

Teacher Wellbeing in Turnaround Lab Schools

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Acknowledgments

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“When you really want something, the universe always conspires in your favor.”—Paulo Coelho

Table of Contents

Executive Summary.....3

Introduction.....7

Organization Context.....8

Problem of Practice.....10

Literature Review.....11

Conceptual Framework.....16

Project Questions.....17

Project Design.....18

Data Analysis.....24

Findings.....28

Recommendations.....39

Conclusion.....48

References.....49

Appendices.....53

 Appendix A: Survey Overview 53

 Appendix B: Survey Questions by Sequence 55

 Appendix C: Survey Questions by Indicator 56

 Appendix D: Interview Questions 57

 Appendix E: Calculation Guide for PERMA Scores 58

 Appendix F: PERMA Scores by School 59

 Appendix G: Codebook 60

Executive Summary

Organizational Context

Relay Lab Schools is a nonprofit, 501c3 organization designed to partner with urban public schools in Texas. As a lab school, it is an affiliate with Relay Graduate School of Education, a national nonprofit institution of higher education. At the time this project began, Relay Lab Schools managed two public schools in the San Antonio Independent School District (SAISD), Ogden Academy and Storm Elementary. Both schools were also on the “Improvement Required” list in the district. The SAISD charged Relay Lab Schools to “turnaround” the school by improving student outcomes. To make gains towards this effort, Relay Lab Schools instituted many new structures, policies, and systems. However, the leadership at Relay Lab Schools was concerned about the impact of the changes on teachers’ wellbeing. This study aimed to investigate the extent that teachers at Relay Lab Schools reported healthy wellbeing as well as the elements of the Relay Lab Schools’ organizational structures that teachers reported affected their wellbeing. In addition, this study aimed to provide recommendations on how Relay Lab Schools can improve teachers’ wellbeing.

Project Questions:

1. To what extent do teachers in Relay Lab Schools report healthy wellbeing?
2. What elements of the Relay Lab Schools’ organizational structure do teachers perceive contribute to their wellbeing?

Conceptual Framework

I used Seligman’s theory of wellbeing, which is a multidimensional approach to understanding wellbeing. According to Seligman (2011), there are five measurable elements of wellbeing known as PERMA: positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment. The

TEACHER WELLBEING AT TURNAROUND LAB SCHOOLS

Workplace PERMA Profiler, which measures all five components of PERMA, defines each dimension of PERMA as such:

Positive Emotions: general tendencies toward feeling content and joy

Engagement: being absorbed, interested, and involved in one's work

Relationships: feeling connected, supported, and valued by others in the organization

Meaning: having a sense of purpose in one's work

Accomplishment: marked by honors and awards received, but also feelings of achievement

(Kern, 2014)

Findings:

1. The highest wellbeing indicator for teachers at Relay Lab Schools was a sense of meaning, a finding reiterated in the teacher interviews.
2. Positive relationships with school-based co-workers were a positive indicator of healthy wellbeing for teachers at Relay Lab Schools who participated in the interviews.
3. Teachers at Relay Lab Schools who participated in interviews reported that the coaching structure negatively impacted the wellbeing elements of relationships and accomplishment.
4. Teachers at Relay Lab Schools reported that lack of autonomy with curriculum and instruction negatively impacted their sense of accomplishment.
5. Teachers described a lack of clarity regarding the changes at Relay Lab Schools as having a negative impact on their wellbeing.

Recommendations:

Based on these findings, I made the following recommendations for Relay Lab Schools:

1. **Reframe existing changes at Relay Lab Schools to align with goals that are important to teachers' sense of meaning.**

Teachers need to see, hear, and understand how the changes that Relay Lab Schools made at both Ogden Academy and Storm Elementary will move them closer to achieving their goals of increasing student achievement and ultimately improving the status of the school and the community. By creating this alignment and leveraging teachers' sense of meaning and purpose, Relay Lab Schools can not only invest teachers in the changes but also increase teachers' sense of accomplishment.

2. **Allow teachers to pilot suggested changes with other teachers on a small scale and monitor results through iterative rounds to involve teachers in the change process.**

I suggest Relay Lab Schools allow teachers to participate in pilots to test, study, and refine recommended changes that teachers would like to see by implementing on a smaller scale through Plan, Do, Study, and Act (PDSA) cycles. Allowing teachers to pilot changes can provide teachers with a greater sense of autonomy and involvement, which can increase their positive emotions. It can also increase teachers' sense of accomplishment as they work to improve changes during the pilot process before implementation across the entire school. Lastly, by working with fellow teachers in pilots, Relay Lab Schools can leverage the positive relationships teachers already have with each other. All of these factors can increase teachers' wellbeing.

3. **Conduct an external process evaluation of the coaching program at Relay Lab Schools.**

An external process evaluation of the coaching program can assist Relay Lab Schools in investigating how coaches currently conduct their coaching sessions and what factors are effective and ineffective in increasing teacher wellbeing and overall performance. The

TEACHER WELLBEING AT TURNAROUND LAB SCHOOLS

information obtained from the evaluation can guide Relay Lab Schools on developing their coaches to build more authentic relationships with teachers and to increase teachers' sense of accomplishment.

By incorporating these recommendations, Relay Lab Schools could positively impact all five elements of teachers' wellbeing: positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment.

Introduction

Relay Lab Schools is a non-profit 501c3 organization located in San Antonio, Texas. As a lab school, it is an affiliate of Relay Graduate School of Education, which is a national non-profit institution of higher education. Relay Graduate School of Education specifically works to bring more highly qualified teachers to communities of color. As such, the partnership of Relay Graduate School of Education with Relay Lab Schools was a hopeful prospect at its creation. Relay Lab Schools has a unique organizational structure in that it has elements of a lab school model and elements of a turnaround school model. Its focus on teacher training, research based curricula and practices, and service to the community are all factors that are associated with a lab school model. However, lab schools traditionally operate in more affluent, white communities. Relay Lab Schools are located in the poorest zip codes in San Antonio. On the other hand, Relay Lab Schools has elements of a turnaround school model as well. Turnaround schools generally operate in low performing schools in communities of color. The idea of a turnaround school is to completely change the current operations of the school so that it can swiftly move from low performing to higher performing. This may involve implementing new systems and structures as well as replacing employees. While Relay Lab Schools, did not replace all of the former employees, they did replace many of the former organizational and operational structures. With this unique model, Relay Lab Schools' leadership wanted to have a better understanding of what factors may be affecting the wellbeing of its teachers. This study not only investigated the state of teacher wellbeing at Relay Lab Schools and the organizational factors teachers perceived contributed to their wellbeing, but it also provides recommendations to Relay Lab Schools' leadership to improve teachers' positive sense of wellbeing.

Organization Context

Relay Graduate School of Education (GSE) is an accredited, national non-profit institution of higher education whose mission is to “teach teachers and school leaders to develop in all students the academic skills and strength of character needed to succeed in college and life” (Relay GSE, n.d). There are several Relay GSE campuses across the country including three in the Texas areas of Houston, Dallas-Fort Worth, and San Antonio. Relay GSE and the San Antonio Independent School District (SAISD) partnered in 2017 when Relay GSE provided training and coaching to the principal of Ogden Elementary as well as placed 25 teacher residents in the school who were students of the Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) program. Approximately one-third of the initial cohort of Relay GSE teacher residents were substitute teachers, teacher aides, and paraprofessionals who were already employed by SAISD (McNeel, 2018). During this same year, the Texas legislature passed Senate Bill 1882 which “provides incentives for districts to contract to partner with an open-enrollment charter school, institutions of higher education, non-profits, or government entities” (Texas Education Agency, n.d). This partnership included a potential increase in state funding for low-performing schools that would also receive “an exemption from certain accountability interventions for two years” including closure (Texas Education Agency, n.d).

Relay Lab Schools, an affiliate of Relay Graduate School of Education, was then established as a non-profit, 501c3 organization whose mission is to “partner with urban public school districts to create and manage neighborhood schools that prepare all kids to enter, succeed in, and graduate from college” (Relay Lab Schools, n.d). Relay Lab Schools’ model combines aspects of both turnaround schools and lab schools. It incorporates the lab school model in that they partner with a higher education institution (Relay GSE), train teachers and teacher candidates, and seek to employ

TEACHER WELLBEING AT TURNAROUND LAB SCHOOLS

innovative research-based practices. However, simultaneously, Relay Lab Schools' model has characteristics of turnaround schools, which seek to overhaul existing structures and staff and is a reform strategy that generally operates in low-performing schools. It is worth noting that when Relay Lab Schools began its management of Ogden Academy in 2018, employees were able to retain their SAISD contracts, which meant that existing teachers were able to stay at the school. This is not a common practice of most turnaround models. The SAISD approved a 10-year management agreement with Relay Lab Schools starting with the operational and management authority over Ogden Academy under Senate Bill 1882. Ogden Academy has been on the "Improvement Required" list for the past six years and if Relay Lab Schools cannot show improvement, the SAISD may force closure. Currently, Relay Lab Schools manages two San Antonio public schools, Ogden Academy and Storm Elementary.

Ogden Academy serves over 600 pre-kindergarten through 8th grade students and 98% of the student population identify as Hispanic and 36% as English Language Learners (Great Schools, 2021). In addition, 97% of students qualify for free or reduced lunch. Storm Elementary serves over 300 pre-kindergarten through 6th grade students and 95% of its students identify as Hispanic while 4% identify as African American. 27% of Storm's students are English Language Learners and 99% qualify for free or reduced lunch (Great Schools, 2021). Both schools were already on the "Improvement Required" list when Relay Lab Schools began its management of the schools. While the SAISD originally granted limited time (two years) to Relay Lab Schools to show progress in student academic outcomes, the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted an entire year of in-person instruction. Both schools had to transition to virtual learning, which negatively affected Relay's ability to meet the requirements of the original

SAISD timeline. However, the state of Texas declared a state of disaster due to COVID-19 and did not rate any districts or schools for the 2019-2020 year, nor have they released 2020-2021 ratings.

Problem of Practice

The instructional superintendent of Relay Lab Schools noted that they have implemented many new systems, structures, curriculum, and coaching to help with school improvement efforts at both Ogden Academy and Storm Elementary. However, she stated that teachers were struggling with the changes of the new model and that they expressed some dissatisfaction with their experience at Relay Lab Schools. The instructional superintendent wanted to gather specific information about what was causing this common experience for teachers at both Ogden Academy and Storm Elementary. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to investigate teacher wellbeing at Relay Lab Schools and the factors teachers report affected their wellbeing. In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic forced both Ogden Academy and Storm Elementary to transition to remote learning. This new teaching environment and increased time pressure to show improvements to SAISD may be an additional stressor to teachers' wellbeing.

Literature Review

Teacher Wellbeing

Teachers comprise the largest occupational group investigated in burnout research (Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998). Burnout can lead to depression, fatigue, substance abuse, cardiovascular disease, and sleep deprivation, which can negatively affect job performance. (Grant, 2013). Maslach and Jackson (1981) identified three core components of burnout: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and lack of personal accomplishment. They note, “Burnout is a syndrome of emotional exhaustion and cynicism that occurs frequently among individuals who do ‘people-work’ of some kind” (Maslach & Jackson, 1981, p. 99). Teachers have to navigate relationships with students, parents, other teachers, administrators, district office staff, and countless other stakeholders. Teachers’ perceptions of interpersonal factors are highly influential on teacher burnout (Fernet et al., 2012). In addition, teachers are vulnerable to give burnout due to the temporal nature of education (Grant, 2013). Teachers give of themselves and may not see the benefits of their work until years later. Personality factors such as neuroticism, anomie, and Type A personality as well as job conditions can contribute to teacher burnout (Mazur & Lynch, 1989; Kokkinos, 2007). Job conditions that increase the likelihood of teacher burnout range from work overload, responsibility, and lack of support and recognition to the way that teachers must implement curriculum (Mazur & Lynch, 1989; Cenkseven-Onder & Sari, 2009).

With the volatile nature of schools, change in job demands is a catalyst for burnout (Schaufeli et al., 2009, p. 908). The COVID-19 pandemic magnified the changes in job demands for teachers who not only had to navigate online teaching but also may have needed to home school their own kids at the same time. The 2021 State of U.S. Teacher Survey indicated that nearly one in four teachers were

planning to leave their jobs by the end of the 2020-2021 school year as compared to one in six prior to the pandemic (Steiner & Woo, 2021). Teachers' perception of their school environment can alter the course of teacher burnout (Fernet et al., 2012). Hascher et al. (2021) suggest using a domain-specific approach to understand contextual factors within schools that support and hinder teacher wellbeing. Mazur and Lynch (1989) state, "The organizational structure of schools is important to understanding its contribution to teacher burnout" (p. 349). Different school models employ different organizational structures and these models can have an impact on teacher wellbeing in different ways. Two such models are the lab school model and the turnaround model.

Lab School Model

The lab school model began in the 1800s when John Dewey "started the progressive education movement and opened the University of Chicago Laboratory School" (Wilcox-Herzog & McLaren, 2012, p.1). Laboratory schools generally had a three-part mission "focused on becoming facilities that engaged in research (on child development), training (of researchers, teachers, and service providers), and service (to families and communities)" (McBride et al., 2012 p. 154). While lab schools have changed and adapted over the years, known variously as "experimental school," "professional development school," "practice school," "university training school," or "teaching school," teacher training and development has maintained its place as a core feature of the lab school model (Henning et al., 2015). McBride et al. (2012) note, "one key role of many lab schools [. . .] is a teaching and observation function" (p. 157). Erikson et al. (2012) also note, "Since their introduction in the 1800s, laboratory schools have played an important role in testing new concepts of teaching" (p. 1). Knudsen Lindauer and Berghout Austin (1999) suggest, "The configuration of a laboratory school, with its unique blend of foci on theory, research, and practice, as well as the presence of

trained master teachers, is designed specifically for the preparation of students” (1999, p. 59). This structure of master teacher paired with education students provides both parties an opportunity to develop their craft. Researchers suggest that “quality of staff members, program philosophy, and favorable adult-child ratios” are all favorable aspects of the lab school model from parents’ perspective (McBride & Hicks, 1998, p. 28-29). They also note the laboratory schools’ focus on, and success with, academics as a positive quality (Erikson et al., 2012, p. 1). However, McBride and Hicks reveal, “[. . .] the perspectives of staff members working in such programs have also been neglected” (1998, p. 22).

Teacher Wellbeing at Lab Schools

While the focus on teaching and academics are highlights of the lab school model, the popularity of lab schools has diminished over the years for various reasons. The International Association of Laboratory Schools’ (IALS) membership numbers have dropped from about 200 in the mid-1960s to about 60 today (Sparks, Education Week, 2015). IALS notes that “the number may be twice that, counting the various similar iterations, such as model and demonstration schools connected to universities and community colleges” (Sparks, Education Week, 2015). Each lab school affiliates with a different higher education institution so each model has different characteristics. McBride et al. (2012) state, “The very nature of such diverse characteristics of lab schools makes it difficult to consider common solutions or collaborations across settings” (p. 155). The inability to collaborate across lab schools can cause stress for the educators in lab schools where innovation is a key expectation. While the teacher training aspect of lab schools yields innovative practices and lower teacher-student ratios, the structure of this model can be overwhelming for the staff. As Erikson et al. (2012) suggest,

Another perceived weakness of laboratory schools is the frenzied environment. Most lab schools are designed to train teacher candidates. This requires student teachers and other school and university personnel to frequently enter and exit classrooms to facilitate observation of teacher candidates and the instructional methods used in the classroom throughout the year. This type of activity can be disruptive to children, who are trying to concentrate on their class material, as well as instructors trying to teach. (p. 2)

The complexity of the lab school model affects staff retention. McBride and Hicks (1998) note that parents and staff view the lab school model as “having the least positive impact on staff turnover rates” (p. 26). While maintaining positive teacher wellbeing can be challenging for lab schools, there are even more challenges faced by teachers in turnaround schools.

Turnaround Schools

Turnaround schools generally serve a different demographic than lab schools. Where lab schools generally partner with colleges and universities in more affluent white neighborhoods, turnaround schools mostly operate in minority serving areas. Pham et al. (2020) note, “Broadly called ‘turnaround’ the most recent national efforts to improve low-performing schools have been primarily shaped by four models prescribed under the federal SIG program: transformation, turnaround, restart, and closure” (p. 4). Being that closure is highly unfavorable to parents and communities, “School turnaround—a reform strategy that involved changing school management, replacing the majority of the teaching staff, and making significant changes to school operations—has become an increasingly popular response to the challenge of low-performing schools” (Cucchuara et. al, 2015, p. 260). There is a thin line between transformation and turnaround as traditionally, “turnaround involves replacing the principal [and] rehiring no more than 50% of the teachers,” but the turnaround

model may also implement new governance structures and curricula, and other programmatic changes (Cucchuara et al., 2015, p. 261). The programmatic changes, new structures and curricula, new leadership, and new staff intend to radically disrupt and transform the current status that is underperforming. While this description fits many turnaround models, there are variations to this strategy.

Teacher Wellbeing in Turnaround Schools

Researchers reveal, “[. . .] we know very little about how variations in organizational structure, culture, and practices shape teachers’ day-to-day experiences and their beliefs about the turnaround process” (Cucchuara et al., 2015, p. 260). Research also suggests, “that the variation that mattered most to teachers was in the domains of organizational function—particularly the level of consistency and institutional clarity—and organizational culture—particularly the ways teachers felt they were (or were not) supported and treated respectfully by school leaders” (Cucchuara et al., 2015, p. 261). Cucchuara et al. (2015) note, “the extent to which teachers believe turnaround schools provide supportive and positive working environments may be crucial to the success of this reform strategy” (p. 261). They also suggest, “turnaround leaders should focus less on convincing teachers that turnaround will work and more on providing a working environment conducive to success” (Cucchuara et al., 2015, p.280). Understanding the impact of organizational structures and culture on teachers is a key component to investment in changes occurring in a turnaround model because “turnaround schools, and urban school reform more generally, cannot succeed without addressing teachers’ concerns and creating conditions that make teachers feel supported, respected, and capable in their work” (Cucchuara et al., 2015, p.282). Feeling supported, respected, and capable are all factors related to maintaining teachers’ social and emotional wellbeing regardless of the model.

Conceptual Framework

Seligman's theory of wellbeing spawned from the field of positive psychology. The field of psychology has extensive research on mental illness and depression as well as a host of ways to identify signs and symptoms. The focus of psychology has been on the deficits that cause human mental and emotional suffering in order to bring people from a lowly state to a more level state of mind. However, being level does not equate to thriving health or wellbeing. Seligman, the founder of positive psychology, pondered this idea and felt the need to examine what makes humans flourish and how people can maximize their wellbeing. This led to Seligman's development of a multidimensional theory of wellbeing that has five main components: positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment, otherwise known as PERMA (Seligman, 2011). Seligman's PERMA framework allows researchers to hone in on specific areas that impact wellbeing. This allows practitioners to develop specific interventions to increase certain areas of wellbeing. Turner and Thielking (2019) showed how teachers using specific interventions to improve aspects of their PERMA wellbeing not only increased their reported feelings of positive wellbeing but also positively affected their teaching practice and student learning.

Butler and Kern (2016) developed the PERMA Profiler to measure the five components of PERMA. Recent studies used the PERMA profiler in their research to measure employee and teacher wellbeing due to its brevity, simplicity for researchers and practitioners, and usefulness in planning interventions (MacIntyre, P.D. et al., 2019; Kolakowski, et al., 2020). The Workplace PERMA Profiler is an adapted version from the original PERMA Profiler to include questions specifically related to work context (Kern, 2014). This study will use the following Workplace PERMA Profiler definitions of the PERMA components of wellbeing:

Positive Emotions-general tendencies toward feeling content and joy

Engagement-being absorbed, interested, and involved in one's work

Relationships-feeling connected, supported and valued by others in the organization

Meaning-having a sense of purpose in one's work

Accomplishment-marked by honors and awards received, but also feelings of achievement

(Kern, 2014)

Seligman's PERMA framework guides the investigation of the following project questions:

Project Questions

1. To what extent do teachers at Relay Lab Schools report healthy well-being?
2. What elements of the Relay Lab Schools' organizational structure do teachers perceive contribute to their well-being?

Project question #1 will incorporate the use of the Workplace PERMA Profiler to disaggregate the different components of wellbeing in terms of positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment. Project question #2 will further investigate teachers' wellbeing from the Workplace PERMA Profiler to gain specific information on which organizational structures at Relay Lab Schools positively or negatively affect the wellbeing of its teachers.

Project Design

Data Collection

In order to investigate the project questions, I conducted a survey and interviews with Relay Lab School teachers. I gave the survey as a baseline assessment of teachers' wellbeing at both Ogden Academy and Storm Elementary to answer the first project question: To what extent do teachers at Relay Lab Schools report healthy wellbeing? I used the Workplace PERMA Profiler survey because it is an established, validated survey. The Workplace PERMA Profiler uses the PERMA framework to provide a multidimensional assessment of wellbeing. It adjusts questions from the PERMA Profiler survey to relate to the workplace and measures all five components of PERMA including negative emotions, health, loneliness, and overall happiness as used in a study of professionals across multiple disciplines to investigate the impact of employee well-being on organizational commitment (Kolakowski et al., 2020). For this study, I eliminated the health questions from the survey because it is a measure that is not in the immediate control of Relay Lab Schools' leadership. Before sending the questions to Relay Lab Schools' teachers, I sent the questions to the instructional superintendent for approval. The instructional superintendent wanted the teachers to complete the survey during the same window that they were completing a different survey for the organization. She felt that by sending it at the same time, the response rate would be higher and teachers would not suffer from survey fatigue. She also wanted Relay Lab Schools to send out all of the communication regarding the study to the teachers. Therefore, I sent the links to the survey to the instructional superintendent who then sent the communication regarding the survey and the survey links to the principals of Ogden Academy and Storm Elementary. The principals then sent the communication to their respective teachers. Teachers at both Ogden Academy and Storm Elementary took the survey

TEACHER WELLBEING AT TURNAROUND LAB SCHOOLS

electronically via SurveyMonkey. Survey participants were anonymous. However, the survey asked participants to identify which Relay Lab School they worked for in order to analyze any differences that may exist in the data between the two schools. A total of 40 teachers responded to the survey (20 from Ogden Academy, 18 from Storm Elementary, and 2 who did not identify their school placements). The survey questions sent to teachers followed the original sequential order of the Workplace PERMA Profiler survey except for the elimination of the health questions. The survey informed project question #1: *To what extent do teachers at Relay Lab Schools report healthy wellbeing?*

Table 1
Survey Questions with Response Anchors

#	Survey Questions	Response Anchors	PERMA Indicator
1	To what extent is your work purposeful and meaningful?	0=not at all, 10=completely	Meaning
2	How often do you feel you are making progress towards accomplishing your work-related goals?	0=never 10=always	Accomplishment
3	At work, how often do you become absorbed in what you are doing?	0=never 10=always	Engagement
4	At work, how often do you feel joyful?	0=never 10=always	Positive Emotions
5	To what extent do you receive help and support from coworkers when you need it?	0=not at all, 10=completely	Relationships
6	At work, how often do you feel anxious?	0=never 10=always	Negative Emotions
7	How often do you achieve the important work goals you have set for yourself?	0=never 10=always	Accomplishment
8	In general, to what extent do you feel that what you do at work is valuable and worthwhile?	0=not at all, 10=completely	Meaning
9	At work, how often do you feel positive?	0=never 10=always	Positive Emotions
10	To what extent do you feel excited and interested in your work?	0=not at all, 10=completely	Engagement
11	How lonely do you feel at work?	0=not at all, 10=completely	Loneliness
12	At work, how often do you feel angry?	0=never 10=always	Negative Emotions
13	To what extent do you feel appreciated by your coworkers?	0=not at all, 10=completely	Relationships
14	How often are you able to handle your work-related responsibilities?	0=never 10=always	Accomplishment
15	To what extent do you generally feel that you have a sense of direction in your work?	0=not at all, 10=completely	Meaning
16	How satisfied are you with your professional relationships?	0=not at all, 10=completely	Relationships
17	At work, how often do you feel sad?	0=never 10=always	Negative Emotions
18	At work, how often do you lose track of time while doing something you enjoy?	0=never 10=always	Engagement
19	At work, to what extent do you feel contented?	0=not at all, 10=completely	Positive Emotions
20	Taking all things together, how happy would you say you are with your work?	0=not at all, 10=completely	Happiness

Each PERMA element on the Workplace PERMA Profiler has three questions associated with it. In addition, there are three questions related to negative emotions, one question related to loneliness, and one question related to overall happiness. I decided to keep these additional questions because they can add insight to teachers’ positive emotions and relationships.

Table 2
Survey Questions per PERMA Indicator

PERMA Indicators	Survey Questions
Positive Emotions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. At work, how often do you feel joyful? 2. At work, how often do you feel positive? 3. At work, to what extent do you feel contented?
Engagement	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. At work, how often do you become absorbed in what you are doing? 2. To what extent do you feel excited and interested in your work? 3. At work, how often do you lose track of time while doing something you enjoy?
Relationships	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To what extent do you receive help and support from coworkers when you need it? 2. To what extent do you feel appreciated by your coworkers? 3. How satisfied are you with your professional relationships?
Meaning	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To what extent is your work purposeful and meaningful? 2. In general, to what extent do you feel that what you do at work is valuable and worthwhile? 3. To what extent do you generally feel that you have a sense of direction in your work?
Negative Emotions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. At work, how often do you feel anxious? 2. At work, how often do you feel angry? 3. At work, how often do you feel sad?
Loneliness	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How lonely do you feel at work?
Happiness	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Taking all things together, how happy would you say you are with your work?

TEACHER WELLBEING AT TURNAROUND LAB SCHOOLS

Because the Workplace PERMA Profiler does not provide insight into why participants rate their wellbeing the way they do, I created interview questions to investigate the second project question: *What elements of the Relay Lab Schools' organizational structure do teachers perceive contribute to their wellbeing?* The interview questions aligned to the five components of the PERMA framework with each dimension having questions related to that specific indicator of wellbeing to gain greater context into each teacher's wellbeing. I piloted the interview questions with a group of doctoral students at Vanderbilt University to ensure clarity and alignment with PERMA wellbeing indicators.

Table 3
Interview Questions per PERMA Indicator

PERMA Indicators	Interview Questions
Positive Emotions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What do you really enjoy about your work at Relay Lab Schools? 2. What is the best part of your day? 3. What do you feel most positive about at Relay Lab Schools? 4. What do you feel least positive about at Relay Lab Schools?
Engagement	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. When are you most engaged in your work? 2. How do you utilize your strengths at work? 3. What do coaching and development look like?
Relationships	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How would you describe your relationship with leadership? (your coach, principal, Relay Lab Schools leaders) 2. How would you describe your relationships with other teachers at your school? 3. How would you describe your relationships with students?
Meaning	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What do you feel is the most impactful aspect of your job? 2. Do you feel like you are making a difference in your work? What makes you feel this way?
Accomplishment	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How successful do you feel in your work? Why? 2. Do you feel like you are growing as a teacher? Why or why not? 3. How are people recognized for their work at your school?
Overall Wellbeing	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Is there anything else that you would want to tell that would contribute to your wellbeing at work?

I met with the instructional superintendent to review the interview questions for approval. Similar to the survey, the instructional superintendent wanted Relay Lab Schools to send the communication regarding the interviews to teachers. I created a Calendly link for teachers to sign up for interviews. The link contained information regarding the purpose of the interviews that stated, “The purpose of this interview is to understand your experiences at Relay Lab Schools that impact your wellbeing. This interview is confidential and should last no longer than 20 minutes.” I sent the link to the instructional superintendent who forwarded it to the principals of both Ogden Academy and Storm Elementary to send out to teachers. Only one teacher had signed up to interview after a month of the survey opening. I used snowball sampling to get more teachers to sign up for interviews. Eventually, seven teachers signed up for interviews and I recorded each interview, with the permission of participants, for the sole purpose of maintaining accurate responses. I did not share the recordings with anyone and the only identifying information included in the interviews was the school where the participants worked and the grade level the participant taught. The purpose of including the grade level information was to analyze any differences across grade levels in each school if they were present.

Data Analysis

Survey Data. The Workplace PERMA Profiler focused on investigating project question #1: *To what extent do teachers at Relay Lab Schools report healthy wellbeing?* I calculated the wellbeing scores in Excel using the original recommended scoring guide from the researcher who created the Workplace PERMA Profiler. Kern (2014) recommends calculating the score by taking the average of the questions comprising each PERMA indicator, which will give an individual score for that particular

PERMA indicator. She suggests taking the average of all PERMA questions, excluding negative emotion, health, and loneliness to calculate the overall wellbeing score as indicated in *Table 4*.

Table 4
Calculation Guide for PERMA Scores

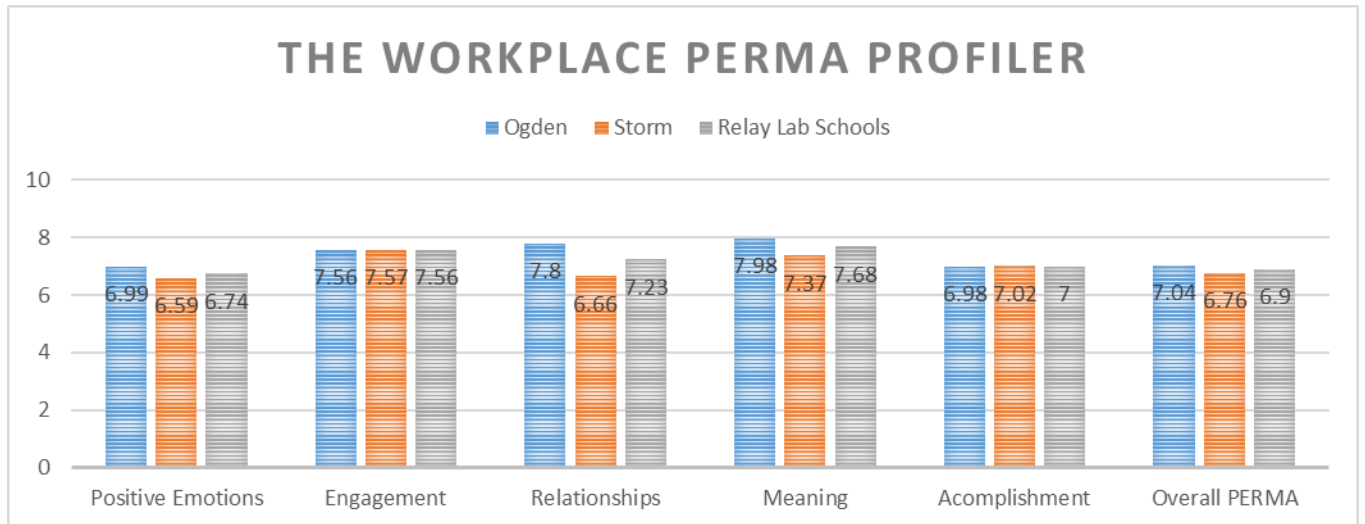
PERMA Indicators	Calculation of Scores
Positive Emotions	mean (Q4, Q9, Q19)
Engagement	mean (Q3, Q10, Q18)
Relationships	mean (Q5, Q13, Q16)
Meaning	mean (Q1, Q8, Q15)
Accomplishment	mean (Q2, Q7, Q14)
Overall Wellbeing	mean (Q1, Q2, Q3, Q4, Q5, Q7, Q8, Q9, Q10, Q13, Q14, Q15, Q16, Q18, Q19, Q20)

I compared survey data results between Ogden Academy and Storm Elementary to discern any differences in the data between the two schools. I did not include the responses from the two teachers who did not indicate their school because I did not want to skew the data. I compiled the results from both schools to get a holistic view of the wellbeing of Relay Lab Schools’ teachers collectively as indicated in *Table 5 and Figure 1*.

Table 5
PERMA Scores by School

PERMA Indicators	Ogden <i>n</i> =20	Storm <i>n</i> =18	Relay Lab Schools <i>n</i> =38
Positive Emotions	6.88	6.59	6.74
Engagement	7.56	7.57	7.56
Relationships	7.80	6.66	7.23
Meaning	7.98	7.37	7.68
Accomplishment	6.98	7.02	7.00
Overall PERMA	7.04	6.76	6.90

Figure 1
PERMA Score by School



Interview Data. I initially transcribed all interviews using Otter. In a first pass at the interview data, I listened to each interview to manually review the Otter transcriptions to correct any electronic errors in the transcription documents. Once all transcriptions were accurate, I used a deductive approach to code data in each transcription related to PERMA: positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment whether the response was positive or negative as indicated in *Table 6*. I reviewed all the data that I coded into PERMA categories and used a deductive

approach to code themes within each PERMA category (Merriam, 1998). Nine themes emerged from the data as indicated in *Table 7*.

Table 6
Deductive Coding Examples

Code	Definition	Example
Positive Emotions	General tendencies toward feeling content and joy	"It makes me happy that they're here at school."
Engagement	Being absorbed, interested, and involved in one's work	"I love reading mastery. I'm a big reading mastery fan because I've seen it really drive results in my classroom."
Relationships	Feeling connected, supported, and valued by others in the organization	"We're like a community here and that is one of the things that I like. Everybody helps everybody."
Meaning	Having a sense of purpose in one's work	"The best thing about teaching is teaching itself. Because what you do as a teacher is give something of yourself to somebody else."
Accomplishment	Marked by honors and awards received, but also feelings of achievement	"We can't figure out what works best for our campus population."

Table 7
Themes from Inductive Coding

Code	Themes
Positive Emotions	School Community Student Success
Engagement	Autonomy Curriculum
Relationships	Change Clarity
Meaning	Advocacy Communication
Accomplishment	Training/Coaching

Findings

The Workplace PERMA Profiler survey and teacher interviews suggest that the healthiest wellbeing indicators for teachers at Relay Lab Schools were the indicators of meaning and relationships. These findings outlined in greater detail below (finding#1 and #2) align to project question #1: *To what extent do teachers at Relay Lab Schools report healthy wellbeing?* Positive emotions and accomplishment were the lowest scoring wellbeing indicators across Relay Lab Schools on the Workplace PERMA Profiler survey. The interviews with teachers offered deeper insights (finding #3, #4, and #5) related to these scores and align to project question #2: *What elements of the Relay Lab Schools' organizational structure do teachers perceive contribute to their wellbeing?*

Finding 1: The highest wellbeing indicator for teachers at Relay Lab Schools was a sense of meaning, a finding reiterated in the teacher interviews.

According to the Workplace PERMA Profiler survey, meaning was the highest wellbeing indicator for Ogden Academy with a score of 7.98 out of 10. It was also the second highest wellbeing indicator for Storm Elementary with a score of 7.37 out of 10. Looking at both schools together, meaning was the highest indicator of wellbeing for teachers across Relay Lab Schools with an average of 7.68 out of 10. A sense of meaning regarding their work with students was evident throughout the interviews with Relay Lab Schools' teachers. Some teachers expressed the act of teaching in itself as meaningful for them because it allowed them to have a greater impact beyond themselves. One such teacher stated,

The best thing about teaching is teaching itself because what you do as a teacher is give something of yourself to somebody else and you hope they take it and do something better.

The only thing that will last forever is what I leave behind and what I give to somebody else, so teaching is the reason why I do it. I think it's more altruistic.

Every Relay Lab Schools teacher expressed the sentiment that their students' success gave them a sense of meaning that positively affected their wellbeing. As one such teacher explained, "Ultimately, my wellbeing is also tied to these kids because I care so much for them and invested so much [. . .] I want to see them successful; I don't want them to struggle the way I've struggled in my life." Several teachers expressed this sentiment throughout the interviews and noted that the best time of their day at Relay Lab Schools was working with their students. One such teacher articulated the sense of meaning one felt from one's students saying, "The best part of my day is when I'm with students and they're engaged in their learning [. . .] I do really feel that's a really strong moment when you can feel like you're making a difference in their life."

In addition to making a difference in the lives of their students, teachers at Relay Lab Schools also felt that improving the status of the school by getting it removed from the "Improvement Required" list was an important purpose in their work. One teacher admitted, "One of the biggest pushes for me to work at Relay Lab Schools was the need. I knew they needed some quality teachers because this school was on the improvement required status." Other teachers spoke about specific things they felt contributed to the "Improvement Required" status and the importance of their role in eliminating those factors. One example of these factors was attendance. As one teacher explained, "Our campus is notorious for poor attendance so just seeing my kids every day makes me happy. It makes me happy that they're here at school. If you're not here, then I mean really nothing else matters right?"

Several teachers expressed positive wellbeing from not only the sense of meaning they gain from serving their students and improving the school, but also from pushing for needed changes within the school despite the consequences they might encounter from leadership members. One teacher unapologetically exclaimed, “I love our kids. They need people who are advocates for them. If I’m going to get fired for doing something right, I’ll take it and go down in flames fighting it. I have no problem with it.” Other teachers spoke avidly about advocating for their students as one such teacher articulated,

The only way we can have change, the only way we can invoke change is by allowing our voices to be heard. It doesn’t guarantee change is going to happen, but at least we know we’re pushing back in that we’re doing so with this intention to give the kids something better.

Teachers’ beliefs at Relay Lab Schools that they are advocating for what is best for their students and the school community brought a greater sense of meaning to their work and therefore positively impacted their wellbeing.

Finding 2: Positive relationships with school-based co-workers was a positive indicator of healthy wellbeing for teachers at Relay Lab Schools who participated in the interviews.

The relationships aspect of wellbeing scored 7.23 out of 10 on the Workplace PERMA Profiler survey for Relay Lab Schools. In fact, relationships was the second lowest indicator of healthy wellbeing for Storm Elementary with a score of 6.66 out of 10. Ogden had a score of 7.80 out of 10. However, because the Workplace PERMA Profiler survey is limited to the language of “co-workers” and “professional relationships,” the interviews were instrumental in dissecting the different types of

relationships impacting teachers' wellbeing, including relationships with administrators, other teachers, and students. Teachers at Relay Lab Schools consistently reported having positive relationships with other teachers. One such teacher noted, "I think we all have pretty positive relationships. We're like a community here and that is one of the things that I like. Everybody helps everybody. Everybody supports everybody." Another teacher reiterated this perspective and stated, "I'm really close to my team. I feel like I can go to any teacher [. . .] I can express any concerns and they're going to listen." Teachers at both Ogden Academy and Storm Elementary reported that the aligned investment in students creates a strong connection among teachers. One such teacher stated, "I feel like a lot of the teachers, they really do care about the kids and we're all kind of single minded in those goals." Another teacher shared a similar statement explaining, "I don't feel like there's any one teacher here that's trying to be like the best and just leave everybody in the dust [. . .] They're all for one and one for all, for the good of our students."

While teachers at both Ogden Academy and Storm Elementary spoke positively about the impact of their relationships with other teachers on their wellbeing, teachers consistently indicated that references to positive relationships were almost entirely about other teachers and not school administrators. One teacher noted, "I like the principal pretty well. I don't have a close relationship with her but a positive one." Another teacher stated, "I don't feel uncomfortable talking to my principal. I don't feel uncomfortable talking to my vice principal. I don't feel uncomfortable talking to my coach." Although I heard many similar comments, this same teacher noted above also suggested that some teachers feel differently about school administrators. One such teacher I spoke to described a positive relationship with the coach saying, "I really love my coach. She's really great . . . when she's able to come in to be able to give me feedback."

Finding 3: The teachers at Relay Lab Schools who participated in the interviews reported that the coaching structure negatively impacts the wellbeing indicators of relationships and accomplishment.

While some teachers at Relay Lab Schools expressed having cordial relationships with school administration, they noted that the coaching structure is limited to a defined structure in which some coaches read from a script during their coaching sessions, which they indicated hindered their growth as a teacher. One teacher reported feeling frustrated because the coach would deliver “the talking points that Relay gives them” rather than have more authentic conversations during their coaching sessions. When I asked about coaching and development at Relay Lab Schools, this teacher explained,

It just depends on your coach, to be honest. I feel like there are some coaches who really are invested in your development in a real way, and then I feel there are some coaches who are invested in your development in the Relay way and you can tell the difference between coaches that are just reading verbatim from the script.

Another such teacher expressed a similar sentiment regarding coaches’ inability to veer from Relay Lab Schools’ prescribed way of doing things. This teacher stated, “I feel like they’re all very professional and they’re all more than willing to help, but I understand that there’s lots of levels to make changes in the schools and like they’re not even the top of where we can like do some of these changes that we would want to do.” Another such teacher expressed empathy towards coaches stating, “I feel like our administration team is kind of small and they don’t have enough people to do everything that they need to do. So they’re not in here as much as they would want to be.”

Teacher interviews suggested the overly structured coaching sessions and limited frequency of coaching hindered their ability to build authentic relationships with their coaches. One such teacher stated,

Coaches will come in for 10 or 15 minutes, we'll have a discussion about what they saw but that's it. In my eyes, coaching should be an understanding of who I am as a person, who I am as a teacher, and what challenges I have in my classroom and relationships like that aren't built in 10 or 15 minute sessions. . . Learning doesn't work that way.

Another such teacher shared this sentiment in reference to the "scripted" nature of coaching at Relay Lab Schools admitting, "[. . .] when the coaching is doing this [. . .] I feel that dehumanizes me."

Finding 4: Teachers at Relay Lab Schools report that lack of autonomy with curriculum and instruction negatively impacted their sense of accomplishment.

Because the teachers I interviewed at Relay Lab Schools feel a tremendous amount of responsibility to improve the trajectory of their students' lives, they expressed frustration about the requirements of Relay Lab Schools that they perceive run counter to their ability to serve students according to students' needs. Teachers described feeling they know what their students need and that they are unable to meet their students' needs due to the lack of autonomy with instruction. Two main ways that teachers revealed lack of autonomy was with the required curriculum and small group instruction or intervention. One such teacher reported, "[. . .] the curriculum is great, they're written by really smart people, I believe that, but it's not giving everything; it is not giving the kids what they need in order to close these gaps. This curriculum is not doing that." Another such teacher reported,

The Relay Texas team pretty much had like complete oversight over our campus, and it was like we could not deviate from the curriculum at all. And so that was sometimes difficult for us because you know we saw where students were struggling. We needed to be able to differentiate a little bit more.

Another such teacher reported, "So our curriculum is, in my opinion, not super developmentally appropriate for Kindergarten students [. . .] it's just really hard for students sometimes to stay fully engaged with the entire lesson when we're teaching exactly to the curriculum." The interviews suggested that teachers were not opposed to the curriculum because it was not a quality resource, but they opposed it because delivered as designed and in isolation, it was not properly serving their population of students. Teachers reported that the inability to modify or deviate from this requirement hindered their ability to improve the academic results of their students. As one such teacher stated in reference to the curriculum, "It is not what my students need. My kids cannot read and they want them to be able to comprehend these books when they can't read sight words and they can't read vowel sounds."

Similarly, teachers described a lack of autonomy to deliver small group instruction to students, which they emphasized is instrumental to student success. One such teacher explained, "Sometimes I do feel like there's a lack of autonomy with the classrooms. I don't have the authority to say I'm going to change my math block and I want to do small group instruction half the time." Being able to provide this level of instruction to hone in on students' needs was one factor that teachers reported brings them positive wellbeing. When I asked about the best part of their day at Relay Lab Schools, one such teacher reported, "[. . .] working in small groups with students is really rewarding just being able to see their growth. I feel like the small groups are most beneficial and I can see where my

students are and know what they need help in." Therefore, teachers' inability to make decisions regarding their instruction hindered the most meaningful aspect of teachers' work, to be able to see students grow and learn. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, teachers had more autonomy than usual in this area and they see this shift as a positive change. One such teacher stated,

I was also able to do a lot of like my own small group lessons and provide those interventions for my kids that I knew they needed. I think that's important because though we do want to align as a grade level, every classroom has different needs based on their student population. I think that was a good thing for this year just having that teacher autonomy to teach.

Another such teacher reported, "[. . .] we had a lot of autonomy in lesson planning and preparation and really focused on teacher discretion as far as what intervention we should be providing for the kiddos. I think a lot of that's due to this crazy year."

Finding 5: Teachers described a lack of clarity regarding the changes at Relay Lab Schools as having a negative impact on their wellbeing.

Change was a word that appeared in every interview with teachers at Relay Lab Schools. While some of the Relay Lab Schools teachers understood the need for change at Ogden Academy and Storm Elementary and were even open to the idea of the Relay Lab Schools model, the lack of clarity and rationale regarding the changes Relay Lab Schools required caused teachers additional stress. One teacher explained,

I picked Relay because I love the idea of coming in and creating a lab school to create a Relay of teachers . . . I think it's a great idea to make teachers master teachers and at the same time help students, and then have that machine creating master teachers for a school district.

However, within that same interview, the teacher discussed changes occurring at Relay Lab Schools with little to no rationale. The teacher explained that the school would no longer have teacher residents next year where before there were two in every classroom. In addition, the school was adopting a new curriculum and becoming a bilingual school. The teacher stated, “I don’t know what’s going on [. . .] I don’t know why decisions are being made [. . .] That disconnect of communications has opened my eyes that there are disconnects of what needs to be done in the classroom.” While this teacher was at least able to explain the lab school structure and it being a catalyst for joining the organization, another teacher was less successful explaining the change stating, “Relay Lab Schools was pretty much an entity of Relay Grad School and the Grad School decided to like I don’t know. I really don’t know how the structure works, but like Relay Lab Schools came from the Grad School.”

Teachers at Relay Lab Schools added that it was not only a lack of rationale for changes but also the pace of changes that contributed to frustration. One such teacher stated, “The reason why I struggle so much to kind of like explain is because there’s so many changes year after year.” Regardless of the level of understanding about the Relay Lab Schools structure, constant change without clarity or rationale was a constant theme. One such teacher noted, “It’s not the same kind of school. It’s changed every year. Stop changing all the time. I just feel like I’m learning a new curriculum like every five seconds. I don’t know why they change things like that.” Another teacher shared a similar perspective stating, “We haven’t stuck to something and they haven’t given us the opportunity to have enough data from year to year to see if it’s working or not. We’re just changing from year to year and that’s not helping at all.” With the success of their students so heavily connected to the teachers’ sense of wellbeing being, the constant changes at Relay Lab Schools do not give teachers a sense of accomplishment. One such teacher explained this notion stating, “We

haven't really found our rhythm, I think and we keep changing things year to year." While the COVID-19 pandemic did give teachers some level of autonomy with their classroom instruction, which positively contributed to their wellbeing, it was not apparent that this change would stick. One teacher stated in regards to this positive change, "I don't know that we're going to continue this on to next year. I don't know where we're heading." While the autonomy was a welcome change that occurred due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it was also an additional change that caused a major setback in terms of being able to see student progress. One teacher used this analogy when I asked how successful they felt at work. "I feel like we're crawling up a muddy hill, and then just sliding down [. . .] I feel like every year we get up there and then it starts to rain and we're tumbling down. It's a struggle." When I asked another teacher what would contribute to their wellbeing, they stated, "It would be nice just to have a solid game plan that we can just stick with year after year."

Limitations

The limitations of my study include survey interpretation, sample size, and the PERMA framework. As with most surveys, the researcher cannot control the respondents' interpretation of the survey questions. In addition, self-report is not always the most reliable source of survey information. Therefore, it was important to interview participants to ensure that I can gain an accurate assessment of how respondents interpreted different aspects of wellbeing. Although 40 out of 60 teachers completed the anonymous Workplace Profiler PERMA survey, it was difficult to recruit a larger sample of teachers for interviews. Relay Lab Schools sent out the notification to sign up for interviews. As a result, the teachers whom I interviewed noted that it was unclear if they would be interviewing with members of the Relay Lab Schools' leadership team. Teachers that I interviewed noted some teachers did not want to interview with Relay Lab Schools and therefore did not sign up

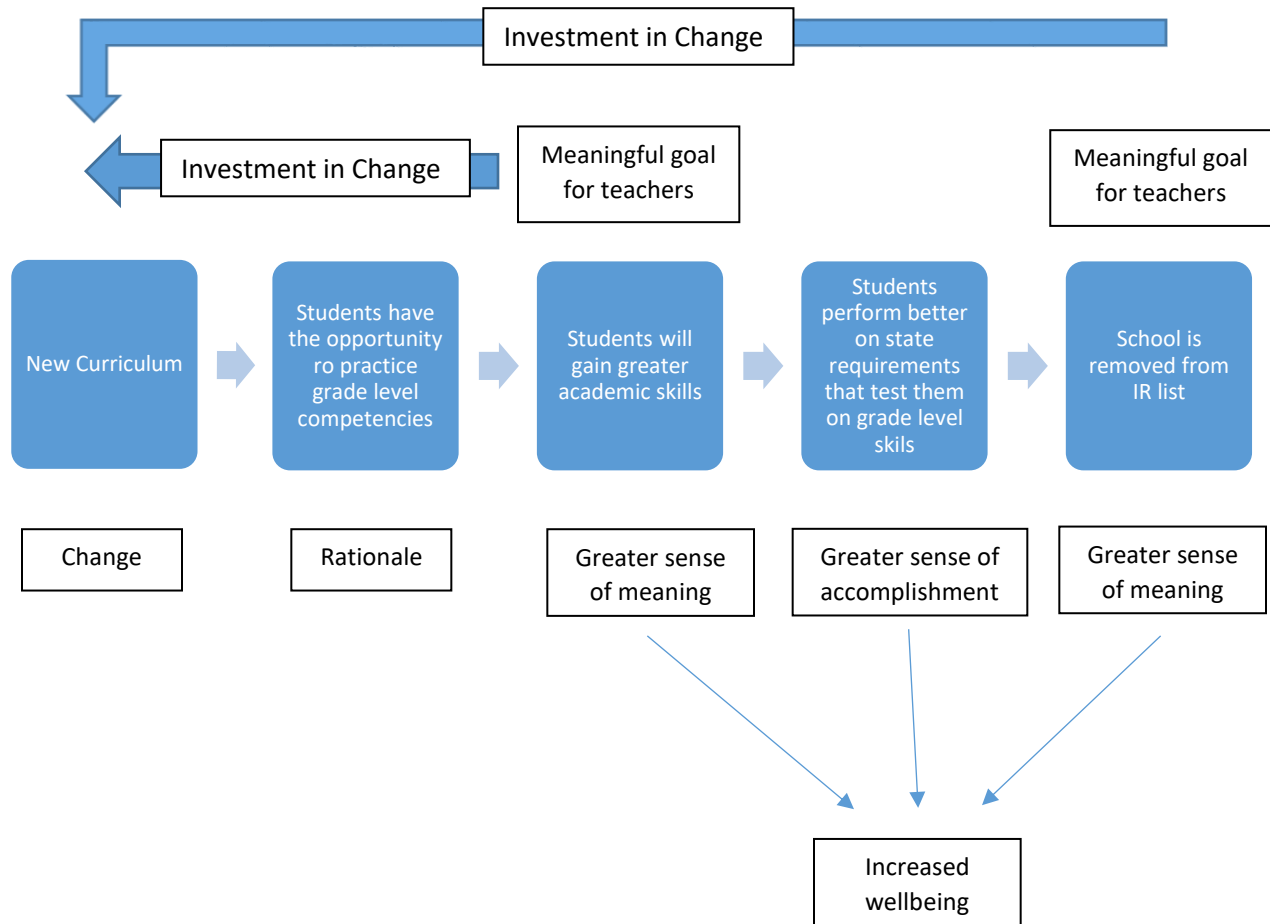
to interview. Through snowball sampling, I was able to get more teachers to interview because those that interviewed with me confirmed to other teachers that a Vanderbilt doctoral candidate conducted the interviews. Lastly, the PERMA wellbeing framework is non-exhaustive. Other factors could impact teacher wellbeing beyond positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment. However, to narrow the focus of this study and to provide more concrete recommendations to Relay Lab Schools, I specifically chose a framework designed to make it easier for practitioners to implement specific interventions for specific aspects of wellbeing.

Recommendations

Recommendation #1: Reframe existing changes at Relay Lab Schools to align with the goals that are important to teachers' sense of meaning.

Finding one, which concluded that meaning was the highest wellbeing indicator for teachers interviewed at Relay Lab Schools, and finding five that teachers described a lack of clarity regarding the changes at Relay Lab Schools as having a negative impact on their wellbeing were the basis for recommendation number one. Teachers reported that working towards uplifting the school from the "Improvement Required" status, making a difference in their students' lives, and advocating on behalf of their students positively contributed to their wellbeing. If teachers at Relay Lab Schools are able to see the connection between the changes in the organization with their larger purpose, then it can invest them in the changes while also increasing their wellbeing. However, teachers at Relay Lab Schools not only lacked clarity around the changes in the organization, but they also perceived some of the changes as contradictory to their efforts to support their students' success and the improvement of the school. Weick (1993) notes, "organizations become important because they can provide meaning and order in the face of environments that impose ill-defined contradictory demands" (p.635). I suggest that Relay Lab Schools evaluate the changes they have made and ask the following question: Do the changes we have implemented align with the goals that are important to our teachers and ultimately to our students? If so, the change should be explicitly stated and documented to show this alignment. Below is an example of reframing the change of the new curriculum:

Figure 2
Reframe Example



Framing the changes at Relay Lab Schools in the context of addressing these issues can provide meaning to teachers in a way that creates alignment with the teachers’ strong sense of meaning for the work that they do for the students and the school. Foldy et al. (2008) note, “Solutions gain acceptance by their immediate connection to an already endorsed problem” (520). Weick (1993) states, “One way to shift the focus from decision making to meaning is to look more closely at sensemaking in organizations” (p.635). Weick (1993) explains, “The basic idea of sensemaking is that reality is an ongoing accomplishment that emerges from efforts to create order and make retrospective sense of what occurs” (p.635). Sensemaking helps create a shift in thinking and

perceptions. Foldy et al. (2008) state, “Research shows that influencing followers’ perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs can strengthen their commitment to their organization’s goals, spurring them to embark on new directions with enthusiasm instead of resistance” (p. 514). This study revealed that teachers at Relay Lab Schools perceived the changes, such as the curriculum, as an impediment to student success. Because improving the academic success of their students and improving the status at the school are such central components to teachers’ sense of meaning and wellbeing, helping teachers to see how these changes support that purpose can help create enthusiasm instead of resistance. Foldy et al. (2008) explain, “Organizations prompting cognitive shifts in how solutions are understood seem to rely on a common strategy: Clarifying that the solution-whether seen as radical or mediocre-is simply a new way of reaching the audience’s previously articulated goal or mission” (p. 520). Reframing the changes at Relay Lab Schools as a new way of reaching the same goal or mission that teachers have been striving towards can not only provide teachers with a “fundamentally different way of thinking about the solution” or changes, but can further positively impact their wellbeing by continuing to fuel their sense of meaning and purpose (Foldy et al., 2008, p. 520).

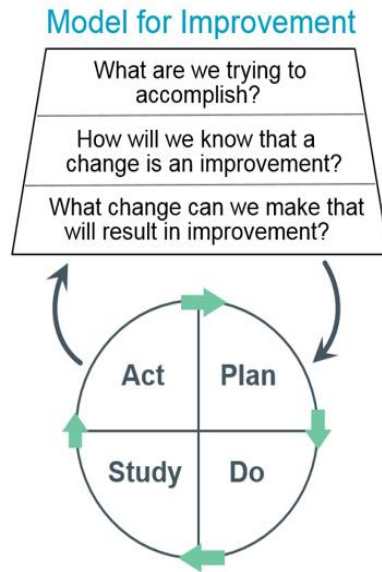
Recommendation #2: Allow teachers to pilot suggested changes with other teachers on a small scale and monitor results through iterative rounds to involve teachers in the change process.

Finding four that teachers at Relay Lab Schools reported that lack of autonomy with curriculum and instruction negatively impacted their sense of accomplishment and finding five that lack of clarity regarding changes at Relay Lab Schools had a negative impact on teachers' wellbeing were the basis for recommendation number two. In addition, finding two, which concluded that positive relationships with school-based co-workers was a positive indicator of healthy wellbeing for teachers

at Relay Lab Schools supports the implementation of this recommendation. In addition to the lack of clarity regarding changes at Relay Lab Schools, teachers also reported that the constant changes implemented across the schools hindered progress. As one such teacher explained, “We haven’t stuck to something and they haven’t given us the opportunity to have enough data from year to year to see if it’s working or not.” The perception of a constantly changing environment negatively impacted teachers’ feelings of accomplishment, an indicator of wellbeing from the PERMA framework. In addition, aligned changes across the school, regardless of grade level context, decreased teachers’ feeling of autonomy. By allowing teachers to pilot changes with other teachers on a small scale, teachers can have more involvement in the changes that occur in the school and test them before the entire school adopts the changes. I suggest using Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) cycles so that teachers can work together to:

1. Plan the details of the test and make predictions about outcomes (Plan)
2. Conduct test and collect data (Do)
3. Learn from comparing and predictions to the results of the test (Study)
4. Take action based on new knowledge (Act)

Figure 3
PDSA Model for Improvement



PDSA Cycles can increase teachers' wellbeing at Relay Lab Schools in three ways:

1. For changes that Relay Lab Schools want to test, allow teachers to volunteer to pilot the changes using PDSA cycles. This provides teachers with some level of autonomy as they are able to elect to participate in the pilot program of a particular change. This not can increase their positive emotions as they start to gain a greater sense of autonomy, but it can also increase their sense of engagement as they work to study and improve the pilots for the benefit of their students and for other teachers, two stakeholder groups that teachers already reported increase their positive wellbeing.
2. By participating in the pilot, teachers have the opportunity to work with other teachers on a particular change initiative. Teachers reported that they had positive relationships with other teachers at their schools because they not only support one another, but they also knew that each teacher wanted the best for their students. Teachers at Relay Lab Schools already have confidence and trust in each other so allowing them to work together as a pilot group can

increase their sense of wellbeing as they work together on improving student success, a meaningful goal that they share.

3. Allow teachers who have suggested changes to test them using PDSA cycles. By allowing teachers a way to test their ideas and innovation with PDSA cycles, it allows them to collect data to see if their suggestions could work or not. This gives Relay Lab Schools leaders data to make informed decisions on whether to consider the ideas or not and allows teachers to see the rationale if their suggestions are not approved. Allowing teachers to test their recommended changes can increase their sense of autonomy and engagement as they test out their own ideas. An increased sense of autonomy and engagement can increase teachers' sense of accomplishment, which is an indicator of wellbeing.

Langley et al. (2009) note, "Very small-scale tests are needed if the degree of belief is low and the consequences of failure are large" (p. 145). Because teachers at Relay Lab Schools are not convinced that changes have been beneficial for students and removing their schools' from the "Improvement Required" list is important to them, making large scale changes without evidence of success could further negatively impact teachers' sense of accomplishment. Langley et al. (2009) state, "An important practical consequence of testing before implementing is that some tests are expected to fail, and we can learn from those failures. This is why testing on a small scale to build knowledge while minimizing risk is so important" (p. 139). In addition, "Testing is used to evaluate the change on a temporary basis" (Langley et al., 2009, 139). The evaluation will uncover one or more of the possible reasons for failure:

1. The change was not properly executed
2. The support processes required to make the change successful were not adequate.

3. The change was executed successfully, but the predicted results did not occur. (Langley et al., 2009, p. 143)

The evaluation of the change allows the organization to learn from the results and adjust accordingly before implementing the change and replicating or even creating further failures. Langley et al. (2009) suggest, "Testing a change on a small scale is an important way of reducing people's fear of making a change" (p. 147).

Langley et al. (2009) reiterate, "Leaders of improvement plan for the social impact of technical change and make people part of the solution" (p. 85). Relay Lab Schools can make teachers part of the solutions by including them in the change process in a way that not only gives valuable information and data regarding what is working and what is not working but also does not overwhelm the entire school with too many changes at the same time. Participating in small scale pilots can help teachers see first-hand the impact of the change but also gives them the voice to suggest modifications to improve those changes during the pilot process. Small scale pilots using PDSA cycles can help boost teachers' sense of wellbeing as they start to perceive an increased level of autonomy, gain insight and voice into the changes across the school, work together with other teachers for the benefit of their students, and increase their sense of accomplishment as they study data from the PDSA cycles to ensure success. As Langley et al. (2009) reveal, "People have a tendency to support what they help create" (p.193).

Recommendation #3: Conduct an external process evaluation of the coaching program at Relay Lab Schools.

Finding three indicated that teachers at Relay Lab Schools who participated in the interviews reported the coaching structure negatively impacted their wellbeing elements of relationships and accomplishment. During the interviews, teachers noted that some coaches at Relay Lab Schools followed a script in their coaching sessions with them and that some coaches had limited time for observations and feedback. Teachers reported this structure hindered their ability to build authentic relationships with coaches and stifled their growth, which negatively impacted two wellbeing indicators: relationships and accomplishment. The inconsistencies in the coaching program require further investigation that is beyond the scope of this project. Therefore, an external process evaluation of the coaching program at Relay Lab Schools will allow Relay Lab Schools' leadership to investigate how well coaches are implementing the coaching program and if it is meeting its desired outcomes. If teacher wellbeing, specifically positive relationships between coaches and teachers and teachers feeling a sense of accomplishment in their work, is a desired outcome of the coaching program at Relay Lab Schools, I recommend an external team conduct the process evaluation so that stakeholders will speak openly and freely about the current coaching program operations. The stakeholders who should be involved in the evaluation include teachers, coaches, school leaders, and Relay Lab Schools' leadership. It is necessary to involve all stakeholders so that external evaluators understand the intended design of the coaching program, the coaching program theory, the coaching program expectations, and the underlying assumptions of the coaching program. All of these factors will allow evaluators to determine the logic behind the coaching program's design and if its' actual

implementation is leading to its' desired outcomes. Table 8 includes suggested key evaluation questions and data sources that can guide the process evaluation.

Table 8
Evaluation Questions and Data Sources

Evaluation Questions	Methods/ Data Source
What is the frequency of coaching occurring?	Coaching records/notes
What are the follow up actions of coaches and teachers from coaching sessions?	Coaching records/notes Teacher lesson plans
What is most effective about coaching at Relay Lab Schools?	Focus groups or semi-structured interviews of coaches Focus groups or semi-structured interviews with teachers
What is least effective about coaching at Relay Lab Schools?	Focus groups or semi-structured interviews of coaches Focus groups or semi-structured interviews with teachers
Do teachers and/or coaches report a change in teacher performance based on coaching sessions?	Focus groups or semi-structured interviews of coaches Focus groups or semi-structured interviews with teachers Teacher performance data Student academic and culture data

With the results of this external process evaluation, Relay Lab Schools can make modifications to its coaching structure as needed and provide training and support to help their coaches develop a more authentic, productive leadership approach. As Ilies et al. (2005) suggest, authentic relational

orientation “should also lead to positive and meaningful relationships with others” (p. 382). Further investigation into the coaching program at Relay Lab Schools with an external program evaluation can help determine specific ways to incorporate practices that help teachers meet their needs of feeling a sense of accomplishment and positive relationships with their coaches. As Rossi et al. (2019) state, “Program evaluation is the systematic assessment of programs designed to improve social conditions and our individual and collective wellbeing” (p.1).

Conclusion

Teacher burnout continues to be a global crisis that has only magnified since the COVID-19 pandemic. As teachers pivot to early retirement or transition to other careers, recommendations for addressing teacher burnout continue to center on self-care techniques that teachers can implement to improve their own wellbeing. However, it is important to listen to teachers to understand where they are gaining a positive sense of wellbeing and what factors may be negatively affecting their wellbeing. What we may find is there are strengths that leaders can leverage to increase teachers’ sense of wellbeing and there are structural and organizational factors that leaders can adjust and refine to increase teachers’ wellbeing. If our teachers are not well, then our students cannot be well. This study not only provides Relay Lab Schools with information and tools to promote positive wellbeing for its teachers, but it also serves as a reminder that systems function as designed. Therefore, if we design our organizational structures and systems to promote positive wellbeing, they will do just that.

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Appendix A: Survey Overview

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Updated 13 October 2014 --- MLK

The Workplace PERMA Profiler

Margaret L. Kern, University of Pennsylvania

Measure Overview

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

P and N = Positive and Negative emotions

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

E = Engagement

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

R = Relationships

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

M = Meaning

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

A = Accomplishment

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

H = Health

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

Scoring:

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

Positive Emotion: $P = \text{mean}(P1,P2,P3)$

Engagement: $E = \text{mean}(E1,E2,E3)$

Relationships: $R = \text{mean}(R1,R2,R3)$

Meaning $M = \text{mean}(M1,M2,M3)$

Accomplishment $A = \text{mean}(A1,A2,A3)$

Overall Well---being $\text{PERMA} = \text{mean}(P1,P2,P3,E1,E2,E3, R1,R2,R3, M1,M2,M3, A1,A2,A3,\text{happy})$

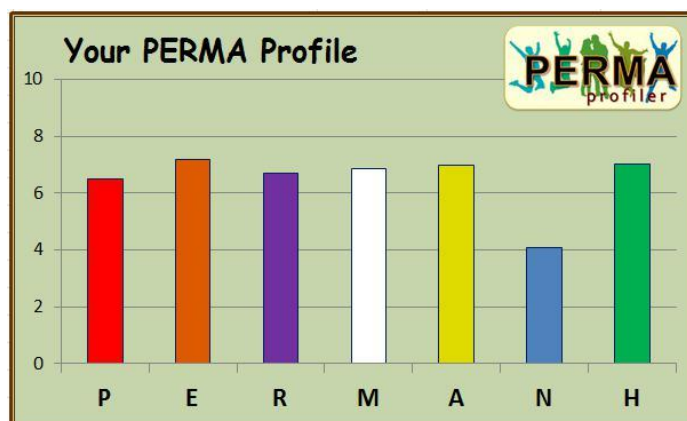
Negative Emotion: $N = \text{mean}(N1,N2,N3)$

Health = $H = \text{mean}(h1,h2,h3)$

Loneliness Lon (single item)

Sample Scoring Presentation

We are working on the best way to display scores. To date, we have used bar graphs:



Appendix B: Survey Questions by Sequence

#	Survey Questions	Response Anchors	
1	To what extent is your work purposeful and meaningful?	0=not at all, 10=completely	Meaning
2	How often do you feel you are making progress towards accomplishing your work-related goals?	0=never 10=always	Accomplishment
3	At work, how often do you become absorbed in what you are doing?	0=never 10=always	Engagement
4	At work, how often do you feel joyful?	0=never 10=always	Positive Emotions
5	To what extent do you receive help and support from coworkers when you need it?	0=not at all, 10=completely	Relationships
6	At work, how often do you feel anxious?	0=never 10=always	Negative Emotions
7	How often do you achieve the important work goals you have set for yourself?	0=never 10=always	Accomplishment
8	In general, to what extent do you feel that what you do at work is valuable and worthwhile?	0=not at all, 10=completely	Meaning
9	At work, how often do you feel positive?	0=never 10=always	Positive Emotions
10	To what extent do you feel excited and interested in your work?	0=not at all, 10=completely	Engagement
11	How lonely do you feel at work?	0=not at all, 10=completely	Loneliness
12	At work, how often do you feel angry?	0=never 10=always	Negative Emotions
13	To what extent do you feel appreciated by your coworkers?	0=not at all, 10=completely	Relationships
14	How often are you able to handle your work-related responsibilities?	0=never 10=always	Accomplishment
15	To what extent do you generally feel that you have a sense of direction in your work?	0=not at all, 10=completely	Meaning
16	How satisfied are you with your professional relationships?	0=not at all, 10=completely	Relationships
17	At work, how often do you feel sad?	0=never 10=always	Negative Emotions
18	At work, how often do you lose track of time while doing something you enjoy?	0=never 10=always	Engagement
19	At work, to what extent do you feel contented?	0=not at all, 10=completely	Positive Emotions
20	Taking all things together, how happy would you say you are with your work?	0=not at all, 10=completely	Happiness

Appendix C: Survey Questions by Indicator

PERMA Indicators	Survey Questions
Positive Emotions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. At work, how often do you feel joyful? 2. At work, how often do you feel positive? 3. At work, to what extent do you feel contented?
Engagement	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. At work, how often do you become absorbed in what you are doing? 2. To what extent do you feel excited and interested in your work? 3. At work, how often do you lose track of time while doing something you enjoy?
Relationships	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To what extent do you receive help and support from coworkers when you need it? 2. To what extent do you feel appreciated by your coworkers? 3. How satisfied are you with your professional relationships?
Meaning	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To what extent is your work purposeful and meaningful? 2. In general, to what extent do you feel that what you do at work is valuable and worthwhile? 3. To what extent do you generally feel that you have a sense of direction in your work?
Negative Emotions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. At work, how often do you feel anxious? 2. At work, how often do you feel angry? 3. At work, how often do you feel sad?
Loneliness	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How lonely do you feel at work?
Happiness	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Taking all things together, how happy would you say you are with your work?

Appendix D: Interview Questions

PERMA Indicators	Interview Questions
Positive Emotions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What do you really enjoy about your work at Relay Lab Schools? 2. What is the best part of your day? 3. What do you feel most positive about at Relay Lab Schools? 4. What do you feel least positive about at Relay Lab Schools?
Engagement	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. When are you most engaged in your work? 2. How do you utilize your strengths at work? 3. What do coaching and development look like?
Relationships	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How would you describe your relationship with leadership? (your coach, principal, Relay Lab Schools leaders) 2. How would you describe your relationships with other teachers at your school? 3. How would you describe your relationships with students?
Meaning	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What do you feel is the most impactful aspect of your job? 2. Do you feel like you are making a difference in your work? What makes you feel this way?
Accomplishment	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How successful do you feel in your work? Why? 2. Do you feel like you are growing as a teacher? Why or why not? 3. How are people recognized for their work at your school?
Overall Wellbeing	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Is there anything else that you would want to tell that would contribute to your wellbeing at work?

Appendix E: Calculation Guide for PERMA Scores

Table 4
Calculation Guide for PERMA Scores

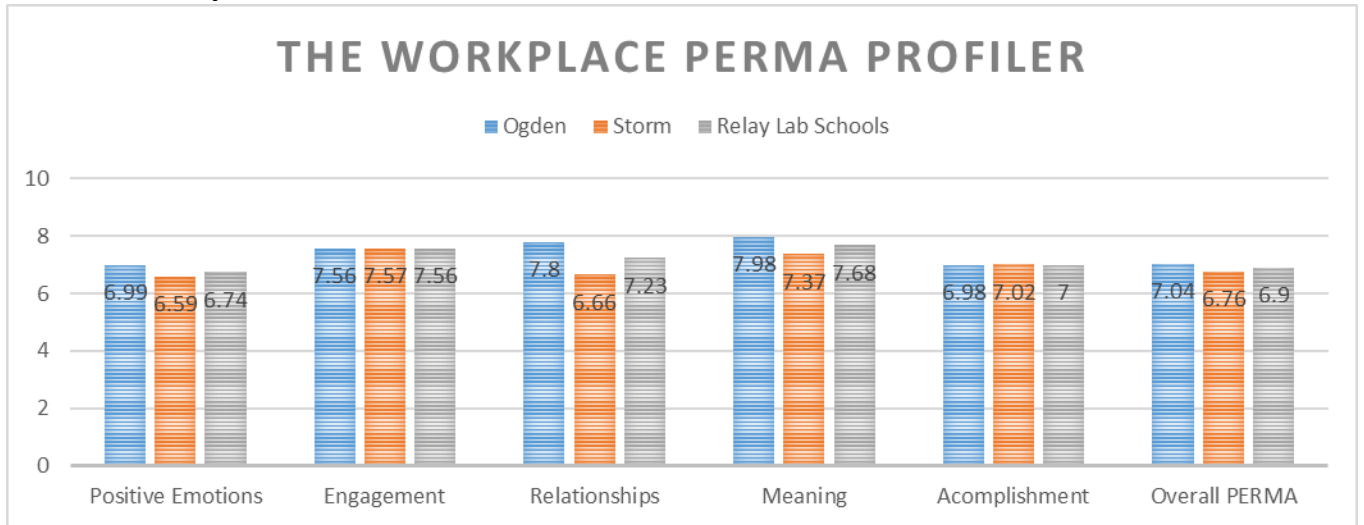
PERMA Indicators	Calculation of Scores
Positive Emotions	mean (Q4, Q9, Q19)
Engagement	mean (Q3, Q10, Q18)
Relationships	mean (Q5, Q13, Q16)
Meaning	mean (Q1, Q8, Q15)
Accomplishment	mean (Q2, Q7, Q14)
Overall Wellbeing	mean (Q1, Q2, Q3, Q4, Q5, Q7, Q8, Q9, Q10, Q13, Q14, Q15, Q16, Q18, Q19, Q20)

Appendix F: PERMA Scores by School

Table 5
PERMA Scores by School

PERMA Indicators	Ogden <i>n=20</i>	Storm <i>n=18</i>	Relay Lab Schools <i>n=38</i>
Positive Emotions	6.88	6.59	6.74
Engagement	7.56	7.57	7.56
Relationships	7.80	6.66	7.23
Meaning	7.98	7.37	7.675
Accomplishment	6.98	7.02	7.00
Overall PERMA	7.04	6.76	6.90

Figure 1
PERMA Score by School



Appendix G: Codebook

Table 6
Deductive Coding Examples

Code	Definition	Example
Positive Emotions	General tendencies toward feeling content and joy	"It makes me happy that they're here at school."
Engagement	Being absorbed, interested, and involved in one's work	"I love reading mastery. I'm a big reading mastery fan because I've seen it really drive results in my classroom."
Relationships	Feeling connected, supported, and valued by others in the organization	"We're like a community here and that is one of the things that I like. Everybody helps everybody."
Meaning	Having a sense of purpose in one's work	"The best thing about teaching is teaching itself. Because what you do as a teacher is give something of yourself to somebody else."
Accomplishment	Marked by honors and awards received, but also feelings of achievement	"We can't figure out what works best for our campus population."

Table 7
Themes from Inductive Coding

Code	Themes
Positive Emotions	School Community Student Success
Engagement	Autonomy Curriculum
Relationships	Change Clarity
Meaning	Advocacy Communication
Accomplishment	Training/Coaching