being is in service of learning outcomes (Hattie, 2009; Stafford-Brizard, 2016), we have a moral responsibility to equip all teachers with these tools. Educator capacity can be empowered during their post-secondary training to build proactive habits of well-being that may prevent burnout and attrition, promote meaning and engagement, and establish a positive practice that can be built upon as their career evolves. Current and compelling statistics and science indicate the urgency of this work.
An essential step in effective Pos Ed implementation is an investment in targeted in-service teacher training (Adler, 2016; Seligman & Adler, 2018). For public schools this investment may be challenging due to the time and financial constraints inherent in publicly funded institutions. An investment in training should be embedded into existing post-secondary educator curriculum (Spurgeon & Thompson, 2018). In addition to specific course content, I believe a strategic continuing education structure is also necessary, with accessible booster courses to receive updated science and tools. This can be achieved through a partnership between universities, community organizations, school boards, and government. Building well-being into teacher education is underway at the University of Adelaide (Seligman & Adler, 2019), and in the United States (Spurgeon & Thompson, 2018).

This work has also started in the province of Alberta through a collaborative initiative between the University of Calgary and a local community partner, Ever Active Schools, called Teachers of Tomorrow (Williams, Murray, & Russel-Mayhew, 2019). Together they have implemented the first CSH course to become a mandatory requirement of a Bachelor of Education (BEd) program. “The Werklund School of Education has embedded teacher well-being through the programme” (Williams et al., p. 21), with a course structure that seeks to model a balanced workload to proactively address the culture of burnout (Williams et al., 2019).

This could also be extended through a continuing education partnership between the university, community organizations, and school boards. I propose a Community of Practice pilot program for self-identified health champion teachers (Morrison & Peterson, 2013) that begins in pre-service education and continues after graduation. The structure of the CoP would be generated by the participants themselves, through an AI (see How Part 2).
Future longitudinal studies could explore short and long-term impact of this program on teachers’ and students’ subjective well-being and health outcomes. Baseline subjective well-being data could be collected upon entry to the BEd program, and then tracked throughout the pilot and the educators’ initial years of teaching. Among the battery of metrics that could be used, it would be interesting to see if optimistic versus pessimistic explanatory styles would reflect a similar impact to Seligman and Schulman’s (1986) study at MetLife, where less optimistic employees were more likely to quit and be less productive and engaged. Along with the rest of optimism’s benefits, it may be a worthwhile mindset to intentionally cultivate in teacher education to proactively address the rates of disengagement and burnout.

**Well-Being Science Resource**

To help inform work in the three pillars, it is also important to present the evidence (in layman’s terms) for the 41 skills, behaviours, and mindsets of well-being science, and propose corresponding strategies to strengthen the three pillars of living it. I believe an adaptable document summarizing empirical evidence and affordable resources, application strategies, and accessible measurement tools would be helpful for public education stakeholders.

We need to build action research capacity to improve our own programs and to generate attention at the policy level. Educators and students are capable and want to be part of the solution to the concerning statistics of languishing in mental health. This menu of tools should include validated metrics to empower public education stakeholders to pursue action research, and to build upon the proposed illustration (see Figure 3) of specific well-being strategies to target authenticity, proactivity, and sustainability in a whole-school well-being approach.
Conclusion

Education needs to be combined with a sincere, compassionate motivation. When intelligence and warm-heartedness are combined, individuals will be happier and more at peace with themselves, their families will benefit, and as a result the wider community will benefit too.

- Dalai Lama

My hope for the future lies in our courage to acknowledge the richness of our own human potential. We have a responsibility to not let ourselves, or each other, get weighed down by fear, uncertainty, or feelings of helplessness. This will require creativity, collaboration, and intentional consideration of context, culture, and evidence. It will require us to identify and discuss shared values across political party lines to incite policy change. Most importantly, it will require intentional application of well-being science in innovative ways, both individually and collectively. It demands that everyone take the very risks we ask our students and children to take, and to practice what we preach.

Living a practice of well-being can be made more accessible, authentic, and sustainable for publicly funded schools. Well-being is not expensive, we just need to rethink ways to train and empower educators, leaders, students, and other stakeholders in education. Compelling science shows that these skills, behaviours, and mindsets are in service of both learning and enhanced psychological and physical health (Adler, 2016; Seligman et al., 2009; Stafford-Brizard, 2016, 2017); we need to invest the best of science, compassion, and experience into a normalized presence of well-being in public education systems.

Authenticity helps to ensure this is relevant to context and moves beyond ideas and lip-service into visible, measurable practice. Proactivity builds an upward spiral of change through
empowered prevention and promotion of well-being, rather than reactive approaches. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, *sustainability* in a practice and culture of well-being creates a long-lasting and far-reaching ripple effect, from the individual to the collective in public education. This investment in the whole by strengthening individual parts of the system creates stronger schools, families, and communities, has the potential to shift the DNA of teacher education and professional sustainability, and infuses hope for the future into our strongest asset for local and global thriving.
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