Belonging and Balance in the Lives of Students and Staff:
A Literature Analysis of the Role Belonging and Balance Play in School Success

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Essential Question: *What must school leaders do to advance student and staff safety through well-being?*

Student Belonging

In recent years, researchers have begun to understand the increasingly important role that belonging plays in the lives of students and teachers. School belonging may be defined in various ways, but most research refers to the extent to which students feel personally accepted, respected, included, and supported by others in the school social environment (Goodenow & Grady, 1993). Belonging can also be observed when students "feel close to, a part of, and happy at school; [when students] feel that teachers care about students and treat them fairly; [when students] get along with teachers and other students, and feel safe at school" (Libbey, 2007). Definitions of belonging emphasize the importance of the following three components:

(1) School-based relationships and experiences;

(2) Student-teacher relationships;

(3) Students' feelings about school as a whole in regard to safety, acceptance, respect, influence, being cared for, and having their needs met.

Therefore, policies and practices focused on improving student sense of belonging should primarily address these areas.

Establishing a sense of belonging is key to creating a healthy school community. School community "is not present until members experience feelings of belonging, trust in others and

safety," so creating a school culture that makes students feel accepted, safe, and that they belong is an essential step in creating a strong school community (Furman, 1998). McMillan and Chavis argue that "community consists of four elements: membership, influence, integration and fulfillment of needs, and a shared emotional connection" (cited in Osterman, 2000). Intentionally creating a sense of belonging is essential in the development of a healthy school community, as each of these elements is driven by belonging. Integration into the community requires that students feel both respected and included. For integration and fulfillment of needs to occur, students must also feel that they are safe and supported. These two concepts of belonging and community are interdependent.

Because belonging is essential to creating a community, it is intuitive that developing a sense of belonging is a social process and not an individualistic one. Belonging is created when a school culture and climate are constructed to encourage the formation of positive and respectful relationships, rather than creating a hierarchy and encouraging competition among students (Osterman, 2000). Osterman explains that "beliefs and practices that nurture individualism and competition, rather than community and collaboration," discourage a sense of belonging in students. Schools that implement "policies and practices that systematically prevent and preclude the development of community among students...directly contribute to students' experience of isolation, alienation, and polarization" (Osterman, 2000).

Creating a strong sense of belonging has a myriad of impacts on students' academic performance and emotional wellbeing. Students who feel connected to their schools are less likely to use substances, exhibit emotional distress, act out violently or deviantly, have thoughts of or attempt suicide, or become pregnant (Lonczak, Abbot, Hawkins, Kosterman, & Catalano,

2002). Schapps explains that students are also less likely to skip classes or get involved in fighting, bullying, and vandalism when they feel connected to their school (cited in Blum, 2005). Connell et. al. report that students are more likely to succeed academically and graduate when they feel they belong in their school (cited in Osterman, 2000). It is important to note that while sense of belonging is not a predictor of dropout rates, it has been shown to decrease the likelihood that a student will drop out. Student sense of belonging also contributes to the positive psychological development and academic achievement (Stafford-Brizzard, 2016).

Furthermore, a strong sense of belonging can positively impact student social and cognitive development. Connell & Wellborn (1991) and Deci, Vallerand, Pelletier, & Ryan (1991) found that "relatedness is one of three basic psychological needs that are essential to human growth and development" (cited in Osterman, 2000). Deci, Vallerand, Pelletier, & Ryan also reported that, "When student needs are not satisfied in educational settings, [school leaders can anticipate] diminished motivation, impaired development, alienation and poor performance" (cited in Osterman, 2000).

In the same paper, Osterman cites a study by Resnick et al. in which "lack of belongingness is also associated with incidence of mental and physical illness and a broad range of behavioral problems ranging from traffic accidents to criminality and suicide." Overall, creating a sense of belonging among students helps students avoid adopting numerous negative behaviors. Baumeister and Leary explained that feeling that one is part of a group often results in an increase in helping behavior, which increases cooperation and cohesion within the group (cited in Osterman, 2000).

There is a strong correlation between academic performance and sense of belonging that is shown to benefit all students across all levels of economic and social advantage and disadvantage (Appleton & Christenson, 2008). All students benefit from feeling that they belong to a group, regardless of their background or situation in life; however, this is not to say that all students achieve this sense of belonging with the same ease or difficulty. For some student populations, it can be more challenging to feel that they belong, creating more obstacles for school leaders and teachers to intentionally overcome in ensuring these students can establish a sense of belonging.

Research suggests that "in academic and professional settings, members of socially stigmatized groups are more uncertain of the quality of their social bonds and thus more sensitive to issues of social belonging" (Walton & Cohen, 2007). Additionally, students who do not fit the school's "norms" or majority feel more sensitive and uncertain about their belonging, and this feeling contributes to social disparities. In her study of race and student belonging, Dr. Keonya Booker (2007) examines how race shapes the experiences of African American students, which has implications for students of color more broadly. African American students often factor in a feeling of "like-ness" into their sense of belonging, so a student "could feel provisionally accepted by [peers], but still not feel that anyone in their school environment is really like them in certain important aspects" (Booker, 2007). School efforts to improve the sense of belonging for black students in predominantly white schools must account for the fact that black students will have an additional barrier to overcome because they do not look like their peers and teachers which often limits their progress towards feeling like they belong.

Social belonging has been shown to have an impact on academic performance and behavior, so African American students can have a significant disadvantage as a result (Walton & Cohen, 2007). In studies where participating black students did feel a sense of community and belonging, it was attributed to involvement in "extracurricular activities, positive peer acceptance and valuing, and pleasant interactions with teachers" (Booker, 2007). Research studying the ways that belongingness presents in Latinx youth populations indicates that, as within non-minority populations, feelings of school belonging among Latinx students are positively related to strong peer friendships, academic performance and academic engagement (Delgado, Ettekal, Simpkins, & Schaefer, 2016), while noting that feelings of belonging for such students are threatened by school environments that are hostile to racial and ethnic minority groups (Nuñez, 2009). The latter study contends that school social environments that are hostile to diversity are strong negative predictors of Latinx students' feelings of belonging, while having positive cross-racial peer interactions are positive predictors of belonging in this population.

Extracurricular activities often create a sense of belonging and community, even when the school culture fails to (Ma, 2003). Providing students with a variety of ways to engage in school outside the classroom, creating a school culture that values differences, and training teachers to develop strong relationships with their students are essential components to helping all students (especially African American students) feel that they belong in their school environment. For the same reasons, it is important for school leaders to intentionally develop spaces for black students (and students of color more broadly) to interact with people like them and provide them with the support they need to succeed as part of the school community.

School leaders should also make inclusion a priority by incorporating lessons and conversations on diversity and inclusion into the curriculum. "Academic performance gaps may result from classroom practices grounded within a "whitestream" curriculum that often ignores – or is uninformed about - the cultural identities or perspectives of non-white / non-English-speaking students" (McClanahan, 2018).

Similarly, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer students (LGBTQ) often struggle more than their cisgendered and/or heterosexual peers to feel a sense of belonging in their school community. LGBTQ students often experience a sense of isolation and stigma resulting from the prejudices that their teachers and peers may hold against them. A 2011 national school climate survey revealed that LGBTQ students who "experience harassment and assault at school may feel excluded and disconnected from their school community," reducing their sense of school belonging (Kosciw, Greytak, Bartkiewicz, Boesen, & Palmer, 2012). LGBTQ youth are at an increased risk of dropping out due to these feelings of isolation, hopelessness, and rejection (Lee, 2002). Not only do LGBTQ students often face prejudice and discrimination from their peers and teachers, but even when they are not facing this discrimination in the classroom, they can still be impacted by it (Lee).

As is the case with African American students, negative interactions that occur outside of school also impact how LGBTQ students perceive their role in the communities they are a part of. In studies where LGBTQ students did experience a high sense of belonging in their schools, it was the result of creating a Gay/Straight Alliance (GSA) in the school. These GSA meetings create a "sage arena within which students can develop positive relationships with their peers and build relationships with understanding adult members" (Lee, 2000). In Lee's

study, students felt safer and happier knowing that they were not the only gay/lesbian/etc.

student at the school and that there were staff members who also fit into those categories

and/or were understanding of their perspective. This helped to develop a "sense of belonging

to a greater whole of humankind," in students who felt out-of-place in the world before (Lee,

2000). This study illustrated that participation in a GSA improved students' overall outlook on

school, their sense of belonging with their peers, teachers, and family, and it increased their

sense of hope and motivation. Students' academic drive, performance, classroom engagement,

and attendance also improved as a result of participation in the GSA. Heterosexual students

also benefit from participating in GSAs. A study by Saewyc, Konishi, Rose, and Homma (2014)

found that "heterosexual boys in schools whose GSAs has been in existence for more than 3

years were about half as likely as those in schools without GSAs to attempt suicide." GSAs had

little to no impact on heterosexual females and there were very limited results in schools with

GSAs that existed for less than 3 years (Saewyc et al.).

In the 2012 school climate report published by Kosciw et al., students reported that

school policies and responses also affected their feelings of belonging, noting the trends toward

heteronormativity in school dances and staff responses to public displays of affection as

discriminatory and exclusive. Students surveyed noted that "same-gender/sex couples were not

allowed to attend school dances together, or were penalized for doing so, such as being

ineligible for 'couple discounts'" (Kosciw et al., 2012). The report also revealed that LGBTQ

students self-reported as being punished more severely for public displays of affection than

their heterosexual peers, and some schools have a policy of notifying parents of public displays

of affection only for LGBTQ students, which in many cases informed parents about their child's

sexuality before the student themself did so. These instances of "outing" students against their will can lead to serious consequences, including homophobic violence against the student.

Finally, structural inequality in terms of gender identity impact the lives of transgender and intersex individuals. Transgender students face daily challenges to overcome discrimination and isolation, which can negatively impact their daily lives and their school performance. The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention and the Williams Institute report that "41% of transgender individuals have reported attempting suicide, compared to 4.6% among the general population" (cited in Gurevich, 2018). A study in Ohio included 129 transgender and gender nonconforming students from 3 major cities in the United States to research the relationship between birth names and non-cisgendered people (cited in Gurevich). This study found that participants who were called their birth name experienced significantly lower rates of suicide ideation. In fact, "for each additional context in which the youngsters were able to use their chosen name, researchers saw a 29% decrease in suicidal ideation, a 56% reduction in suicidal behavior, and significant improvement on a screening tool that measures depression. Every additional context where a youth could use their chosen name resulted in a further decrease of risk" (Gurevich). For transgender and gender non-conforming students, feeling that they belong has significant impacts on their quality of life.

Similarly, intersex individuals (those born without genitalia that clearly define sex due to chromosomal abnormalities) experience a similar sense of isolation related to their gender identity. The World Health Organization indicates that 1-2 people out of every 1000 is intersex, and studies have shown that these individuals face systemic discrimination that reduces their quality of life. In an Australian study on intersex individuals, researchers found that the majority

of the group studied had "engaged in suicidal ideation, particularly when individuals first found

out about their variation. This impacted on their schooling -- almost one-fifth of survey

respondents had received no high school certification due to their early dropout [...] only one-

quarter of participants rated their overall education experiences positively" (Jones, 2016).

Schools everywhere have a significant number of structural policy and practice changes to

make in order to create environments that foster belonging, but research shows that the

creation and support of Gay/Straight Alliances and other safe spaces for LGBTQ students to

connect has a significant positive impact on students' sense of belonging within their school.

In this literature review, student belonging has been discussed in a general, big picture

sense and more specifically in regard to race/ethnicity and gender identity. A limitation of this

literature review is that it does not discuss the plethora of variables that could impact students'

sense of belonging. In addition to the variables specifically discussed in this review, additional

variables that could impact students' sense of belonging include, but are not limited to socio-

economic status, anti-social behaviors or disorders, student abilities (special needs, gifted, etc.),

language (i.e., English Language Learners), religion, etc.

Assessing Student Belonging

Accurately assessing the sense of belonging among a student body can pose a challenge

to school leaders, but there are a number of assessments that can help begin the process or at

least provide significant insight. Many organizations offer open source assessments that school

leaders can access for free. [The Gallup Student Poll](#) measures engagement, hope,

entrepreneurial aspiration, and career and financial literacy. The assessment also identified

student strengths in 34 areas, such as sense of belonging, agency and engagement that help

school staff understand the strengths and needs of their student body. Solution Tree created

the Student Questionnaire - A Sense of Belonging assessment to measure both the social and

emotional state of students and the state of school culture and climate. This questionnaire asks

students broad questions about how valued, accepted, and supported they feel in their school

and classroom environments. Due to its broad nature, it is best suited for younger grade levels

as the questions are not too complex. The Project for Research that Scales (PERTS) created the

Academic Mindsets Assessment survey, which is taken by students in 10 minutes. It allows

them to express their mindsets around school belonging, their personal growth mindset, their

level of self-efficacy, and their view of the relevancy/purpose of coursework. This assessment

was created by the Hewlett Foundation in collaboration with researchers at Stanford University

and the University of Chicago Consortium on School Research. It is not intended to be given

multiple times to measure change.

Hoffman's Sense of Belonging Scale consists of 26 questions relating to perceived peer

support, perceived classroom comfort, perceived isolation, and perceived faculty support.

Students rate their agreement or disagreement with statements on a scale of 1-5. It was

developed for college students, but can be administered at the secondary level.

There are also various network improvement communities with university partners who

are working on questions in regard to the the learning environment and the ways in which it

does or does not support student success. The Student-Centered Accountability Program (S-

CAP) is facilitated by the Colorado Rural Education Collaborative (CREC) with the University of

Colorado - Denver and Battelle for Kids. School leaders work together with CU-Denver to

measure student learning dispositions using elements collected and combined from open

source tools after previously testing Panorama and Tessera. S-CAP also includes a peer-review

process that assesses the condition of the learning environment and its success in meeting

student needs through observation and focus groups with a variety of stakeholders including

students and parents.

The BELE Network partners with the University of Chicago Consortium to build "upon

the *Foundations for Young Adult Success*, the most comprehensive look to date at what

research, theory, and practice identify as the building blocks for lifelong success[.] [T]he Raikes

Foundation has brought together ten non-profit organizations to participate in a three-year

learning network that will use the science of learning and development to advance equity in the

schools they support" (Hill, 2016).

Also with funding from the Hewlett Foundation, Researchers from the University of

Oregon produced the Inflexion MetaSkills Report in partnership with a group of California

Schools. The Inflexion Approach is rooted in organizational theory and recognizes the critical

role identity plays in developing schools and systems that serve all students well. Specifically,

identity informs the types of structures needed to support learning environments capable of

ensuring readiness and belonging. In Inflexion's work, identity includes shared values, beliefs,

mental models, attitude, and vision.

The following assessment vendors provide surveys and other tools to determine the

level of belonging felt by the student body. The Assessing Student Connectedness Survey by

Panorama is used to measure competencies (grit, growth mindset, self-management, and

others), student supports, environmental influences (such as relationships and sense of

belonging), and teacher skills and perspectives and is building a scientific basis for their survey. Assessments can be customized to focus on selected topic areas.

The Tessera assessment by ACT measures tenacity/grit, organization/responsibility, teamwork/cooperation, composure/resilience, leadership/communication, and curiosity/ingenuity using three integrated methods to measure these non-cognitive skills and characteristics to holistically understand a student's social and emotional landscape. In its beginning, this effort was informed by the work of Richard Roberts, PhD, a leading international researcher on social/emotional learning who also works on integration of social/emotional learning measures (SEL) into the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA).

The Devereux Student Strengths Assessment (DESSA/DESSA mini) by Aperture Education measures self-awareness, social awareness, self-management, relationship skills, personal responsibility, and other core social and emotional competencies supported by a strong research base. This assessment is administered to parents, staff, and school counselors on the behalf of students.

For schools looking to improve their understanding of diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) on their campus, the newly released Tripod DEI Survey measures (1) student perceptions of school commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion, (2) school climate in general and relating to DEI, (3) integration of DEI into classroom and co-curricular activities, (4) everyday discrimination, and (5) meaningful interactions between social identity groups (Tripod, 2018).

Improving Student Belonging

The are many research-driven strategies to help school leaders improve student sense of belonging in their schools. One such strategy is based in expanding social-emotional learning (SEL) for students. SEL is the process through which children and adults understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions (Durlak, Dymnicki, Taylor, Weissberg, & Schellinger, 2011). Numerous Research studies by Eisengerg, Guerra & Bradshaw, Masten & Coatworth, and Weissberg & Greenberg all indicate that effective mastery of social-emotional competencies is associated with greater well-being and better academic performance, while the failure to achieve competence in these areas can lead to a variety of personal, social, and academic difficulties (cited in Flynn, 1998).

Social emotional learning (SEL) curriculum can make a significant difference in student sense of belonging. The Harvard Graduate School of Education published a report on best practices for SEL implementation in schools. This report found that "effective SEL programming is about more than targeting skills in students; it must also address the broader environment in which children live and learn" (Jones et al., 2017). This report explains that the most successful SEL programs include the following elements:

(1) They occur within supportive contexts, meaning that they establish prosocial norms and promote healthy relationships while providing positive classroom management and support.

(2) They build adult competencies by developing teachers' SEL competencies and pedagogical skills.

(3) They acknowledge the community environment and context to help support students in and out of school.

(4) They focus on skills across various areas, such as processing emotions, interpersonal skills, and executive function skills.

(5) They help students set reasonable goals in both the short- and long-term (Jones et al.).

Using this structure, teachers and staff can spend 30-45 minutes ideally daily, but in other situations 1-3 times per week to intentionally to develop relationships (teacher to student, teacher to family and student to student), set and monitor personal and academic goals, plan for the future, learn SEL skills and connect to the broader community through a referral system. These types of programs support teachers and staff in purposefully taking on the new role of ensuring all students have a sense of belonging.

SEL can be an essential strategy to creating a culture of belonging as teachers play a significant role in influencing student sense of belonging through the relationships they form with their students and the classroom culture they build. Osterman explains that teachers should take on one of two roles to increase student belonging: "(1) academic support (teacher as [the] instructional leader) and (2) personal support (teacher as a person)" (St-Amand, Girard, & Smith, 2017). The academic support role is used "to address the wide range of teaching strategies that positively influence students' school belonging," these strategies include "giving examples, checking for understanding, engaging in problem solving, and giving students' choices." The personal support role that teachers take on addresses the fact that "effective teaching strategies are not enough alone to develop students' school belonging. Osterman argues that on a daily basis, teachers must show adequate interpersonal support because students perceive sound teaching partly through their teachers' caring behaviors" (cited in St-

Amand, Girard, & Smith, 2017). Personal support behaviors include "offering students guidance, knowing students' names, listening to students, using humor, and encouraging discussion" (St-Amand, Girard, & Smith).

Supporting the health and wellness of students is also key to improving students' sense of belonging. Research suggests that the two greatest predictors of a student's sense of belonging are (1) the student's "mental and physical conditions," and (2) general health of the student (Ma, 2003). A student's self-image and self-confidence play the largest role in their sense of belonging. If a student feels that they are good at athletics, academics, making friends, etc., then they will be self-confident and will have a more positive relationship with their school. Relatedly, if a child is in good general health, then they will be able to participate in more school activities and will be more likely to succeed in those activities. The theory around sense of belonging in school is based off of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, so providing health and safety to students is essential if they are to achieve higher needs, such as a sense of belonging. This is also affirmed in the research provided by Turnaround for Children in relationship to their building blocks for learning (Stafford-Brizard, 2016). Providing quality services to help support students that may come to school in poor physical or mental health is an essential first step to helping those students succeed, develop a strong sense of self-worth, and develop positive relationships that determine their sense of belonging.

Ma's study additionally suggests that getting students to participate in extracurricular activities is the most significant factor in their sense of belonging. In addition to the research presented in the racial minority and LGBTQI sections above, Ma highlights the significance of involving students in school-related events outside of the classroom as an essential tool in

helping students connect to the school community. School leaders who offer a wide variety of extracurricular activities (beyond sports) encourage student participation and inclusion. Having organizations for students who are not part of the racial, ethnic, religious, sexual orientation, gender identity, etc. majority of the student body is essential to helping all students feel like they belong.

For students who don't easily associate themselves with being part of the student body, having staff and faculty members who align with their identity and/or experience such as being an immigrant, minority student, LGBQTI student or other similar groups can aid their sense of belonging. Research illustrates that "the racial/ethnic composition of social contexts, such as schools, is a basic dimension on which young people base their senses of belonging" (Benner & Crosnoe, 2011). The makeup of a school's teaching staff has tremendous impact on the quality of education and treatment that students receive. According to Warren (2002), school leaders should hire new teachers with intention to ensure that they will not bring any prejudice into the classroom with them. Warren explains that this should not be misinterpreted to mean that only teachers of color can teach students of color, but that school leaders should "exercise greater selectivity in hiring teacher" (Warren). Regarding a school's current staff, school leaders should actively work to "transform beliefs, practices, and policies in ways that nurture, challenge intellectually, and promote the interests of all students, especially those whom schooling has most failed" (Warren). School leaders can begin this transformation by training staff to "appreciate the assets of the community in which their students live," and understand that cultural differences come with both strengths and challenges (Warren).

As schools hire staff, they should also consider how those potential teachers think and talk about minority students and what assumptions they will enter the classroom with. Warren explains that "only through changes in the quality of teachers will student academic achievement increase," particularly for minority students. "One reason that bridging such gaps is so promising is that it also offers an avenue for supporting the sense of school belonging of diverse students. Belonging is known to be grounded significantly in connections between students' identity/culture, and their experiences at school and to be a potent anchor for student motivation and engagement" (McClanahan, 2018).

Social media usage can influence students' sense of belonging. Research suggests that social media use in an educational setting can have positive effects on student feelings of belonging, development of social contacts, and learning (Silius, Kailanto, & Tervakari, 2011). Social media can have both a positive and negative influence on student life, which is discussed in greater detail in the school-life balance section. However, it's helpful for educators to understand that "the use of social media presents a unique opportunity to engage students in a new paradigm of human interaction and social learning" (Deaton, 2015). Educators and school leaders have an opportunity to use social media to positively influence students. Encouraging student social media use can assist students who are prone to loneliness and social anxiety in developing stronger peer relationships, reducing feelings of loneliness, and increasing feelings of connection to their peer group (Allen, Ryan, Gray, McInerney, & Waters, 2012).

Additionally, developing social media tools within classroom communities also provides students and teachers with modes of communication for community-building that can continue outside of the classroom and school day (Kaya & Bicen, 2016). This case study also concludes

that high school students with higher Facebook engagement rates are more likely to build

online connections with universities and participate in university activities prior to matriculating

into undergraduate studies. This suggests that social media use could help high school students

engage in online and offline community-building social interactions that simultaneously

strengthen their feelings of belonging with their current high school community and with a

university community prior to their arrival at a given institution. Dunlop and Lowenthal contend

that "through the social story community one can engage in active (and collaborative) learning,

in contribution to group learning and culture of community, in enhancing creativity" (cited in

Holotescu & Grosseck, 2011).

   This study argues that using Twitter and other similar micro-blogging platforms in

educational settings can create a community rooted in learning and mentorship. Active

participants within this digital community are likely to feel a sense of membership to that

group. New tools such as the Cyclusbreak app allow students to control who they have in their

cheering section by inviting caring adults and peers whom they trust to join a platform to keep

in touch and dialogue about college preparation and transition.

   While social media use can positively affect adolescent students' feelings of belonging

and well-being, caution is recommended as this same use and excessive use can also negatively

affect student belonging and well-being. Research studying the consequences of adolescent

social media use found that students who receive negative feedback on their social media

pages or accounts also report lower social self-esteem and well-being (Valkenburg, Peter, &

Schouten, 2006). Other research points out that students can engage in social media activities

that foster community-building and belongingness or social media activities that are not

designed to foster belonging, concluding that the latter activities can negatively impact student well-being, as they can encourage youth to become isolated and make social comparisons which are detrimental to the user's mental and emotional health (Clark, Algoe, & Green, 2018). Similarly, some studies assert that cyberbullying through social media poses a threat to student well-being and belonging as students who suffer such online harassment may be more likely to experience anxiety, depression, and severe isolation (O'Keeffe & Clarke-Pearson, 2011). These studies connecting social media use to feeling of isolation are important considerations as well research demonstrates that students who feel isolated in school are also more likely to feel disconnected from and outside of their school environment, damaging their feelings of belonging (Nichols, 2008).

Cooperative learning environments have been shown to bolster feelings of belonging among students. This occurs because "cooperation promotes a sense of belonging because all members of a classroom work together to achieve a common purpose" (Beck & Malley, 1998). Cooperative learning environments also help foster peer interactions, which can improve engagement, sense of belonging, and the likelihood of continuing in their studies (Meeuwisse, Severiens, & Born, 2010). Some students reported "engagement and collaboration with peers fostered a sense of camaraderie that diffused some of the isolation often associated with off-campus study" (Thomas, Herbert, & Teras, 2014). This indicates that collaborative learning can help create a sense of community and belonging among participants.

The size of classes, groups, and even the size of the school can influence belonging. Opportunities to participate in smaller groups throughout the learning experience "may encourage member participation (a) because smaller groups are more unified in their purposes

and actions than are larger groups and (b) because individual members often feel that they are more closely affiliated with the group, receiving guidance and support from other group members" (Finn, Pannozzo, & Achilles, 2003). Students also "have a greater sense of belonging in small schools than in bigger ones," so larger schools may want to utilize smaller class or group sizes to compensate for the size of their student population (Cotton, 1996).

Staff Belonging

Staff belongingness can be defined as "the congruence between the expectations of the role within the organization and the personal needs of the employee" (Brion, 2015). Staff belonging is similar to student belonging in that is the feeling of security and support accompanied by a sense of acceptance, inclusion, and identity (Culture Amp, 2017). These qualities are what motivate people to form and maintain lasting, positive, and significant relationships with others. The relationship between teachers and administrators has the ability to either enrich or diminish one another's lives and thereby enrich or diminish their sense of belonging (Barth, 2006). Barth emphasizes the vital relationship that teachers have with one another and how important they are to the culture of the school. Teachers that maintain congenial or collegiate relationships contribute positively to their work environment.

Congenial relationships are those defined as personal and friendly. Collegiate relationships are characterized as professional and are focused on planning and working together. Workplaces that "reflect equality and inclusion, have positive staff relationships, celebrate diversity, value staff efforts through acknowledgement, and promote empathy," also

display higher levels of belonging (Hazel, Kemp, Newman, & Twohill, 2011). A study surveying the well-being of primary school teachers found that shared understandings and responsibilities and positive relationships were connected to staff feelings of belonging (Evans, 2016).

Two characteristics that can erode the staff sense of belonging at a school are (1) a preference for working alone, resistance to working in a team, and a distaste for change; and (2) intimidation and/or exclusion of other staff members from teams, discussion, and decision making (Barth, 2006). School staff who have been or felt victimized were found to be less likely to report feeling of belongingness while school staff were significantly more likely to report feelings of belonging than students, and elementary school staff were more likely to report feelings of belonging than staff in secondary schools (Waasdorp, Pas, O'Brennan, & Bradshaw, 2011). A study focusing on high school staff found that school staff who have strong feelings of belonging in their school community are less likely to experience burnout and more likely to have stronger connections with students than those who do not (O'Brennan, Pas, & Bradshaw, 2017).

Just as student belonging plays a significant role in the lives and performance of students, staff sense of belonging has a tremendous impact on not only the lives of school staff, but also on the performance of students. The relationships that exist between teachers and between teachers and school leaders is at the center of staff sense of belonging. In a study on teacher belonging, Barth found that the "nature of relationships among the adults within a school has a greater influence on the character and quality of that school and on student accomplishment than anything else" (Barth, 2006).

In fact, schools that have a tightly-knit staff characterized by strong relationships between staff, between students and staff, and between staff and parents are less likely to experience incidents of bullying (Armstrong, n.d.). Another study aimed at understanding and measuring the optimal workplace identified belonging as the first of five components used to measure the employee experience and concluded that "employees who experience a sense of belonging, purpose, achievement, happiness and vigor are more likely to perform at higher levels and contribute 'above and beyond' expectations. They are also less likely to quit" (WorkHuman Research Institute, 2016). Overall, empirical research related to teacher belonging is quite limited, but sources cited here indicate that teachers and students benefit when staff feel that they belong and are part of the community at their school.

Assessing Staff Belonging

Highly researched survey instruments related to staff belonging are somewhat limited with most examples stemming from the corporate realm. Solution Tree has developed the Staff and Team Questionnaire: A Sense of Belonging as part of their book, *Building a Culture of Hope.* This survey asks participants to rank 25 statements regarding school culture and the nature of relationships on campus based on a 6-point scale (ranging from "1 - Needs Improvement" to " 6 - Exemplary Practice"). The Culture Amp and Paradigm Inclusion Survey asks staff members to evaluate the experiences of the staff as a whole to highlight conflicts or areas of concern. This gives leaders actionable ways to create a more inclusive workplace culture.

The Employee Experience Index is a tool developed by the IBM Smarter Workforce Institute and WorkHuman Research Institute to measure employee experiences related to

belonging, purpose, achievement, happiness, and vigor. The index compiled the survey results from over 23,000 employees across 45 different countries and territories to understand what factors influence workplace belonging and how leaders can improve belonging in their workplace or community. The data gathered underwent "a series of statistical analyses to assess and validate the psychometric properties of the survey items and related constructs" (WorkHuman Research Institute, 2016). This index can serve as a guide and resource to schools looking to improve the sense of belonging among their staff.

If UACS staff are comfortable using "engagement" as a construct that demonstrates a sense of belonging, the [Gallup Q12 Survey](#) on employee engagement may be a useful tool. There are 35 million survey results from employees around the world that have been studied as part of survey implementation and a free State of the American Workforce report can be downloaded by following the link above.

Improving Staff Belonging

In order to improve staff sense of belonging, research suggests that school leadership must be intentional in how they develop and build relationships among their staff. In a white paper written for Cognizant regarding the subject of improving workplace belonging, the author explains the importance of creating an inclusive mindset in the workplace characterized by everyone having a voice, bonding through team building exercises, collaboration among staff members, a strong feeling of trust, and ongoing constructive feedback (Tammy Erickson Associates, 2017). Creating a workplace where everyone's voice is heard and valued contributes to creating a shared vision for the organization. When all members of a team work together to

develop a shared set of purposes, goals, and a vision, then they are more likely to feel that they belong to that organization.

Having explicit conversations about educational goals and values for the school have been shown to improve staff belonging in schools (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011). Culture Amp also notes that leadership needs to be continuously developing and investing in their staff members to help them grow and develop their professional skills. Offering regular professional development days for teachers may help teachers feel that school leadership is valuing them by investing in them. School leaders must also intentionally facilitate collaboration among staff to build a sense of community (Skaalvik & Skaalvik). This may take the form of virtual staff meetings to encourage participation from those who cannot physically attend, creating physical spaces for teachers to collaborate (possibly a section of the library for teachers to develop curriculum and lesson plans), or creating structures such as organized, informal social events and mentorship programs to encourage staff to build stronger relationships and build a sense of community.

A 2017 peer-reviewed study noted that mentorship is "not only beneficial in reducing teachers' retention," but can also "help create a supporting climate for enhancing novice teachers' knowledge, and for personality development as well as career advancement" (Hadi & Rudiyanto, 2017). Mentoring programs also "boost teacher satisfaction and confidence, reduce their isolation, and enhance their professional growth" (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004). The Skaalvik & Skaalvik research introduced above explains that it is important for school leaders to create opportunities for staff to collaborate to begin forming a sense of community. Part of creating a collaborative environment is encouraging informal bonding between teachers.

Donut is an example of an informal tool that helps team members connect by grouping individuals in the school that do not know each other well and arranging a time for them to get coffee and get to know each other. Donut can also help connect newly hired staff members with veteran staff members to help them through the onboarding process and encourage retention. Creating mentorship programs can also facilitate the formation of positive social relationships among staff members and lead to lower staff turnover rates (Culture Amp, 2017).

The studies above both from corporate and education settings indicate that creating an environment where everyone feels valued by a network of coworkers that they trust and rely on is key to developing a high sense of staff belonging. School leaders can intentionally create structures in schools such as mentoring relationships and professional learning communities to foster connection and solicit feedback that helps improve the level of connectedness experienced by teachers.

Student School-Life Balance

Students today face the crucial challenge of not only navigating stressors in both their academic and personal lives but must also develop the skills necessary to create life balance amidst 24/7 technology access. Life balance, as defined by by Gröpel & Kuhl and Kunle, Hofer, & Kilian can be stated as, "how satisfyingly individuals distribute their time to those areas they feel are important or that they highly value" (cited in Kuhnle, Hofer, & Kilian, 2012). When school is listed as an area of importance in the context of this definition, we can understand school-life balance to be the degree to which a student distributes their time and resources to school and non-school activities while maintaining feelings of satisfaction in both areas.

Developing a healthy school-life balance requires a complicated negotiation between roles and responsibilities, as "a student often wears many hats: partner, worker, friend, classmate, etc. Often these roles are in conflict, and a student must be adept at attending to a variety of factors and assessing priorities" (JHSAP, School-Life Balance). Creating distinction between these different roles is especially important for older students, as students entering adolescence face "a sense of increasing independence, emerging adult responsibilities, and the development of decision-making abilities" (Bröder et al., 2017). As students grow older and face increasing levels of autonomy and responsibility outside the classroom, the ability to create balance between the two becomes more important; Bröder et al. note that "learning and adopting health-promoting knowledge and behavior during this formative life period may improve healthy decision-making and health literacy among adolescents."

Generally, the absence of school-life balance is characterized by imbalances in the student's allocation of resources toward school and other important areas of their life. The need for increased attention to this imbalance is evident in the growing number of schools across the country experiencing a drastic increase in the number of students exhibiting anxiety. In a 2013 study conducted by the American Psychological Association, teens' self-reported stress levels were higher than adults', and 31% reported feeling overwhelmed as a result of stress. A third of surveyed teens stated that their stress level had increased over the previous year, 25% of students reported "extreme" levels of stress, while 42% reported that they are not doing enough to manage their stress (American Psychological Association 2014).

Root causes of modern student anxiety include "more rigorous standardized testing policies, pressures from social media and fears surrounding school safety" (Flannery, 2018). The

combination of stress from academic and social sources and fears for their own physical well-being in an era of increasing school violence, in addition to any stressors students may be facing in their home life, frequently result in today's students having a growing need for healthy coping mechanisms to manage stress. Flannery (2018) explains that these coping mechanisms become especially crucial when considering the decline in students' free time outside of school.

A seminal study conducted in 2000 by Hofferth and Sandberg determined that between 1987 and 1996, children's free time declined by 12%. Indeed, a 2011 article analyzed data and found a strong correlation between reduced time for play in children and increased levels of psychopathology in children (Gray, 2011.) A more recent 2018 study of kindergarten teachers in Massachusetts found that an average of 69% of teachers reported a decrease in the amount of school-scheduled time for child-directed activities, which the report defines as encompassing free play, recess, lunch, snack, and rest time (Fowler, 2018).

This difference was even more pronounced across socioeconomic levels, as schools in high socioeconomic status (SES) districts scheduled 100 more minutes per week for play and recess than low-SES schools (Fowler). In fact, the study revealed that in the low-income schools surveyed, kindergarteners had fewer minutes of child-directed activities in their day than school janitors had minutes of break time in their work day (Fowler). Though the study focuses on student and teacher autonomy at the kindergarten level, these changes are also prevalent across grade levels. As free time declines along with time spent in student-directed school activities, students face lower levels of autonomy, which can raise their stress levels (Fowler).

Shafer (2017) conducted a series of interviews with students to learn more about the factors contributing to their sense of school-life balance. She found that students face

significant challenges in dealing with stress if they have not had sufficient opportunities to practice and build resilience (Shafer, 2017). Students from more affluent backgrounds may not be given opportunities at home or in the classroom to fail and learn to overcome failure. For these students, the pressure to succeed can be magnified by parents' hyper-involvement in their academic and personal lives. Students experience pressure to succeed at home, online, in extra-curricular activities and in the classroom. Their lack of experience in dealing with failure and stress can lead them to worry, obsess over the worst-case scenario, and shut down. Creating opportunities for students to fail in a safe environment is key to helping them develop the resilience and coping skills necessary for them to be healthy and happy (Shafer). However, special consideration should be given to minority populations, as described in Appendix A, before adopting strategies to promote resiliency.

When student school-life balance becomes uneven, whether in favor of school or non-school activities, student performance and well-being suffer. A 2006 study of engineering students found that students who were preoccupied with schoolwork to an unhealthy level exhibited increased stress, increased expectations, and diminished opportunities for social activities and non-school activities (Loshbaugh, Hoeglund, Streveler, & Breaux, 2006). The students who demonstrated the widest range of interests and "spoke most passionately" about school-life balance, on the other hand, demonstrated some of the highest GPAs of the study (Loshbaugh, Hoeglund, Streveler, & Breaux).

Additionally, qualitative studies in high- performing schools find that some students who work hard in school may be compromising their mental and physical health in the pursuit of top grades (Conner & Pope, 2013). The increased stress that accompanies students' lack of school-

life balance can have serious negative consequences. An International WELL Being Institute (2017) report indicated that unchecked levels of stress can lead to both physical and psychological problems, including gastrointestinal issues, a weakened immune system, difficulties sleeping and an increased risk of depression and anxiety. Abeles (2014) posits that our increasingly "busy" school cultures may contribute to decreased ability to form communities. Indeed, a study by Konrath (2013) found that students entering college after 2000 scored 40% lower on two key empathy measures (empathetic concern and perspective taking) than students who entered college before 2000. In this study, a cross-temporal meta-analysis was conducted to monitor change in both empathy measures among American college students from 1979 to 2009.

Although some research indicates that social media can be a positive force in students' lives, as the use of social media can help students build the social capital needed to help optimize their school-life balance (particularly in periods of transition from one level and place of education to another), social media is also a leading cause of imbalances in students' school-life negotiations (DeAndrea, Ellison, LaRose, Steinfield & Fiore, 2012). Studies indicate that students who face a school-life imbalance in the form of a media addiction, may exhibit reduced academic engagement and performance as well as diminished mood and well-being (Wang, Chen, & Liang, 2011; Kaya & Bicen, 2016; and Hume & Sullivan, 2012). Research further identifies that while social media is attractive to young people and provides avenues to relieve stress and build relationships inside and outside of school, it also has the potential to shift a student's school-life balance away from their academic endeavors when used excessively, negatively impacting grades and productivity (Wang, Chen, & Liang, 2011).

Facebook-specific studies indicate that use of the platform can distract students from academic work, and that changes in the performance of a student's Facebook content can impact student mood and focus (Kaya & Bicen, 2016), suggesting that Facebook use can affect a student's well-being and school-life balance. A student's school-life balance can be compromised by the following issues associated with social media use: excessive internet use, absence of offline activities and interactions, exposure to cyberbullying and other online hazards (Hume & Sullivan, 2012). This study also notes that educator-led guidance for safe internet and social media use could help students avoid these adverse effects while engaging with social media. "Students' attitudes towards social media services in the educational context have changed. Initially, students viewed social media as a way to connect with other people during their free time, but now they start to expect the use of social media services more in the studying context" (Silius, Kailanto, & Tervakari, 2011). Students navigating the shift from using social media strictly for personal social activities to using social media technologies for educational purposes may struggle to find balance when the line between school life and personal life is blurred.

Assessing School-Life Balance

The resources for assessing school-life balance are limited if considering the singular School-Life Balance construct. However in expanding the construct to consider what strengths students have and need to intentionally have developed to succeed in life (which incorporates balance), the Search Institute's two surveys Attitudes & Behaviors and their Development Assets Profile may be of assistance. The Attitudes & Behaviors Survey Survey "gives a snapshot

of the current experiences and perspectives of your adolescent youth in your school, program,

or community. It emphasizes the strengths and supports they currently have and need, and

how those positive indicators protect against youth risk behavior" (Search Institute, n.d.). The

Development Assets Profile "measures young people's internal strengths and external supports,

and their growth in these key areas over time" (Search Institute, n.d.).

Additionally, there are online resources and apps that may be useful in helping students

develop and monitor their own sense of school-life balance. The Life Balance Inventory is a free

online survey that allows users to answer questions to find their life balance and stress scores,

helping them identify areas needing improvement. While this tool is not specifically designed to

measure school-life balance, it may still benefit students experiencing a school-life imbalance.

The Focus Booster is an app that tracks the time users spend working or staying on task. It uses

the Pomodoro technique of breaking up work with small breaks to help users stay focused and

productive without experiencing burnout. Timeneye is another app that helps users evaluate

their life balance by measuring the time users spend on various activities. It can be integrated

with Basecamp, Outlook Calendar, Google Suite, and other programs to help make tracking

easier.

Through grant planning work funded by the Colorado Health Foundation in partnership

with The New America Schools, Generation Schools Network (GSN) worked with Nate Melson, a

teacher, to develop an app to help monitor school-life balance. The BodyBank app is used by

students at the charter network's Lowry Campus in East Denver to help students manage stress

and make healthy choices regarding sleeping, eating, exercising, meditating, etc. When a

student makes a healthy choice, they earn dollars in the app that they can use for perks at school. Unhealthy choices subtract money from the student's daily balance.

Youper is an app that uses artificial intelligence to ask critical questions about the thoughts and feelings of users and provides responses that help the user get back on track with their mental health goals. It also provides guided meditation to help reduce stress and promote emotional health. GSN has been testing the app for use with students who struggle with depression and anxiety due to stress and has found it to be useful in managing those issues. The app also offers resource referrals to users that may be experiencing more severe or life-threatening situations due to being overwhelmed by stressors.

Finding School-Life Balance

Beyond the technological tools, there are a host of ways that school leaders can support students in finding their school-life balance. One of the most straightforward ways to help students find this balance is to have school staff (teachers, counselors, etc.) develop strong relationships with their students, which will enable them to check-in with students and understand how they are doing mentally and emotionally (Saha, Huebner, Hills, Malone, & Valois, 2014). School leaders can also make efforts to inform parents about how to support their child and strengthen coping mechanisms to deal with stress and anxiety. School staff should also "support the development of quality peer friendships," to help students build support systems for themselves among their peers. Teaching students what positive friendships and support systems look like can also be incorporated into social-emotional learning units and can be modeled by positive adult/staff relationships (Roffey, 2011).

Research demonstrates that students benefit from "direct coping skills training," so setting time aside in the school day to give students this training and help them develop their coping skills will give them the tools they need to navigate stressful situations (Saha et al., 2014). Additionally, Kraag et al. found that these programs were met with the most success when they "incorporated multiple techniques, such as relaxation training, social-emotional competence training, and social problem solving" (cited in Saha et al., 2014).

There is little research regarding how to help students find their school-life balance, but there is an accumulation of best practices to help school leaders support their students in finding this balance. For instance, Johns Hopkins University developed a Student Assistance Program supporting the concept of school-life balance to increase student awareness of their own need for balance and understanding of the concept. This toolkit explains that time management can be a major cause of stress for students. Helping student develop schedules for themselves can help them understand their workload, begin prioritizing their responsibilities, and stay organized (John Hopkins Student Assistance Program, n.d.). Teaching students to set high, but achievable goals can also make a difference in the amount of additional stress that they place on themselves. Learning how to set boundaries and say "no" or ask for help to avoid over exerting themselves is an important skill for students to acquire (John Hopkins Student Assistance Program, n.d.). Intentionally teaching students positive habits that relieve stress (such as exercise, positive thinking and self-talk, maintaining a support network of family and friends, and mindfulness practices) provides them with tools to manage stress that are life-long.

These recommendations align with the Search Institute's well known 40 Developmental

Assets Framework. Through their research, the "Search Institute has identified 40 positive

supports and strengths that young people need to succeed. Half of the assets focus on the

relationships and opportunities they need in their families, schools, and communities (external

assets). The remaining assets focus on the social-emotional strengths, values, and

commitments that are nurtured within young people (internal assets)" (Search Institute, n.d.).

Search Institute's approach can provide a way to organize specifically chosen interventions and

supports backed by research across grade levels such as is the case with mindfulness.

For example, teaching and practicing mindfulness meditation is proven to play a

significant role in alleviating the stress and burnout that can throw students out of balance. This

could be a way to increase a student's assets in the category of Positive Identity by expanding

their sense of personal power through teaching mindfulness.

Mindfulness is defined as, "the ability to attend to thoughts and emotions as they arise

and to be fully conscious of the present-moment experience" (Schure, Christopher, &

Christopher, 2008). This can include meditation, yoga, qigong, and other practices that involve

reflection and relaxation. Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) is one type of

mindfulness program that has resulted in positive outcomes for participating students.

Graduate students that participated in an MBSR study indicated that they experienced

"meaningful effects on physical, emotional, mental, spiritual, and interpersonal aspects of their

lives," demonstrating that these practices are not narrow in their impact (Schure, Christopher,

& Christopher). Participants also reported noticeable improvement in their ability to cope with

and manage negative emotions and general improvements to their personal and professional

lives.

Some research suggests that the success of mindfulness meditation in adolescent

populations is connected to the focus on attention, which is believed to enhance executive

function (EF). The brain's prefrontal cortex, the area concerned with EF, is still developing in

youth, which makes adolescents more vulnerable to the negative effects of stress. As a result,

some argue that mindfulness meditation aids prefrontal development in adolescent brain and

promotes wellbeing (Erbe & Lohrmann, 2015). In younger children, participation in less

structured activities (such as mindfulness activities) resulted in better self-directed executive

function than activities that were highly structured (Barker et al., 2014). Other studies note that

participants respond differently to mindfulness techniques, but also indicate that such practices

"could ameliorate negative outcomes resulting from deficits in self-regulation" (Tang, Hölzel, &

Posner, 2015).

Some states are addressing student stressors through systemic changes. California's

Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP) includes a goal focused on the engagement of

pupils and the school climate, making it incumbent on school leaders to assess and address

student mental health. This tool helps school districts set goals and expenditures to ensure

positive outcomes for students by focusing on eight priority areas, including school climate and

student safety (California State PTA, 2016).

Staff Work-Life Balance

Work-life balance is defined as "the individual perception that work and non-work activities are compatible and promote growth in accordance with an individual's current life priorities" (Kalliath & Brough, 2008). Other definitions of this concept describe work-life balance as "the absence of conflict" between personal and professional roles (Kalliath & Brough). Most research suggests that harmony between these two realms of life is generally indicative of work-life balance. Successful work-life balance creates equity across professional and non-professional roles, satisfaction across these roles, fulfillment of role salience, and perceived control in roles (Kalliath & Brough).

Work-life balance can be broken into three components: time balance, involvement balance, and satisfaction balance and it is characterized by equal levels of time commitment, psychological involvement, and role satisfaction between professional and non-professional roles (Greenhaus, Collins, & Shaw, 2003). Similarly, some researchers have chosen to look for equal use and restoration of four major areas of resources to determine if an individual's professional and personal lives are adequately balanced. Greenblatt (2002) explains that successful management of temporal resources, financial resources, personal resources, and control are key for ensuring an optimal work-life balance.

When someone does not have work-life balance, they are said to have work-life conflict. This typically takes the form of imbalances in and conflicts between the resources dedicated to personal and professional roles, respectively. Generally, poor work-life balance is associated with increased stress, reduced quality of life, and reduced effectiveness at work (Greenhaus, Collins, & Shae, 2003).

The consequences of imbalance are significant. Work-life imbalances are linked to mental health issues such as depression and poor personal relationships (Troppmann & Troppmann, 2017). According to Velms (as cited in Balamurugan & Pasupathi, 2018) work-life imbalance is associated with "enhanced levels of stress and stress-induced illness; lesser-life satisfaction; elevated rates of family strifes, violence, and divorce; rising frequencies of substance abuse; rising challenges with parenting and control of children and adolescents and swelling rates of juvenile delinquency and violence".

When individuals are able to find a healthy work-life balance, not only do they benefit, but their employer does as well. The Association of Teachers and Lecturers (n.d.) created a toolkit for helping educators find work-life balance. The quantitative data regarding the impact of work-life balance in the toolkit is limited. However, the school policies that support work-life balance as recommended to improve productivity, efficiency, motivation, recruitment, retention, training, relationships, self-esteem, confidence, and concentration can be supported by a variety of research sources. Research by Bubb and Earley (2004) demonstrates that schools that focus on staff wellbeing by promoting healthy work-life balance receive a host of benefits. Work-life balance creates an environmental situation in which educators and students are more effective and achieve more, schools experience lower turnover rates, and school culture improves as people feel more valued and supported (Bubb & Earley). Balance also improves retention rates for schools, it makes employees feel like a valued, motivated member of a learning community, and it saves money that would otherwise be spent on teacher recruitment costs (Bubb & Earley).

A cross-cultural study of the effects of work-life balance and work-life conflict found that work-life balance "was positively related to job and life satisfaction and negatively related to anxiety and depression" (Haar, Russo, Suñe, & Ollier-Malaterre, 2014). Kessler et al. (2007) writes that depression is the leading cause of disability throughout the world. The impact of depression can be significant in an individual's life. It limits one's ability to concentrate, which causes a loss of interest in activities and makes daily functioning more difficult.

Mental health issues can influence an individual's productivity, and that lack of productivity costs $193.2 billion in annual earnings in the United States (Insel, 2008). Reducing depression through helping staff achieve work-life balance could help avoid these negative consequences. Thompson (2018) suggests that one of the most challenging parts of being a teacher is maintaining a work/life balance because there are many pressing responsibilities to juggle, teachers are often idealistically dedicated to their work and struggle to say "no," teaching is an emotionally, mentally, and physically challenging field, and many teachers find it too easy to immerse themselves in school duties. The dedication that teachers often have can be detrimental to their personal lives, as many teachers report significant stress as a result of poor work-life balance (Thompson, 2018).

Assessing Work-Life Balance

There are many surveys and tools available to school leaders seeking to measure the level of work-life balance that their staff experience. The Work-Life Balance Questionnaire made up of 34 statements gauges the expectations and supports that an organization gives to its employees. Employees rank their answers on a five-point scale (ranging from always to

never) to help school leaders understand the factors that contribute to teacher work-life

balance at their school.

The Work-Life Balance Self-Assessment is an assessment that staff members can take

themselves to reflect on the habits and practices they have and how that contributes to their

sense of work-life balance. This can be a useful tool for staff working to identify self-

improvements in this area.

The Life Balance Inventory is a free online survey that allows users to answer questions

to find their life balance and stress scores. This helps them identify areas that they can change

or improve. There are also apps available to help individuals measure and monitor their work-

life balance using the time spent in various areas of work and life and the amount of

satisfaction they received from those actions. Timeneye is a free app that was mentioned as a

resource in the student school-life balance section. This app helps users track the time they

spend on various projects throughout the day to help them manage their time more efficiently.

Fit2Teach is another free app that measures teacher work-life balance by analyzing user

responses to a short daily survey. This data in turn creates a work-life balance score that users

can track throughout the week to better understand where improvements can be made in their

routines. A more simplistic resource is a wheel chart, which is used to help individual visualize

their life balance, using self-reported satisfaction in each area to measure their overall life

balance.

Finding Work-Life Balance

Work-life balance is often a challenge for teachers with issues cited that drive stress and imbalance such as: workplace conflict with management and colleagues (Clunies-Ross, Little, & Klienhuis, 2008), lack of support from school leadership (Eskridge & Coker, 1985), student misbehavior (Kokkinos, 2007), student absences and low academic achievement (Blase, 1986), lack of school resources, large class size, time and financial constraints, demands to perform clerical duties (Abel & Sewell, 1999), and a lack of professional opportunities (Eskridge & Coker, 1985).

Granted, stress in the profession seems to begin early in teachers' careers. Student–teachers who experienced high guidance demonstrated lower levels of burnout at the end of their practicum than those who experienced low guidance (Fives, Hamman, & Olivarez, 2007). Warren (2018) states that "Approximately 40 percent of beginning teachers will leave the classroom within their first five years of teaching."

In contrast, the Association of Teachers & Learners (n.d.) argues that school policies that support work-life balance improve productivity, efficiency, motivation, recruitment, retention, training, relationships, self-esteem, confidence, and concentration. A study by Spilt, Komen, and Thijs (2011) suggests that the quality of relationships between staff members and between teachers and their students are two indicators of staff wellbeing. In this article, teacher-student relationships is a strong indicator of teacher wellbeing, though no causational relationship could be established (Split, Komen, & Thijs).

The school environment is a social one, so the relationships that students and teachers build with one another is an essential factor in the wellbeing of both teachers and students. A teacher's sense of wellbeing and job outlook is strongly related "to the degree of social

cohesion in the classroom and in the school," (Split, Komen, & Thijs). School leaders should

train staff members to have the behavioral management skills and interpersonal skills needed

to be successful in the classroom and build relationships with their students. The data in this

study suggests that helping staff members achieve competency in the classroom and build

positive relationships with their students will contribute to their sense of wellbeing.

Thompson (2018) offers a variety of best practices that districts can adopt to help their

staff members find their work-life balance and improve their wellbeing. For instance, many

districts offer their employees a range of health resources to improve their wellbeing. This is

often called an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) and it can take many forms, such as

counseling referrals, wellness activities, online stress reduction classes, support groups,

financial coaching, help with substance abuse, and many other services (Thompson). These

district-level supports are helpful, but it is in the individual school's best interest to support

teachers with their own self-care to help them maintain work-life balance.

In a 2014 study by the British Department for Education, titled the Workload Challenge

Consultation, the 1,680 teachers surveyed attributed poor work-life balance to the large

volume of assignments, unrealistic deadlines, and long and irrelevant meetings (Gibson, Oliver,

& Dennison, 2015). The survey reported that 32% of teachers called for marking arrangements

to be modified and 25% said they would like a reduction in data entry to support better work-

life balance (Gibson et al., 2015).

In addition to school-based policies, Thompson (2018) explains that teachers can

develop the following habits to improve their work-life balance: time for personal regeneration,

eating well, exercising, planning fun activities, scheduling time for a hobby after work, looking

at work problems as opportunities to learn, working efficiently at school, setting boundaries, sharing and delegating control, allowing time to make effective transitions between classes, creating structures and routines, finding a mentor and building a positive support group. For additional learning, Appendix B refers to examples of how work-life balance is being addressed in other countries while Appendix C specifically looks at the way teachers' roles in Finland differ from those in the U.S. and other nations which take a similar approach.

Finally, factors identified as protective against teacher stress and burnout from a variety of research sources cite an increased sense of self-efficacy, connectedness with students, connectedness and support by colleagues and receiving recognition (Klassen, Perry, & Frenzel, 2012; Flook, Goldberg, Pinger, Bonus, & Davidson, 2013; Gardner 2010; Schwarzer & Hallum, 2008).

Conclusion

The two areas of belonging and balance that this review focuses on, are essential to student and teacher well-being and to achieve or maintain high levels of performance. Planning to intentionally address the issues of student/teacher belonging and school/life-work balance can update mindsets about what it means to be a healthy, inclusive and thriving school community. Further, this tandem research-base can guide development of an overall Health & Wellness Plan for the District using the Whole Child, Whole School, Whole Community model and constructs to improve student and teacher well-being in the district as it relates to student and staff wellness and mental health.

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Appendix A
The Role of Resilience in Student Success

Sagor (1996) defines resilience as "a set of attributes providing people with the strength and fortitude to confront overwhelming obstacles" (Sagor 1996). Resilience is demonstrated when a person is optimistic, energetic, cooperative, inquisitive, attentive, helpful, punctual, and on task. Building resilience in students has a host of benefits (some of which are described above). Students that are more optimistic about school and are more engaged in their education are more likely to succeed throughout their life (Sagor, 1993). Resilience also makes students more likely to feel competent and useful as they will provide them with evidence of their academic achievements and will give them the sense that they can contribute to their communities (Sagor). Students also show higher senses of belonging and potency as they feel they are valued members of their communities and they are more likely to feel empowered to make positive changes (Sagor).

There are various approaches that a school can take to help students build resilience, but all of them require deliberate and disciplined planning and execution. Sagor (1996) argues that student-led parent conferences are a tool that can help students build an internal locus of control (a key indicator of resilience). Students are held accountable for their performance and are responsible for reporting it to their parents, which helps them establish autonomy over their educational experience. Teachers are a great strength when building resilience in students. Sagor (1996) explains that teacher-conducted action research can help provide insight and feedback into the effectiveness of a school's resilience-building efforts. Teachers can analyze whether or not cooperative learning and service learning had a significant impact on students' feeling of usefulness. Or they can explore if the classroom expectations for mastery helped students feel more competent. Using the insight and resources that students and staff have can greatly contribute to the success of resilience-building efforts.

School leaders can also develop an inventory of potential resilience-building practices and create a logic model to help monitor the impacts of these practices. For example:

Organizational / Instructional Practices (OIP)	Resiliency Trait Reinforced (RTR)
Logical Consequences	Potency
Mastery Expectations	Competence
Service Learning	Usefulness
Cooperative Learning	Usefulness
Teacher Advisory Groups	Belonging
Authentic Assessment	Competence
Student-led Parent Conferences	Potency
Learning-Style Appropriate Instruction	Belonging
Activities	Belonging
Portfolios	Competence

Sagor (1996) explains that school must provide their students with experiences that will help them build their resilience. He argues that this is especially true for at-risk students. However, school leaders must understand the role that resilience plays in the lives of many students, especially students of color. Bettina L. Love (2019) explains in her research that academic approaches to teaching resilience (also referred to as grit) can have unintended consequences as a result of the relationship between African Americans and resilience throughout history. Love explains that grit and resilience have been intertwined into the lives and experiences of black people since the North American slave trade began (2019). The physical and emotional anguish that enslaved black people had to endure to survive is still present in the daily lives of African Americans today, as "African Americans fight every day to matter in this country" (Love, 2019). This narrative and the role that grit and resilience play in it must be understood by teachers and administrators before they attempt to teacher those qualities to students.

Love makes two arguments in her piece. First, she explains that it is unjust to measure "African American students' grit while removing no institutional barriers" (Love). Society cheers on the few "exceptional" black students who are able to overcome those barriers while ignoring "the hundreds of kids who are left behind because we are rooting for what we are told is an anomaly" (Love). Second, she explains that the grit that is displayed by black people throughout history is often overlooked or not valued in an academic setting. Black students have to overcome inequality, racism, prejudice, and many other barriers on a daily basis, but this is not the kind of grit that is valued in the classroom. Love explains that it is "dangerous to remove [black American's] history on both sides of the water from the conversation about grit," because it not only devalues the African American experience and accomplishments but is also harms black students by not acknowledging the resiliency that they have to possess to survive (Love).

Love challenges educators and policymakers to "have grit for justice…[and] understand the legacy of African Americans' grit" (Love). For educators and school leaders to begin teaching students about grit and resilience, they must first understand the role race plays in it and any unintended consequences it may have for black students. Lessons designed to increase grit in students should be sensitive to the role race plays in students' experiences with grit outside school.

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Appendix B
Global Studies on Work-Life Balance

The impacts of work-life balance have interested researchers across the globe, with many countries adopting new workplace rules and laws in response to such research.

Many countries in Asia have developed new practices aimed at ensuring employee health and safety through work-life balance. In Japan, the term "Karoshi" is used to describe situations in which employees commit suicide or suffer heart failure as a result of long work hours (Weller, 2017). A 2016 report examining karoshi cases and their cause of death found that more than 20% of people in a survey of 10,000 Japanese workers said they worked at least 80 hours of overtime a month (Weller, 2017). Unsurprisingly, many solutions for achieving balance in Japanese workplaces are focused at restricting overtime and long work hours. Tokyo's governor has ordered municipal employees to finish work by 8:00pm and anyone still at their desks will be subjected to "strict monitoring" by overtime prevention teams.

The move follows the suicide in December 2015 of a 25-year-old woman who worked 159 overtime hours over the course of a month. Japan's biggest advertising agency has since barred workers from logging more than 65 hours of overtime a month (Weller, 2017; Alpeyev, 2016). South Korea is, like Japan, known for a work culture in which employees work extremely long hours (Sudworth, J., 2010). In an attempt to remedy this, officials at the Ministry of Health introduced a monthly Family Day in 2010, when offices turn off their lights and close at 7:00 PM, encouraging employees to go home, spend time with family, and procreate to find a healthier work-life balance, dedicate time to personal relationships, and help raise the country's low birth rate (Sudworth, J., 2010). The long hours seen in the South Korean workplace also appear in the lives of the country's students. Long hours are also expected of students who often attend regular public schools during the day and the visit their chosen Hagwon in after school hours often staying until well past midnight (Coulson, A., 2017).

In Europe, countries such as France, Germany, and Spain have made progress in implementing workplace policies that help employees achieve and maintain a healthy work-life balance. In France, "Companies with more than 50 workers have been required to guarantee employees a 'right to disconnect' from their emails outside office hours to reduce stress and improve their work-life balance in a new law that came into effect on Jan. 1 [2017]" (Samuelson, K., 2017; Close, 2017). Many work-life balance policies in Germany focus on employee email protocols. Managers are forbidden by law from contacting staff while they are on vacation.

Several major companies have restricted out-of-hours e-mailing (Nelson, 2014). Some companies have taken this strategy even further, implementing a policy that allows employees to set their email software to automatically delete incoming emails while they are on vacation. Upon receipt of an email, this program, 'Mail on Holiday', issues an automatic reply to the

sender that the recipient is out of the office and that the email will be deleted, but also directs the sender to another on-duty contact to assist them (Rosen, R. J., 2014). In Spain, where a mid-day siesta once helped employees find balance, employment minister Fátima Báñez announced a push to let Spaniards knock off at 6:00pm, rather than 8:00pm. Spanish firms have also been working to incorporate work-family programmes in response to employment strategies and institutional pressures (Poelmans, Chinchilla, and Cardona, n.d.).

The above practices and policies implemented in European and Asian workplaces all demonstrate a growing trend in providing workplace structures that encourage employees to find a healthy work-life balance. In emphasizing reduced overtime hours, implementing "disconnect" protocols that provide employees the distance from work and the workplace needed to accomplish this balance, and encouraging family time, these countries have taken important steps in improving employee prospects for achieving work-life balance.

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Appendix C

A Study of Finland's Teachers

Finland is another country that has an educational system that the United States can learn from. Finland is a small, distant country that maintains the highest test scores in Mathematics, Science, and Reading. The most significant factor contributing to the high performance of Finland's schools is their teachers. In Finland, the teaching career is surrounded by much prestige and trust (Bastos, 2017). The profession holds the same reputation as careers in medicine and it is consistently rated as the most admired profession in the country (Bastos). Sahlberg explains that "teaching is congruent with the core social values of Finns, which include social justice, caring for others, and happiness" (cited in Bastos, 2017).

In Finland, teachers enjoy significant autonomy over what they teach in their classrooms, as there is much less emphasis placed on standardized testing compared to the United States. Teachers are very motivated by this autonomy and will often leave their school or change careers if they feel they have lost it (Bastos). This sense of teacher responsibility and individual accountability for the learning and welfare of students drives teachers to be more efficient and effective in their prepping and instructional time.

Sahlberg reports that "between the 6th and 8th grades of elementary education, Finnish teachers teach approximately 600 hours per year in classrooms," compared to 1,080 hours in the United States (cited in Bastos, 2017). Bastos (2017) explains that this is because "Finnish teacher preparation is designed to build a powerful sense of individual responsibility for the learning and well-being of all the students." The unique combination of autonomy, accountability, prestige, trust, and respect are what make Finland's education system so unique and effective. While it may be unreasonable for a school or district to implement all of these strategies, there are certainly some small changes that can be adopted in American schools to give teachers more power and help them feel more valued for their work.

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