HEALTH LESSONS FOR SCHOOL LEADERS:
A MIXED METHODS STUDY OF SCHOOL EMPLOYEE PERCEPTIONS OF
WORKPLACE WELLNESS

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ABSTRACT

HEALTH LESSONS FOR SCHOOL LEADERS: A MIXED METHODS STUDY OF SCHOOL EMPLOYEE PERCEPTIONS OF WORKPLACE WELLNESS

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Dr. Stanton Wortham

There is a growing body of research literature and popular media about wellness and various ways to promote health. Only a few academic studies have attended to school employee wellness, however, and we have no comprehensive studies that attend to the sub-dimensions of wellness and examine these in the workplace. The purpose of this study was to understand school employees’ perceptions of wellness, the wellness needs of staff, and ways administrators can support these wellness needs. The mixed methods study draws on Renger, Midyett, Soto Mas, and Erin’s (2000) six dimensions of wellness—spiritual, social, emotional, physical, environmental, and intellectual—and uses these to examine school staff perceptions of wellness. The study took place in Bloomington Public Schools, a Midwestern, suburban public school district, where I am an elementary school principal. Participants included 448 staff from a total of ten elementary, three middle, and two high schools. Data were collected in an online survey and six focus groups conducted over a one year period. The results highlight school employee wellness needs, focusing on the themes of social connectedness, emotional support, and stress from specific job demands. Implications for school leaders and suggestions for further study are also discussed.
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

School leaders face many educational challenges that ultimately affect student achievement. As a public elementary school principal in a Midwestern, suburban school district, I have grown increasingly concerned with the wellness needs of school staff. All too often, school leaders focus on ways to support teacher pedagogy to the exclusion of ways to support the full development of teachers and other school staff. This research study begins with the belief that staff wellness needs should be of equal importance to developing staff as much as their curricular and instructional needs. Attention to staff wellness will help address several growing concerns that include: how to identify and retain teachers in the profession beyond the first five years, how to reduce employee health costs, and how to support school staff role modeling of healthy lifestyles to students. Each has importance to both the mission of schools and our society.

First, it is widely recognized that teachers often leave the profession within the first five years (Roehring et al., 2002) and the loss of skilled staff affects a school district in two specific ways. The overall investment in new teachers include; recruitment, selection, mentoring, evaluation, and professional development. The cost in time, resources, and support for new teachers has to be replicated every time there is turnover. The resources used for staff replacement take attention away from other areas such as schoolwide improvement initiatives. A second way turnover affects schools is through the subsequent shift in school culture whenever a person leaves the school. Schools are communities and when a person departs the community there is an inevitable sense of
loss. Families, students, and other school staff build relationships with teachers before they leave the school. Similarly, whenever a new teacher joins a school there is a natural transition, too. The new employee must learn the school culture and develop an array of relationships between colleagues, supervisors, students, and families (Deal & Peterson, 1999). Thus, identifying school staff wellness needs can help school leaders take proactive steps toward supporting their employees’ desire to stay and also improves teacher performance.

Employee performance isn’t the only issue facing school leaders as worksite wellness is increasingly seen as a cost benefit to school districts (Aldana et al., 2005). Studies related to worksite wellness emerged in the 1970s and were due to the increased need to contain health care costs (Conrad, 1987, p. 257). By the late 1970’s, health care costs were rising as high as 20 to 30 percent per year (Stein, 1985, p. 14). Expenditures for health care exceeded $2.3 trillion dollars in 2008 and are over eight times higher than the $253 billion spent in 1980. Annual costs of our medical system, due to obesity alone, are estimated at $147 billion dollars annually (Finkelstein et al., 2009). Aldana, Merrill, Price, Hardy, and Hager (2005) found a cost savings of $2.5 million dollars over a two-year period in the Washoe (Nevada) School District. These savings are significant for the school system and its employees.

Reducing district health care costs while increasing school staff wellness can benefit everyone, especially as school leaders confront continued levels of State funding reductions. The National forecast is that there will be nationwide layoffs of teachers due to State and National budget deficits. Schools can reduce health care costs (Cullen et al., 1999) while promoting greater wellness among school staff. The need for health care
cost containment was an issue that started much of the wellness promotion at work. Today, many organizations including school districts do not know what to do about rising health care costs as cited in the following report.

The Washington Business Group on Health-Watson Wyatt employer survey reports that only 18% of employers are “very confident” of their ability to manage current increases in health care costs. Put another way, 82% don’t know what to do. (Whitmer et al., 2003, p. 916)

This concern of what to do raises important questions for school educators as they serve students from grades pre-kindergarten through high school. Students become future workers with health needs that need to be addressed by their employers, peers, and families. School staff serve an important role toward modeling healthy lifestyles for students. Our Federal Healthy People 2020 plan highlights the need to address emerging issues in educational and community-based programs. The Coordinated School Health model is mentioned as a program intervention to reduce school dropouts. Again, one component of the Coordinated School Health model is staff wellness.

Simple actions appear to have significant impacts. While schools teach physical education and health education curriculum, these classes are often not enough to fully influence student health habits. School staff role modeling of positive wellness can have a significant influence within a child’s development. Principals, teachers and other school staff are with students for almost eight hours per day and have the potential to influence the wellness of their students. The Federal Government recognized this potential when they drafted “model” language in support of Public Law 108-265 (local school wellness policies). The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) created the following recommendation in support of the law stating, “The school district
encourages parents, teachers, school administrators, students, foodservice professionals, and community members to serve as role models by practicing healthy eating and being physically active, both in school and at home.” Within my own school district, there is an annual walking program that seeks to model health lifestyles to students as one of the key benefits of the program. Students become curious about why so many staff are wearing pedometers and discussing how many steps they take each day. Physical activity and wellness become broader conversations within the school.

This study seeks to learn more about the wellness needs of school staff; administrators, teachers, and non-licensed school staff (paraprofessionals, clerks, custodians, food service staff, etc.), which will allow school leaders to make more informed decisions as they design programs to further support identified needs. One benefit of identifying school staff wellness needs and developing wellness programs is that it can demonstrate a school district’s positive organizational support for employees. Seeing school staff as more than just employees but as people with lives and specific wellness needs can help reduce the turnover of all school staff. Promoting school staff wellness programs can help with teacher recruitment, retention, and productivity, and modeling of healthy lifestyles for students. Each of these goals can be better achieved when we know more about the wellness needs of school staff.

This study took place in the Bloomington Public School District, a second ring suburb outside Minneapolis. There are ten elementary schools, three middle schools, and two high schools that took part in this study. Using a multi-dimensional framework for wellness, a mixed method design was used to understand employees’ perception of their workplace wellness. The two primary data sources included a survey administered to 448
employees at fifteen schools and six focus groups conducted with a subset of thirty-four employees. Data was analyzed using the six dimensions of wellness (Renger et al., 2000) to attempt to understand school employee perceptions of the degree to which their work environment affects their wellness, as well as understand any differences that emerge between the elementary, middle, and high school employees. It sought to identify interventions school leaders may use to address employee wellness needs.

Ultimately, this study furthered new understandings about school employee wellness and ways district leaders could promote staff wellness for employees based on the self-described needs of staff.

Review of Related Literature

Introduction.

This review of literature included studies related to school (grades K-12) employee wellness and factors that affect employees' wellness at work. Research from corporate settings and post-secondary education were also reviewed in order to gain a broader picture of relevant work-site studies, this was needed due to the limited studies of school settings. In order to provide a context for this study, the following sections will describe: the history of wellness definitions, various frameworks for wellness, the sub-dimensions of wellness within this study, an economic case for school staff wellness, and schools as sites for wellness promotion.

Historical definitions of wellness.

One of the earliest definitions of wellness in America came from Halbert Dunn. In 1961, Dunn, the first director of the United States National Office of Vital Statistics
wrote about the concept of wellness as being more than a disease-free state. He had developed the following definition, “an integrated method of functioning which is oriented toward maximizing the potential of which the individual is capable, within the environment where he is functioning” (Mackey, 2009, p. 104). This early definition focused on individuals and how to maximize their potential.

In 1970, the World Health Organization (WHO) further expanded the definition of health. They defined it as, “a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being, not merely the absence of disease or infirmity” (World Health Organization, 2012). This definition included a three dimensional view (physical, mental and social). Thirty years later, Renger et al., (2000) described wellness as an “intentional choice of a lifestyle characterized by personal responsibility, balance, and maximum enhancement of physical, mental, and spiritual health.” This definition included the three dimensions mentioned by the World Health Organization but emphasized wellness as a lifestyle choice.

A more recent theory of wellness by Mackey (2009) offers a different view of the experience of being well. One that is “lived as a continuity of time and that involves both a taking-for-granted of the body and containment of the horizon of concern” (p. 103). Wellness, for these individuals, is experienced as an everyday occurrence. Subsequently, they may not be as receptive to current health promotion programs that inspire people to reach a certain health potential. Instead, unlike other definitions that describe an individual’s striving to reach a health potential, wellness is not a striving toward a better place. Mackey suggests wellness is a “present” state versus a future or optimal state. Wellness is seen through the concept of continuity; how you situate yourself along a
horizon which at times may include background health issues such as pain, and
foreground issues of other areas of wellness that are not associated with illness or the
absence of pain. This ability to contain injuries and illness provides another view of
wellness that captures individuals' experiences throughout a lifetime. According to
Mackey, wellness is not solely seen as a future, desirable, state. Instead, wellness is seen
as a continuum that is unique for each person's situation.

Clearly, there continues to be a lack of agreement around a common definition of
wellness in the research and among health professionals. There is, however, agreement
that wellness is multi-dimensional. I will describe various frameworks for wellness and
how my framework is influenced from the work of Sackney et al. (2000) and Renger et
al. (2000). Each has advanced frameworks that provide a more holistic definition of
wellness that extends beyond physical wellness or simply the absence of disease.

**Theoretical frameworks for wellness.**

A number of wellness experts have constructed a range of wellness frameworks to
best describe and define wellness. It is not surprising to find a subsequent lack of
agreement among these experts around the various sub-dimensions that comprise
wellness. In fact, the Research Digest Report: Toward a Uniform Definition of
Wellness: A Commentary, highlighted the continued disagreement among researchers
and professionals about the sub-dimensions that comprise wellness and encouraged the
movement toward a uniform definition of wellness (President's Council on Physical
Fitness and Sports, December, 2001). While there is disagreement about a uniform
definition, it is generally agreed that wellness is multi-dimensional (O'Donell, 1996;
Sackney et al., 2000; Renger et al., 2000). Most frameworks for wellness include
between five and seven dimensions (Corbin et al., 2000). The most frequently cited sub-
dimensions include physical, social, intellectual, emotional (mental), and spiritual.

These sub-dimensions capture what I have frequently seen as important areas
within schools. Each dimension has a specific connection with school settings. First,
schools are social environments with many opportunities for adults to engage with
students. They are also worksites that promote the intellectual development of staff
through readings, discussions, and workshops. Other needs include stress management
for emotional wellness, fitness programs to support physical wellness, optimal room
temperatures to provide better environmental wellness, and ways for employees to
connect with the values of the school system to support spiritual wellness.

It is an understanding of the diversity and complexity of school staff wellness
needs that informs the conceptual framework for this study. Studies, from Sackney et al.
(2000) and Renger et al. (2000), especially informed the development of this study’s
conceptual framework and subsequent six dimensions: social, emotional, spiritual,
environmental, physical, and intellectual.

The study by Sackney et al. (2000) examined school employee wellness through
six dimensions. The researchers were interested in understanding whether job type or
gender had an influence on employee perceptions of wellness. One of the findings was
that administrators reported being more positive about their wellness than teachers or
other school support staff. A unique aspect of this study was the use of a holistic
instrument that examined six dimensions of wellness within a school system.

The study by Renger et al. (2000) explored various dimensions of wellness and
created an instrument to better assess the wellness needs of participants with the Canyon
Ranch wellness program. Their instrument, the Optimal Living Profile, was an inventory that measured individuals' health and wellness. What the researchers were seeking was a holistic view of wellness, one that was more than just one-dimensional. This study adopts this holistic view of wellness and recognizes that school environments are complex environments with many social interactions which require a high degree of emotional wellness. School settings are also places requiring continuous adult learning to support improved pedagogy in the classroom. This need for learning and creativity are components of intellectual wellness.

In the following section, I describe each of the six dimensions in detail and discuss how each dimension is relevant to school workplaces specifically. I start with the emotional, intellectual, and social dimensions, which I believe are highly relevant to schools as workplaces and under-emphasized in previous research. Next, I turn to the remaining three dimensions: physical, spiritual, and environmental.

**Sub-dimensions of wellness.**

*Emotional wellness.*

Emotional wellness is seen as the ability to be aware of one's feelings and to have them under control. The National Wellness Institute definition included the following key components: the ability to maintain healthy relationships with others, positivity toward self, enthusiasm for life, and the ability to cope with stress as key components.

Schools can be stressful environments with each day filled with numerous workplace pressures that include numerous transitions from one subject area to the next. This creates a need for school staff attention and awareness toward motivating both students and oneself. Each transition with students and shift in focus can lead to a wide
range of emotional interactions. Goleman (1995) describes the need for individuals to manage upsetting emotions as essential to emotional well-being. He clearly states that we cannot always be feeling one type of emotion such as happiness, "There is much to be said for the constructive contribution of suffering to creative and spiritual life; suffering can temper the soul" (Goleman, p. 57). Helping school staff manage and balance the inevitable conflicts of a school day are essential for their well-being. Ask any school teacher or principal whether every student comes to school ready to learn, and the answer will most likely be no. We know that students enter school with a variety of needs that affect their ability to engage with school staff, peers, and volunteers. A lack of sleep, skipping breakfast, or an argument at home can influence students' emotional states and subsequently the emotional responses of those around them (Parsing the Achievement Gap, 2008).

Developing school staff members' ability to cope with the emotional challenges mentioned above will be essential because both students and staff have increasingly complicated lives. Parker and Martin (2009) used a two-factor, coping and buoyancy, model to study teachers' work-related well-being and engagement. Buoyancy is defined as an "employee's ability to effectively deal with setback, challenge, adversity, and pressure in the workplace setting" (p. 69). They sought to understand factors that underpin engagement and well-being. Setbacks, challenges, and adversity are all typical stressors. Stress is an inevitable part of all our lives, and teachers are subjected to great levels of stress due to the number and types of interactions they have with students along with disruptions to their schedule each day. In the article, Stress Management for Teachers: A Practical Approach, Russell Bradshaw describes the continuous interruptions
and distractions that are part of a teacher's workday. Within school settings, teachers are typically in classrooms with students for a majority of the day. This means there are infrequent opportunities to meet with other adults or to have time for oneself. Stress in schools is particularly high due to the need for school staff to manage their emotions during times when students have mental health needs and few adult outlets. Emotional wellness is an area of emphasis within this study because it is increasingly seen as a necessary area for employee development and workplace stress management.

**Intellectual wellness.**

Intellectual wellness encompasses the development of an optimal level of enriching intellectual activity. It includes creative and stimulating activities (Kang et al., 2008) that increase one's knowledge. One would think schools are places where school staff would fully develop their creativity and be provided with a broad array of opportunities to learn at work. The reality is that teachers today largely receive professional development that is similar to what teachers received a generation ago. Recognizing the connection between a school staff person's intellectual development and their feelings of competence can help school leaders see the importance of intellectual wellness as a key piece of the school's educational mission.

In fact businesses have recognized that intellectual capital is a key component for their employees' success. There is also the concern of intellectual property leaving the organization when an employee moves from one company to another. Intellectual property may not be thought of in the same way within school systems; however, there is a cost in lost skill when an employee leaves a school. This cost is very real for school leaders whenever they make staffing changes. It is easy for many school leaders to see
staff as numbers on a spreadsheet. Instead, I view school staff as contributing members to the community with unique hopes, dreams, and career aspirations. Understanding more about their intellectual wellness needs can help all leaders, including me, make better decisions about how to best help employees with their intellectual development.

Caring for the intellectual needs of school staff can better ensure their feelings of competence, decrease their anxiety, and further their ability to teach students to high levels. When staffs are engaged in greater self-inquiry they develop greater curiosity, engagement, and intellectual vitality (Weinbaum et al., 2004). What have not been studied in more detail are the possible connections between emotional wellness and a school employee's intellectual wellness.

**Social wellness.**

Social wellness includes the level, type, and quality of relations with others in work, home, and community settings. Classrooms can be isolating work environments with a need for educators to develop relationships through social networks, (Sparks, 1983). Houghton (2003) equally describes the isolation of teaching and how her own experiences of lesson planning with a colleague provided space to discuss instruction, student achievement, and the success within their instruction. Time for structured support and problem solving for teachers are seen as necessary supports.

Another area of social wellness for employers is perceived supervisor support and its impact on employee retention. Maertz et al. (2007), in particular, studied the effects of perceived organizational support and perceived supervisor support on employee turnover. Their study of 225 social service workers was driven by the acknowledgement that voluntary turnover of employees is costly in many ways. School systems like other
organizations have costs associated with interviewing, selecting, and mentoring new employees. Maertz et al. (2007) findings show that positive organizational support did have significant effects on turnover. The researchers recommend that supervisors, "regularly ask employees how they can help them do their job better and show personal consideration" (p. 1072).

Personal consideration is continuing to be seen as an important social/emotional need and greater positive emotional support was found to decrease emotional exhaustion and cynicism while increasing professional efficacy, (Kahn et al., 2006).

Social wellness is also an important area for school leaders to be mindful of because of the daily interactions school staff have with students, peers, parents, and supervisors. Each interaction can create a range of emotions and responses that affect the person’s ability to help students learn to high levels. Houghton (2003) describes the isolation of teaching and how her own experiences of lesson planning with a colleague provided space to discuss instruction, student achievement, and the success within their instruction. Having a peer to connect with socially can reduce the feelings of isolation that comes within classroom settings. This is an area where school administrators can exercise significant influence by creating both time and opportunities for teachers to discuss enjoyable parts of their job (Kahn et al., 2006). If, for example, a school staff member has a conflict with a student, there will be a natural need to discuss the conflict with a colleague or supervisor. Thus, school employees’ overall ability to connect with colleagues for support, to laugh, and to socialize will help to strengthen their overall wellness.
**Physical wellness.**

Numerous studies have shown the benefits of physical activity and nutrition on mental wellness along with benefits to one's cardiovascular system (Anshel et al., 2010). Cardiovascular disease is still the leading cause of death in developed countries, as a result, it is important for organizations, including schools, to find ways to support increased physical activity in staff and in ways that increase heart rates to optimal target zones.

Farag et al. (2010) specifically studied physical activity promotion and the effect on cardiovascular disease risk profiles of school staff. This study took place in a rural Southwestern Oklahoma school district. Within the study, a significant two thirds of the employees participated in the wellness program. The potential for school sites as future places for wellness promotion is clear due to the high participation rates. There is also the potential to influence a large number of students, due to the high numbers of school staff participation. In my school district alone that would be close to 10,000 students.

**Spiritual wellness.**

Spiritual wellness continues to be a well-researched and discussed area in the wellness literature. Kolodinsky et al. (2008) noted that as work continues to be an increasingly time consuming part of our lives and, “As a result, workers’ need for connectedness, meaning, purpose, altruism, virtue, nurturance, and hope in one’s work, and at one’s workplace likely is also at an all-time high” (p. 465).

Workplace spirituality can be thought of in terms of how one’s personal spiritual ideals and values interrelate with one’s workplace (Kolodinsky et al., 2008, p. 466). Work related events and an employee’s perception of them can thus be seen through their
personal spiritual values. The importance of spiritual wellness as a part of the overall dimensions of wellness is critical because a number of studies have found spirituality to be a cushion to stressors in life and linked to positive health.

*Environmental wellness.*

Environmental wellness is a wide-ranging dimension that includes how individuals relate to their environment (Miller & Foster, 2010). Environmental wellness can be seen as air quality, room temperature, and the physical layout within one’s workspace and school. Teachers especially describe “sick” classrooms where they experience headaches and the “sick building syndrome.” Wargocki et al. (2000) found that doubling air circulation rates to typical office building standards resulted in greater perceptions from employees of decreased sick building syndrome and improved performance. They also found increases in creativity with the increased outside air exchange. Both school staff and children would benefit from environmental changes that can increase productivity, creativity, and perceptions of healthy buildings.

*Limitations of the theories available.*

What is missing from these descriptions is information about how individuals see themselves on a continuum of health. Our society’s current wellness models typically see individuals as “rational and isolated entities whose focus on goal setting, self-observation, self-reward, and self-punishment as a way to regulate their own behavior” (Spreitzer et al., 2005, p. 19). There are theories, however, about organizations and health; related to job characteristics such as perceived control, perceived job demands; time pressure, etc. These theories view health in terms of environmental demands, and
the individual psychological response to these perceived demands. They also include social environmental aspects such as perceived support from coworkers and supervisors.

**Schools as center of health promotion for staff.**

Schools are a unique type of worksite, and only recently have schools been conceptualized in terms of different employee and staff roles and needs in relation to health and wellness. Educating school staff can have two cost saving benefits for school leaders. First, healthy school employees can save district resources that go toward health benefits and also reduce the number of sick days for staff (Aldana, 2005). Second, staff members who learn more self-care strategies and wellness skills can share this information with their family and friends, thus extending the reach of wellness savings for our overall community.

During the 1980s, Diane Allensworth and Lloyd Kolbe outlined eight areas of a Coordinated School Health approach to promoting and protecting the health of students and staff. One of the eight areas cited was employee wellness (Tyson, 1999, p. 4). School students had already been an area of focus for health improvement with President Kennedy’s efforts toward promoting physical fitness in schools beginning in kindergarten through high school (Shillingford & Mackin, 1991, p. 459).

More recent interest in school employee wellness emerged with the Alliance for a Healthier Generation’s inclusion of employee wellness in their school assessment tools for school communities. The healthy schools inventory allowed school teams the opportunity to develop wellness programs throughout the community including school employees. Role modeling of healthy lifestyles to students is a recurring theme. Yet, while there are champions for improving the health of students it seems there is less of a
focus on providing school staff with the knowledge and skills to promote a healthier lifestyle for themselves. Our current federal initiative of Healthy People 2020 includes goals of health promotion of staff, too. Next, I will provide a context for wellness in school settings.

School districts employ a significant number of staff ranging from teachers to principal to bus drivers. Each person contributes to the education of children and is also a part of a larger social network with differing wellness needs. More often there have been studies related to teacher stress and burnout with little to no attention to the wellness needs of other school staff. Health promotion programs often have not taken into consideration the wellness needs of differing roles employees such as school food service, clerical, custodians (engineers) and bus drivers to name a few. This study seeks to better understand health among a greater range of school staff. Specifically, how do school administrators, teachers, and non-licensed staff, describe their respective wellness needs?

School staffs bring experiences from their home and personal lives to work with them each day. Pajak and Blasé (1989) studied teachers' perspectives about the impact of their personal life factors on their work lives. Their study recommended that policy makers and social scientists, "understand the richness and complexity of teachers as human beings who have lives both inside and outside the school" (p. 285). Interpersonal relationships were one broad category that emerged as a personal area that affected the professional lives of teachers. Loving families, stable home environments, and positive relationships with families and friends were all cited as important to their well-being at school. Another interesting finding is that regular exercise contributed to some teachers
feeling more energized and ultimately more receptive to students. Exercise benefits not only the cardiovascular health of individuals but also their feelings of greater energy at work. The implications are that teachers need to develop relationships and support networks outside of school and with people in other professions. It was also found that teachers need to process their emotions with others, especially feelings over guilt about interactions with students.

It is difficult for those who work in other settings to understand how the fragmentation within a school day can affect a school staff member's wellness. They are part of a daily schedule with emotional challenges that emerge from student interactions, less flexibility in schedules, and increasing intellectual requirements to meet increasing student test benchmarks. The broad range of conditions that influence school staff wellness make school sites unique places for study. It also requires a more holistic and expansive design to understand the complexity.

**Research Design and Methodology**

The purpose of this proposed study is to better understand the health needs of school staff and to what degree school/work environments promote or diminish employees' perceptions of wellness. A mixed methods approach is the most suitable for this study because of the need to take an analytic approach toward understanding a set of variables (dimensions of wellness) while also seeking to understand the interactions of the variables (how school staff explain their wellness needs) in the complex environment (Miles & Huberman, 1994). This study's methodology was also informed by MacDermaid et al.'s (2008) recommendation that further mixed-methods studies follow
their study, Work Organization and Health. The inclusion of a qualitative approach was cited as a key component toward developing a richer understanding of the context of work environments.

This study uses the six dimensions of wellness (Renger et al., 2000) as its conceptual framework: emotional, spiritual, intellectual, social, environmental, and physical wellness. This study examined employees’ perceptions of wellness in ten elementary, three middle, and two high schools within my school district, Bloomington Public Schools. Schools are complex environments with school staff working, at times, with individual students, small groups, or large classes. The elementary schools ranged in size from 300 students to over 500 students while the middle schools and high schools averaged much higher. Within each school setting there were frequent transitions during the day and students came to school with differing emotional needs. Taking these differences into account, this study sought to understand what is common in employees’ perceptions of wellness, as well as any differences that emerged across school types. Recognizing school sites as unique work environments, a survey allowed me to access a large sample of staff to see what emerges as areas of needed attention. Miles and Huberman (1994) describe how surveys can help researchers develop better conceptual understanding of the “phenomena of importance,” which in this study are the wellness needs of school staff. The purpose of the survey was thus to broadly scan school staff perceptions of wellness at work. Sackneys (2000) survey on educator wellness was used as a foundation for this study’s survey instrument. Within this study, I was interested in better understanding the reported differences between school staff perceptions of wellness at work, specifically what school staff had to say about what contributed to or
diminished their wellness at work. The emergent trends and qualitative insights gathered from the survey would be further probed through focus groups. Morgan (1997) references the use of focus groups for this purpose and states, “they might be used to pursue poorly understood survey results or to evaluate the outcome of a program or intervention (p. 3).”

Surveys alone did not provide the depth of information I was seeking. However, I took an inductive approach by closely examining emerging patterns and themes, then I compared the initial results against my experiences and the literature (Creswell, 2009, p. 64). The next step, after finding specific wellness dimensions of need, was to further investigate staff perceptions of wellness through focus group interviews. Focus groups allowed for “concentrated insights into participants’ thinking on a topic” (Morgan, p. 23) and also served to, “put a human face” on the results from the quantitative analyses (p. 30).

This study sought to understand staff perceptions about wellness within their work environments and determine whether there were significant differences across elementary, middle, and high school settings. A survey was the most useful instrument because it allowed broad data collection of staff perceptions while capturing a large sample size. The survey questions centered on the six dimensions of wellness—spiritual, environmental, physical, social, emotional, and intellectual—that are imbedded in school-work settings and the degree to which each area is supported or diminished at work. An open response question was added at the end of the survey to gather further data from participants about their health needs. This study’s survey was based on Sackney et al.’s (2000) survey instrument for five of the six dimensions of wellness. The spiritual
wellness dimension was adapted from Wheat's (1992) Organizational Spiritual Values Scales because Sackney et al.'s spiritual wellness questions were structured for a parochial school system versus a public school system. The following section details the Cronbach Coefficient Alpha Scores.

Survey construct and content validity.

This study utilized a survey from Sackney et al.'s (2000) study of educator wellness and Wheat's (1991) study on measuring human spirituality. Each of these studies had developed construct and content validity for their surveys, which I will explain in the next sections. First, Sackney's content validity was established by having three representatives of the following three groups review the survey: administrators, teachers, and support staff. Their feedback led to survey revisions and improved wording of the survey.

Construct validity was explored with a factor analysis of the survey items. The factor analysis resulted in Eigen value of greater than one for six principal components. Cronbach's coefficient alpha was used to determine the construct validity of the survey questions. A coefficient was determined for each of the six dimensions of wellness along with the number of survey items. Coefficients and survey item numbers are displayed below. Five of the dimensions of wellness results showed good construct validity (range between .71 and .84), while physical wellness showed poor construct validity (.55). The physical wellness scores were thus not considered statistically reliable and subsequently not used within this study's findings. See Table 1 below.
Table 1

*Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha Scores for the School Staff Perceptions of Wellness Survey*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimensions of Wellness</th>
<th>Cronbach's Alpha</th>
<th>Number of Items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Wellness</td>
<td>.771</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Wellness</td>
<td>.746</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Wellness</td>
<td>.549</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spiritual Wellness</td>
<td>.836</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intellectual Wellness</td>
<td>.713</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental Wellness</td>
<td>.769</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This study also adapted spiritual wellness questions from Wheat's (1991) study on the development of a scale for measuring human spirituality. Content validity of Wheat's instrument was established by having a panel of five judges, each holding doctoral degrees in related fields, review the construct items and provide feedback for improvement. Scale reliability was estimated through item analysis with a discrimination index of >0.30. Finally, construct validity was demonstrated in three ways. First, mean scores of long term, spiritual group members were compared against the general population and found to be higher. Second, factor analysis resulted in three factors consistent with the literature on spirituality. Third, differences with respect to age and gender were consistent with the Wheat's conceptual framework.

**Research site/demographics.**

I studied school staff within my own school district, Bloomington Public Schools, which is the largest geographic suburb within the Minneapolis/Saint Paul, Minnesota
area. The school district is comprised of ten elementary schools, three middle schools and two comprehensive high schools. Each day, staff within these schools educate close to 10,400 students. Within the school district four of the ten elementary schools, one of the three middle schools, and one of the two high schools receive federal Title 1 funds and thus serve communities where at least 30% of their student population qualify for free or reduced lunch. As a result, school staff work with diverse student demographics; some work with a student body that includes more children from families of higher socio-economic status, while others work with children representing more races and languages. Each environment may influence the wellness needs of staff and subsequently a survey many not provide all the data around staff wellness, thus focus groups were used to further probe school staff experiences around the dimensions of wellness at work.

At the district level there is also an active District Wellness Committee committed to promoting and protecting the health of staff. There is broad representation from elementary, middle, high school, and other district worksites that include our transportation, community education, early childhood, and district offices.

*Thriving at work and school district mission statement.*

In addition to having a District Wellness Committee, the Bloomington School’s Board of Education approved Mission Statement states, “Bloomington Public Schools is an Education leader developing in ALL learners the ability to thrive in a rapidly changing world.” The mission statement is intended to include all district employees (teachers, administrators, bus drivers, cooks, custodians, district administrators, and non-licensed staff), not solely students. Mission statements are frequently seen as an optimal or
desired state that a school system strives toward. It is also meant to inspire all staff toward action and growth.

Thriving is described by Spreitzer, Sutcliffe, Dutton, Sonenshein, and Grant (2005) as an area of importance in work settings, and clearly has a strong connection with my school district’s mission statement. The authors define thriving at work as the “psychological state in which individuals experience both a sense of vitality and a sense of learning at work” (p. 538). Someone with vitality possesses positive feelings of available energy and also the feelings of “aliveness.” An individual’s learning is demonstrated by attaining skills and knowledge while applying them to their self-development. Together vitality and learning at work combine to create forward progress and feelings of self-development. Spreitzer et al.’s (2005) socially embedded model of thriving at work holds importance because “when individuals are situated in particular work contexts, they are more likely to thrive.” School leaders will especially need to be mindful of ways to promote thriving at work with many State budgets forecasting reductions to K-12 Education finances. In Minnesota, there is a projection of a $6 billion dollar deficit for the next biennium. A modest reduction of 3.5% to my school district would have an effect on school staffing and subsequently staff morale. It will be especially important for school leaders to think of their school staff wellness needs from a framework that includes multiple dimensions. It is also important for school leaders to not see each dimension of wellness as separate areas of comparison by school staff roles. Leaders must also see the interaction of areas such as intellectual wellness (learning at work) and the psychological wellness (vitality).
Participant selection.

My study's survey participants included school staff from all ten elementary, three middle and two high schools within my Midwestern suburban public school district. An e-mail invitation with a link to SurveyMonkey was sent to school staff at the elementary, middle, and high schools. My school district has 10,400 students and approximately 2,300 employees. School staff comprised the majority of employees within our district. There is an average of 50 staff at each elementary school, 80 at each middle school, and 150 at the high school for a total of approximately 1,100 employees. The remaining 1,200 employees work in district offices and not schools. I surveyed all school respondents within my district through the online survey tool, SurveyMonkey.

Next, I conducted six focus groups with six participants in each group. Two were comprised of administrators, two were comprised of teachers, and the final two groups were representative of school support staff. I also worked to have balanced representation from the three school divisions (elementary, middle, and high school). School support staff included office clerks, paraprofessionals, teachers, cooks, custodians, health associates, and administrators. Each comprised a distinct group of employees with differing work conditions in school workplaces. Staff were selected through convenience sampling because of the initial challenge of randomly sampling and recruiting participants. Staff members were subsequently recruited through an e-mail and thus by responding volunteered to participate in the focus groups.

Data collection and analyses processes.

As described earlier, this study consisted of a mixed methods approach that included a survey of school staff wellness along with focus groups of school staff. The
following sections summarize the data collection procedures and the process for analyzing the data. It begins with a description of the survey collection and continues with focus group administration. Next, a summary of the analyses for the surveys and focus group are described in greater detail.

**Data collection: survey.**

I discussed the survey with my school district’s K-12 principals and sought their support with their staff’s participation. I considered hosting breakfast (bagel and coffee) sessions in each of their school computer labs during the months of April and May to create a greater response rate. I was comfortable presenting the survey instrument during school staff meetings, secretary meetings, and other settings. However, the challenge was in coordinating a schedule among the fifteen sites. Ultimately, I chose not to do individual site visits.

The survey consisted of 35 questions on a 4-point scale with 1 open response question. It was administered during the spring of 2011. The survey was instrumental in broadly scanning the school staff community in order to gather data on the following research question: What are the wellness needs of administrators, teachers, and non-licensed staff? It allowed for an examination of similarities and differences among job categories, work settings, gender, and age. An open-ended response question, supplemented the survey items, and asked participants, “What else would you like me to know about your wellness needs at work?” The intent of the open response was to uncover any additional descriptions of wellness needs that were not part of the survey.
Data collection: focus groups.

The survey was followed by six focus groups in the fall of 2011. I conducted six focus groups that included three separate groups: teachers, administrators, and school support staff. Teachers were selected as a subgroup because they were the largest employee group within each school. Administrators were chosen as a separate group because they are the supervisors of all staff within their school and thus carry a distinct relationship with staff. If a school administrator was present in other focus groups, then it would have been difficult to ensure candid wellness perceptions among teachers and school support staff. The third sub-group was school support staff, consisting of paraprofessionals, clerks, custodians, and cooks. Focus groups took place after the school day because staff schedules presented challenges. Focus groups before school were problematic because participants often become anxious about the pending start of class. Focus groups after school hours ensured sufficient time without the stress of a school bell.

Within the focus groups, I structured main questions and follow up prompts. I had intentionally adjusted the phrasing of the first set of questions to both create variety and also to maintain participant interest. While each question related to a specific dimension of wellness, I wanted to draw out the unique experiences of each conversational partner (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Focus groups took place in my school’s conference room but for one of the administrator focus groups which was held in one of our District Office conference rooms. I structured my focus group questions to further understand the variability within my survey questions and draw out each participant’s unique experience within their school.
I utilized SurveyMonkey to administer my survey. School staff are skilled with the use of computers and have received online surveys from the district, so they were familiar with completing surveys in this format. A follow up e-mail was sent to participants who had not completed the online version within the first week. Staff were also asked to enter their e-mail address into the survey for the chance to win possible incentives. The incentives included an iPad 2 and a number of $25 cash gift cards. I had also spoken with the Director of my school District’s Research and Evaluation Office to gauge the optimal time to administer the survey. He has considerable experience administering surveys and found the timing to be less influential on response rates. Instead, he agreed that incentives would be more influential toward ensuring higher response rates.

The focus groups took place over the course of six weeks, with five afternoon meetings and one during the lunch hour. Each focus group lasted an hour to ninety minutes. The benefit of the focus groups was the “concentrated insights into participants’ thinking on a topic” (Morgan, 1997, p. 23). The focus group findings provided a richer context for the research question: In what specific ways can district leaders promote staff wellness for all employees based on the self-described needs of staff?

**Data analyses processes.**

**Survey analysis: reliability and coding of focus group data.**

Reliability within the coding of the focus group data set was developed through an inductive process of code development. The first step was writing contact summaries after each focus group. The purpose of the summary forms was to summarize the main issues and themes within the focus group. This led to the next step, which was to
methodically develop a code list based on the conceptual framework and research questions. This code list was supplemented by in vivo codes that were formed through each focus groups' more frequent descriptions of wellness. The focus group data, however, was not coded by a second person.

Subsequently, I will account for the biases that shape my analysis of the data. Due to my past work on school district wellness committees and over twenty years of experience in schools, I bring certain biases to this study. I conducted the study with the perspective that school work environments are social settings that allow for greater staff-to-student interactions than staff-to-staff interactions. These experiences shaped my beliefs around factors that influence school employee wellness. For example, I have experience as a public school teacher and know the demands of pacing curriculum throughout the day and school year. I also have familiarity with lunch, preparatory periods, and school meetings. My experiences both as a teacher and school administrator influence my bias toward these factors. The risk, according to Boyatzis (1998), can occur “[w]hen researchers have too much familiarity, it is often difficult for them to resist their own typical response to the situation” (p. 13).

I attempted to reduce familiarity with the data and subsequent coding process by utilizing Miller and Crabtree’s (1992) template analytic technique. This technique is one “in which the researcher uses someone else’s code or framework to process and/or analyze the information” (Boyatzis, 1998, p. 33). While this technique was useful for this study, future studies on this topic might benefit from by having two researchers code and discuss the data. This process of check coding can help reduce research bias by openly discussing the process for developing them. As Miles and Huberman (1994, p. 56) state,
“Words are fatter than numbers and usually have multiple meanings.” Thus, a second coder could help further refine the multiple meanings and potentially draw better structured codes that may lead to deeper interpretations.

Survey analysis: analysis of variance, Student-Newman Keuls post hoc test, and t-test.

The survey data analysis included several procedures: a comparison of means, frequencies and standard deviations, an Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), Student-Neuman Keuls Post Hoc Test, and a t-test. Cross sectional survey data were examined by frequencies, means, and standard deviations for each of the six dimensions of wellness. Next, a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to test for any significant differences, within and between groups, on the continuous outcome of each dimension of wellness. The groups included age, job category, and work assignment. Each of the six dimensions was used as an dependent variable. Differences in mean scores were further analyzed using the Student-Newman-Keuls post hoc test at the p<0.05 level of significance. This was done to see specifically where, if any, statistically significant differences occurred within groups.

Next, a t-test was used to determine any statistically significant differences between male and female respondents. A final method of survey data analysis was through an examination of the percentile responses to the various questions. This was done to determine specific questions with the greatest variability.

Focus group and survey open response data analyses: coding, categorizing, and themes.

The focus group findings were analyzed using a system of thematic analyses. This included a combination of open and in vivo coding. What emerged was an initial
list of 37 codes. This first level of codes were further categorized and developed into major themes and subthemes. MacDermaid et al.'s (2008) study on work site included a number of themes that were used as one source for theme development within this study.

**Method of analysis.**

My triangulation of data consisted of reviewing each focus group transcription to develop specific data units. Rubin and Rubin (2005) suggest researchers look for “concepts, themes, events, and topical markers in [their] interviews” (p. 207). Essentially, each focus group transcript was read with an inductive process of looking for emerging concepts, then applying topical markers such as social wellness, physical wellness, or emotional wellness to code the transcript. I followed an inductive process where the first two transcripts served as a base to inform each successive transcription. However, while the first two transcripts served as a base, I remained open to new concepts within each focus group transcription. Next, I reviewed text that connected important information to the coding lists. It helped me to quickly locate pieces of data for further review and possible inclusion in my findings and implications section. I also looked for similarities and differences from another vantage point, including when, during the course of the interview, different points of view occurred. The results of the focus group were compared with the results of the survey and open responses to provide multiple points of comparison among the data sets.

**Data management.**

Survey participants were provided with an abbreviated statement of the informed consent form along with a short overview of the study via e-mail. Focus group participants also received a paper copy of the letter of informed consent and an overview.
of the study during each focus group. Participation in the study was voluntary and school staff were provided with the opportunity to withdraw from the study at any time through a written (e-mail or letter) request. School staff were reminded that information from the study would not become a part of formal or informal evaluations. In addition, no identifiable information was shared with Bloomington Public Schools District Administration, school principals, or other department leaders (i.e., special education director, nursing supervisor, assistant superintendent, etc.). Informed consent forms for interviews were provided to participants, signed and returned to me. Online surveys included an explanation of consent at the start of the survey.

Data generated from the study was managed by me at all times and kept in Dropbox, a secure (online) storage facility. Dropbox access is set up for my laptop, iPad, and home computer, and was also set up with additional password protection. It was essential for me to use Dropbox because I utilized several electronic tools to record and manage the data. I wanted to reduce the likelihood of information being left on one specific electronic tool and possibly lost.

Focus group data were recorded using a digital audio recorder and an iPhone application (iTalk) which served as a backup recorder. The latter ensured interviews were recorded correctly the first time. Voice recorded interviews were immediately transferred to secure digital files, then erased from both my iPhone and digital voice recorder.

**Role of the researcher and issues of validity.**

I recognized that my role as an elementary principal and co-chair for the District Employee Wellness committee carried influence with participants in this study.
However, both survey and interview questions pertained to perceptions of wellness and not teaching/curricular areas; therefore, there was minimal concern among staff regarding the motives for this study. School staff, especially teachers, were keenly aware of conversations at the state and national level around impacts on student achievement in conjunction with teacher quality. The intent of my study was not to contribute to their worry and anxiety. Instead, I sought to learn more about ways to reduce their stress and improve their health. I see my primary role as a learner, and as Glesne (2005) states:

Having this sense of self from the beginning is important. The learner’s perspective will lead you to reflect on all aspects of research proceedings and findings. It will also set you up for a particular type of interaction with your others. As a researcher, you are a curious student who comes to learn from and with research participants. (p. 46).

I took measures to clearly state my objectives orally and within the written consent form. In order to decrease the effect of my leadership roles in the school district, I purposefully included two members of the district wellness committee in my focus groups. The committee consists of twenty worksite representatives from Bloomington Public Schools. These individuals have worked with me for a number of years and as a result have an established level of trust with me.
CHAPTER 2
FINDINGS

This chapter summarizes the key findings of the school staff survey data, focus group interviews, and open response analysis on school staff perceptions of wellness within the work environment. Upon analysis of my survey results, the social, emotional, intellectual, spiritual, and environmental wellness dimensions all showed statistically significant differences among job categories. In addition, differences were found: between elementary, middle, and high school settings, between males and females, and between age groups. Specifically, female staff had statistically better spiritual wellness scores than male staff and those under 26 years of age had better spiritual wellness scores than other four age categories. The social, emotional, and environmental dimensions of wellness were similarly described as areas of wellness need by focus group participants and within the survey’s open responses. Subsequently, I have structured the reporting of the findings to focus on these wellness needs along with school staff recommendations for wellness improvement.

The following sections of the findings chapter will highlight these key differences and be correlated with the focus group transcripts and survey’s open responses. I will begin by providing background descriptive data to give context to the study’s participants. The first section will focus on the survey results. The focus group and open response data are interrelated with the survey results and will follow, jointly, using the same reporting format. This will be followed by the key findings (themes) that emerged from the survey data’s (quantitative) analysis of participants’ responses to the six
dimensions of wellness. Specific questions that guided my analysis were: 1.) How would school staff respond to the emerging survey data findings? 2.) What would they say are the most important wellness needs of school staff?

Survey Results

This section highlights findings from the survey. Overall there was a 40% response rate, which amounted to 449 out of a possible 1,133 surveys completed online through SurveyMonkey and is part of this analysis. Of these, 324 (72%) were from teachers, 14 (3%) from administrators, and 110 (25%) were from support staff. A response size of 14 administrators may seem small. However, the total possible number of administrative respondents was 23, thus 60% of the possible school administrators participated in the survey. Similarly, with regards to gender, males comprised 32% (77 out of 243) and females comprised 42% (373 out of 890). Table 2 presents further descriptive statistics that include: the survey’s base sample of possible respondents, participation size by number, and percentage of actual versus possible respondents.
Table 2

Descriptive Statistics: base sample, N = participant size, and % of base sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Job Category</th>
<th>Base Sample</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1133</td>
<td>448</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>735</td>
<td>324</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrators</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support Staff</td>
<td>375</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Base Sample</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1133</td>
<td>450</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>243</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>890</td>
<td>373</td>
<td>42</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Work Assignment</th>
<th>Base Sample</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1133</td>
<td>453</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elementary School</td>
<td>582</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle School</td>
<td>253</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School</td>
<td>298</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>36</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Bracket</th>
<th>Base Sample</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1133</td>
<td>****</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 and Under</td>
<td>****</td>
<td>18</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-35</td>
<td>****</td>
<td>162</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36-45</td>
<td>****</td>
<td>109</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46-55</td>
<td>****</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 55</td>
<td>****</td>
<td>67</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**** = Base sample data for age group was not available.
Data analysis and results: means and standard deviation.

Cross sectional data (job category, gender, and age group) were examined by frequencies, means, and standard deviations for each of the six dimensions of wellness. Table 3 displays each wellness dimension within the survey, the number of question items for each dimension, along with mean and standard deviations by job category: teachers, administrators and support staff. Overall the table shows administrators’ dimensions of wellness mean scores were better than both teachers and support staff. Next, teachers’ scores were better than support staff in the area of intellectual wellness. The mean scores for support staff, however, were only slightly better than teachers in the emotional, spiritual, and environment wellness dimensions. The interpretation and implications of the findings will be discussed in chapter three (Summary and Discussion).

Table 3

Mean Scores for administrators, teachers, and school support staff on six dimensions of wellness (N=449), M=mean; SD=standard deviation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wellness Dimension</th>
<th>Number of Items</th>
<th>Teachers</th>
<th>Administrators</th>
<th>Support Staff</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.19</td>
<td>0.52</td>
<td>1.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>****</td>
<td>****</td>
<td>****</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spiritual</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2.39</td>
<td>0.51</td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.96</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td>1.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.83</td>
<td>0.43</td>
<td>1.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intellectual</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.03</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td>1.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>2.03</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td>1.79</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Mean and Standard Deviation were not reported for Physical Wellness because the Cronbach Alpha was .549 which is considered “poor” (George & Mallery, 2003, p. 231).
• N.B. The value of 1 was assigned to the survey response (a) always and increasing in number, by 1, for the remaining responses with response (d) having the value of 4 (thus a lower score meant a better report of wellness).

Data analyses and results: survey response rates.

This section highlights the survey response rates by job category and their potential influence on the results and interpretation of findings. Overall, there was a good response rate within the various job areas. The majority of surveys were completed by teachers (72%). This was not a surprise because the majority of school-based staff are teachers. The next largest groups of survey respondents were paraprofessionals and school clerks. These two groups typically comprise the largest employee groups, behind teachers, in schools.

Then, there were several job categories with very small overall response rates. The first one, administrators, appeared small at 3% of the overall survey responses; however, the total number (n) of respondents was 14. Within the school administrator group there are a total of 24 principals and assistant principals. Thus, 60% of the possible school administrators completed the survey.

Next, school nurses also had a small overall response rate at 2%; however, there were a total of 9 out of 15 possible respondents. Thus the sample or respondents represented 60% of the total school nurses. Similarly, there were 7 out of 15 cooks who completed the survey, thus the sample represented 47% of the total school cooks. These were actually very good response rates; however, when simply viewed as a percent of the total number of schoolwide employees, it would appear that the specific job group was not well represented in their respective job category. There was one exception to the
findings and that was within the custodial group. They had the least representation with 3 survey respondents. The total (n) from the school sites is 15, thus a response rate of 20%. While this is better than the .7% overall school employee response rate, it is still well below the typical response rate among other groups.

The impact of a small custodial response rate is that the custodial team’s perceptions may not be adequately reflected in this study’s findings and interpretations. However, there was one custodian participant in a focus group. This person’s experiences and insights were helpful for capturing the needs of the school support staff sub-group. It would be beneficial to have greater outreach with the custodial group and perhaps specific presentations on how to complete the survey. The outreach for this study consisted of an initial districtwide e-mail and a follow up e-mail.

Data analyses and results: ANOVA and Student Newman-Keuls post hoc test.

A one-way analysis of variance was used to further test for any significant differences, within and between groups, on the continuous outcome of each dimension of wellness. The value of 1 was assigned to the survey response (a) always and increasing in number, by 1, for the remaining responses with response (d) having the value of 4 (thus a lower score meant a better report of wellness). The groups included job category, age, and work assignment. Each of the six dimensions was used as the dependent variable. The following sections report the results of the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) for job category, age groups, and work assignments along with Student Newman-Keuls post test data. This is followed by the results of a Paired Sample T-Test for any statistically significant differences by gender.
One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) by job category: administrator, teachers, and school support staff.

The Analysis of Variance by job category showed significant differences with the following results (see Appendix H).

Environmental wellness. The one-way ANOVA, F (2,449) = 7.217, MSE = .237, P = .001, demonstrated highly significant differences between groups for the variable of environmental wellness.

Social wellness. The one-way ANOVA, F (2,449) = 2.438, MSE = .184, P = .088, demonstrated somewhat of a difference between groups for the variable of social wellness.

Emotional wellness. The one-way ANOVA, F (2,449) = 7.715, MSE = .280, P = .001, demonstrated highly significant differences between groups for the variable of emotional wellness.

Intellectual wellness. The one-way ANOVA, F (2,449) = 3.937, MSE = .248, P = .000, demonstrated highly significant differences between groups for the variable of intellectual wellness.

Physical wellness. The one-way ANOVA, F (2,449) = 0.135, MSE = .209, P = .525, demonstrated no significant differences between groups for the variable of physical wellness.

Spiritual wellness. The one-way ANOVA, F (2,449) = 7.217, MSE = .237, P = .021, demonstrated significant differences between groups for the variable of spiritual wellness.
In summary, the previously mentioned ANOVA results (for job category) show highly significant differences in the environmental, emotional, and intellectual dimensions of wellness. There was also a significant difference within the spiritual dimension and somewhat of a difference in social wellness. The physical dimension, however, was not statistically significant. Together these findings suggest that the environmental, emotional, spiritual, intellectual, and spiritual wellness dimensions all have importance in school work environments. The next step would be to determine where reported differences occurred between groups.

Further analysis was thus conducted in order to determine where, if any, statistically significant differences occurred between groups. Post hoc comparisons using the Student Newman-Keuls test revealed administrators reported better scores in the area of environmental, social, emotional, intellectual and spiritual wellness dimensions than teachers and school support staff. In addition, post hoc comparisons using the Student Newman-Keuls test revealed teachers reported better scores in the area of intellectual wellness than school support staff.

One-way analysis of variance by age groups (under 26, 26-35, 36-45, 46-55, over 55).

Next, a One Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted for age groups and showed no statistically significant differences within each of the six dimensions of wellness except for spiritual wellness.

Spiritual wellness. The one-way ANOVA, F (4,447) = 3.172, MSE = .274, P = .014, demonstrated significant differences between groups for the variable of spiritual wellness.
Post hoc comparisons using the Student Newman-Keuls test revealed those under 26 years of age reported better scores in the area of spiritual wellness than the other four age groups (see Appendix N).

One-way analysis of variance by work assignment: elementary, middle, and high school

The Analysis of Variance by work assignment showed statistically significant differences in the environmental, social, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual dimensions of wellness (see Appendix O). The following descriptions further detail the results.

Environmental wellness. The one-way ANOVA, F (2,448) = 13.199, MSE = .224, P = .000, demonstrated highly significant differences between groups for the variable of environmental wellness.

Social wellness. The one-way ANOVA, F (2,446) = 8.387, MSE = .174, P = .000, demonstrated highly significant differences between groups for the variable of social wellness.

Emotional wellness. The one-way ANOVA, F (2,446) = 9.472, MSE = .268, P = .000, demonstrated highly significant differences between groups for the variable of emotional wellness.

Intellectual wellness. The one-way ANOVA, F (2,448) = 4.178, MSE = .256, P = .009, demonstrated highly significant differences between groups for the variable of intellectual wellness.

Physical wellness. The one-way ANOVA, F (2,446) = .880, MSE = .230, P = .416, demonstrated no significant differences between groups for the variable of physical wellness.
**Spiritual wellness.** The one-way ANOVA, F (2,446) = 10.860, MSE = .224, P = .000, demonstrated highly significant differences between groups for the variable of spiritual wellness.

In summary, the previously mentioned ANOVA results (for work sites) show highly significant differences in the environmental, social, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual dimensions of wellness. The physical dimension was not statistically significant and may be related to the low Cronbach’s Alpha score for the physical dimensions’ questions.

Further analysis was conducted in order to determine where, if any, statistically significant differences occurred between groups. Post hoc comparisons using the Student Newman-Keuls test revealed elementary and middle school staff reported better scores in the area of environmental, social, emotional, intellectual and spiritual wellness dimensions than high school staff.

**Paired sample t-test: gender.**

A Paired Sample T-Test was conducted to determine what, if any, differences occurred between male and female survey respondents. The results found no statistically significant differences between male and female respondents except in the dimension of spiritual wellness with the following results showing the reported difference.

**Spiritual wellness.** A comparison of spiritual wellness scores for females (M = 2.35, SD = .53) and males (M = 2.50, SD = .51) revealed a statistically significant difference between groups with females reporting better spiritual wellness.
Summary of survey findings.

Overall, the survey findings show a significant difference between high school, middle school, and elementary school respondents with middle and elementary staff reporting better wellness scores than high school staff in all six dimensions of wellness. There were no statistically significant differences between elementary and middle school staff. High schools have larger staff and larger facilities. Each of these factors was described in the focus groups as differences that may impact staff wellness. In terms of job category, administrators reported better scores in the intellectual, environmental, social, emotional, and spiritual scores than teachers and support staff. This may be due to the overall flexibility in their daily schedules and subsequent breaks. There was, however, a statistically significant difference between male and female respondents. Female staff reported better scores in the spiritual wellness dimension. Finally, there were statistically significant differences between age groups within the six dimensions of wellness. Specifically, post-test analysis found those under 26 years of age had better spiritual wellness scores than the other four age groups. Together, the summary highlights the survey findings and serves as relevant data to the focus group and open response findings. The next section presents the focus group and open response findings.

Survey and Focus Group Findings: Connections, Contradictions, and Confusing Elements.

This next section will further discuss the survey and focus group findings to illuminate insights and unexpected findings when comparing the two data sets. I will begin by describing how the survey results informed the development of the focus group
questions. Next, I will share connections and contradictions between the focus group findings and various survey dimensions. Finally, I will describe various unexpected findings between the focus group and survey data.

Overall, the survey data was instrumental in identifying several broader trends. This included statistically significant differences between work sites, across age groups, between gender, and among job categories. This statistically significant data provided a foundation for understanding the wellness needs of school staff. What was missing was an understanding of which wellness dimensions mattered most to school staff and why. The development of the focus group questions was essential toward capturing this textured information and is described below.

The focus group question set began with a 'grand tour' question around the survey's six dimensions of wellness. I was especially interested in hearing about school staff perceptions of each wellness dimension that was not captured in the survey. Specifically, how did the wellness dimensions connect with their work environment? This led to focus group questions about which of the six dimensions of wellness were most/least relevant for them and what contributed to or undermined their wellness at work. I wanted to learn more about the school, work-day environment from the school staff's perspective, and how their work setting influenced their wellness. I recognized that the survey did not adequately probe for this information. Instead, survey respondents were responding to survey questions within the prescribed set of wellness dimensions.

The following focus group question probed more deeply around why staff felt there was greater variability among certain survey questions asking, "I did a wellness survey last spring, and I noticed some differences among groups, along the following
questions. Do these matter to you or not?” The purpose of this question was to gain their insight into the reported survey differences and their perceptions of what may have accounted for the variability. Finally, the last focus group question gave school staff the opportunity to share what they would tell their supervisor about ways to help improve school staff wellness. This last question was a more detailed probe of the open-ended survey response question, “What else would you like me to know about your wellness needs at work?” The focus group questions both served to triangulate the data as well as to draw out more nuanced qualitative data from the school staff. What follows are the insights and unexpected findings that emerged when comparing the survey and focus group data.

There were two key insights that emerged when comparing the focus group and survey data. First, focus group participants described how the size of high school’s may have contributed to high school staff reporting better wellness scores than either elementary or middle schools. Elementary schools were especially described as closer communities because of the connections that elementary teachers create with young children. This feeling of a close community and smaller size staff were cited as possible reasons for the different scores.

A second insight related to focus group participants sharing the importance of their social wellness. The first connection was between school staff’s descriptions of wanting to know their colleagues in meaningful ways and the survey’s social dimension of wellness. These opportunities to be social, both in and out of work, were described as important for their social wellness. Creating a sense of community through social opportunities may serve to strengthen school staff’s capacity to ask for help both on
professional and personal levels (survey question). Asking for help and being supportive of each other was a key component of the social wellness dimension. Another way, described by focus group participants, to build connections was through simple greetings in the hallway or even a smile.

Another dimension of wellness that the survey data illuminated was intellectual wellness. The focus group data did not specifically address this area as an area of importance in their wellness. However, there are some possible reasons for the reported differences in survey results. First, principals and teachers are provided with professional development opportunities. For example principals within my district receive $2,000 annually for their personal professional development. In addition, there are mandatory district professional development seminars for principals each school year. These include literacy, technology, and teacher evaluation improvement to name a few. Teachers have two sources of funding for their professional development. First, each school receives state-based General Fund professional development funds each year along with federal Title 1 funds that can be allocated for staff development. In addition, my district has a separate fund to further teacher professional development. The annual budget for this fund is $200,000, which goes directly toward teacher professional development. This fund does not go toward administrative or non-licensed staff professional development. Typically, support staff within my school district have limited opportunities and limited funds to pursue professional development. There are occasional grants for paraprofessional staff who team within the special education department, as well as occasional opportunities for paraprofessionals to participate in workshops with teachers.
Subsequently, the survey data mirror both the funding and flexibility that is given to different staff groups based on their role within the school district.

Two unanswered questions from the survey findings were why women reported better spiritual wellness than males, and why those under age 26 reported better spiritual wellness than other age groups? The most frequent response from focus group participants was that spiritual wellness was not talked about at work and tended to be associated more with one’s religion. School staff felt one’s spiritual beliefs were a personal matter and not one to be discussed with colleagues at work.

One unexpected finding within the focus group data was around various aspects of job control. Focus group participants described a range of job control related issues that included: a lack of decision-making discretion, too many meetings, a “full plate” of work demands, and limited breaks throughout the day. Interestingly, these job control issues related to various wellness dimensions but were not imbedded in this study’s survey questions. It may be helpful for future studies to integrate a scale of job control questions as a related measure for school employee wellness.

Another unique finding related to the following survey point, “I feel comfortable taking “quiet time” during the course of my day to relax, think, and take a break from the rush and noise of my work.” School staff felt that it was not realistic to set aside time for quiet time during the day. School schedules that afford most school staff with limited breaks and one contractual preparatory time a day for teachers may be the reason for this perception. One administrator did describe the ability to shut the office door and take quiet time during the school day, but this person was more the outlier in the various descriptions by school staff. Yet, the following questions would be an area for further
study: To what degree do school administrators have better job control with areas such as discretion in their daily schedule? How would this relate to administrators’ survey reports of better wellness than other school staff?

Focus group and open response (survey) findings.

This section highlights key findings from the six focus groups and survey open responses. The focus group participants represented the following job categories: school administrators (principals and assistant principals), teachers (elementary classroom, secondary classroom, special education, English as a second Language (ESL), and physical education), and school support staff (cooks, custodians, school secretaries, paraprofessionals, and clerks). There were two focus groups conducted for each job category. Together, the data provides a picture of wellness needs by job category and in sum total.

The themes within this study emerged from a variety of sources. First, the themes of social wellness, emotional wellness, and environmental wellness were part of this study’s original six dimensions of wellness. The theme of job demands, however, came from MacDermaid’s (2008) study of Work Organization and Health. MacDermaid’s code list and themes provided a helpful guide as I began my coding and theme development phase. Next, the theme of differences between elementary/middle schools and high schools emerged from the survey findings and was discussed within the focus groups. The last theme of school staff wellness improvement ideas was taken from this study’s research questions. The overarching theme of school staff perceptions of wellness needs was thus comprised of the following six major themes:

- job demands as external factors
Each of these themes, which emerged from the analysis of the focus group data, is discussed below. I will also discuss differences between each work role.

**Job demands as external factors.**

According to Demorouti, Bakker, Nachreiner, and Schaufeli, (2001) job demands are defined as the “physical, social, organizational aspects of the job that require sustained physical or mental effort and are therefore associated with certain physiological or psychological costs (e.g., exhaustion).” All six focus groups described various challenges within the work setting that relate to their job demands. The following subthemes were included: schedules, meetings, stress, and elementary/middle school and high school differences. An understanding of this first major theme, job demands as external factors, provided a context for other self-reported wellness needs. The specific job demands relate to schedules, meetings, and the reported differences between elementary/middle school work environments and high schools. The following section will begin with the findings as they are related to job demands.
Schedules.

School day schedules are typically divided by class periods or instructional "blocks," which serve to structure school days in unique ways. Teachers, the largest employee group, share commonalities that include only a half hour duty-free lunch (Bloomington Public Schools Contract, 2009-2011) and a student instructional day schedule that affords little contact with other adults. In the elementary schools there is a districtwide expectation of a 90-minute literacy block and a 60-minute math block for instruction. Lunch and recess comprise another 30 minutes of the school day and elementary teachers have a 55-minute contractual, preparation, time. The secondary (middle school and high schools) have six period days with instructional blocks on a bell schedule. According to one participant, the schedule within schools was analogous to a "rat race."

[Y]ou look at a high school schedule. It creates a fair amount of isolation during the day. You're just hitting every, every hour, 30 new kids, you know. And a short prep to, you know, go to the bathroom, you know. Make some copies. You know, so it's, I don't think it's a perfect environment for wellness in that way. Kind of a rat race. (Principal Focus Group, 11-01-11)

The pace alone was not the sole concern with schedules. Other staff perceptions centered on over-scheduling, and a feeling of isolation with little down time. A lack of down time occurred when staff had split schedules, thus less quiet time during the day for reflection. A split schedule can occur when a staff member may not have a full 50 minutes of continuous preparatory time. For example, a special education teacher may have to adjust his/her schedule to serve a number of students and staff schedules. Subsequently, the blocks of student contact time may not allow for a full 50 minute preparatory time. One staff member described the lack of down time in this way:
Time's a huge issue. You've got, you know, like if someone has a split prep where they get 20 minutes here, then they get 30 minutes here, versus like a secondary person who gets a nice full 50 minutes of whatever of prep time. I mean, that, that quiet time during the course of the day is really hard if you're juggling prep times. (Support Staff Focus Group, 10-10-11)

In two specific job areas, cooks and school secretaries, there seemed to be a feeling that it was difficult to take a contractual break during the day. The cooks are expected to prepare and clean up after both breakfast and lunch. Most of the meals within the district require more preparation than simply reheating food. School secretaries have different job demands that include answering phones, greeting visitors, and helping staff/administration with their related needs. The various demands described above, impact school staff schedules and make quiet/reflective time a challenge. It is important to recognize that school staff described very specific issues unique to their roles.

Within this discussion of schedules emerged a prominent theme of social connectedness. The work environment of a school is structured in such a way that allows school staff more or less time to connect with other adults. This connection is important, as numerous school staff mentioned throughout the study. For example, one participant said, “And then you know, ‘cause we spend so much time on the intellectual and the curriculum. It would be nice to have those times for connection” (Teacher Focus Group, 10-04-11).

Time for connection is an element that can be present or absent within school schedules. School schedules allow for considerable student to teacher contact time. However, the connection and support that comes from being with adults is limited throughout the day. Thus, administrators and school district leaders have opportunities to
further connections during staff meetings and through school professional development.

One teacher expressed the isolation that can occur in the following way.

> Everybody gets into their work and it’s really hard because right now you have so many demands on you. The dyads and the PLCs and this and that, and you don’t have time to even get all that done in your prep time. So you’re thinking that’s why a lot of people lock themselves away ‘cause they’re just trying to do a good job and they don’t have time for the— they don’t make any time for the social or the physical, you know as a staff. They might do all that on their own.

(Teacher Focus Group, 10-03-11)

Even the limited 30 minutes of “duty free” time staff receive for lunch affects their ability to develop social connectedness with other adults. For example, staff make several transitions just to get to lunch each day that include moving from their instructional spaces to the staff lounge, perhaps stopping at the office to check their mailboxes along the way. Additionally, staff may have to heat up lunches in a microwave oven, which also takes time. The time for social connectedness is thus not a full 30 minutes, especially when you consider how a staff member must be somewhere at the end of the 30 minute period.

School staff also work in an environment where e-mail is the best relay of information to other adults. Given the varying schedules of staff, e-mail can convey messages quickly and efficiently because it is not reasonable for a staff member to leave their class or other duties to go meet with another person. Schedules would have to align for that to be the case. However, to what extend do the e-mails carry the same emotional feeling as “face to face” communication? A teacher focus group member commented on how their personal well-being could be improved by more “in person” communication.

An important point of consideration for school administrators is the need to develop schedules that allow for less social isolation and ways for staff to meet face-to-
face or engage in other verbal exchanges. This could have implications for how school leaders connect with their staff and encourage their staff to connect with each other. The next sections will further expand various themes that influence feelings of social connectedness or isolation.

Meetings.

In addition to the workday schedule, there are before and after school meetings that require teacher or administrator attendance. The meetings add to the length of the teacher’s workday and range from peer-based professional learning communities to school committees; such as technology committee, diversity committee, or literacy committees to name a few. For example, one common addition to a teacher workday is Individual Education Program (IEP) special education meetings. These meetings must be scheduled before or after student contact hours in order to not conflict with a contractual teacher workday schedule. Subsequently, the meetings take place before or after student contact time and result in less planning time before or after school. When a teacher has too many of these meetings, then it can lead to fatigue as described by the following teacher:

There’s so many meetings. You know, like what am I missing, what am I doing? Oh, I have to be where in ten minutes. What? It’s like you sit in the meetings and, like, our principal sometimes is just, he’ll be like, “What, I’m getting nothing from anyone here?” Like everyone’s just staring at him like, blankly because of that. (Teacher Focus Group. 10-04-11)

The teacher, mentioned above, was sharing how her administrator wonders why staff members appear disengaged during staff meetings. Clearly the fatigue from the pace of the day can affect teachers’ level of engagement. Administrators had their own challenges with meetings that differ from other job categories. Meetings for school
administrators typically take place during the school workday and thus remove principals from their schools. The meeting time and travel times to district meetings reduce their contractual time that would have been spent on other school related needs. As a point of comparison, principals work a forty-hour week, and their work demands often require time spent beyond the contractual time too. Yet, similarly utilizing a forty-hour work model, one can see how principals’ meetings can result in a 5 to 10% loss of available work-time for other school related projects and issues that await their return to school.

Licensed staff and administrators also shared concerns with attendance at meetings that did not seem to relate to their work. In the case of special education staff, this may result in less time to write or revise student Individualized Education Program (IEP) plans. For school administrators, a loss of time may affect their visibility within the school and accessibility for students, staff, and parents.

*Meeting subtheme: meetings for what purpose? Procedures and information versus time for social connections.* Meetings are an inevitable part of every teacher and administrator’s monthly and annual calendar. Oftentimes, school meetings are devoted to professional learning, information distribution, or decision-making agendas. Teachers and school administrators are the most impacted by meetings, as school support staff did not have the same frequency and duration of meetings. What takes place in these meetings is frequently curricular and instructional conversations along with other school related procedural information. What is missing are opportunities for school staff to connect socially and emotionally. Staff meetings may result in an administrator’s need to communicate important district or school information. If administrators use staff
meetings as *stand and deliver* opportunities to simply share information, then opportunities to have staff talk and socialize with each other are lost.

The challenge for school administrators is structuring intentional and authentic time for school staff’s social and emotional connection while trying to balance time for important initiatives such as literacy improvement. Yet, if staff members feel unfulfilled and unconnected to other staff, then to what degree will optimal adult learning take place? The investment in social time, which includes appreciation and gratitude, may hold the key to strengthening social connectedness. Frequent meetings for teachers and administrators along with continuous scheduling demands can all contribute to feelings of stress. This following section describes specific ways in which stress emerged in the findings.

*Elementary/middle and high school differences.*

This next section of the findings describes the reported differences between the elementary, middle and high school work environments. The following focus group question was asked of all groups, “I did a wellness survey last spring, and I noticed some differences among groups, along the following questions. Do these matter to you or not? Prompt: Tell me your thoughts.” The intent was to better understand why school staff in the elementary and middle schools reported better wellness scores than the high school staff on the initial survey.

One variable that emerged in the focus group discussions was the differences in staff size amongst the various schools. Elementary school staff average around 35, while middle school range closer to 75 and high schools approximately 125. This range in

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numbers affects the ability of school leader to form close relationships among staff and is described by a principal below:

The first thing is, is I just think that they have a smaller community, you know. You know, we’ve got, what, a hundred, and making copies to staff is usually 120 copies. That’s a lot of people. That’s a lot of different personalities. That’s a lot of different experiences. And so I think it is hard. It’s not impossible but it’s harder to get a sense of community. You know, like little pockets of community, but I think in an elementary, I mean what’s your staff? (Principal Focus Group, 10-27-11)

What is striking is the comparative size between a high school and a typical elementary school. A typical elementary school staff averages a quarter of the size of the high school mentioned above. Developing a sense of community versus pockets of a community was thus described as a challenge within the high schools. Even the frequency of seeing the same person each day may be a challenge within a high school, too. The ability, on the other hand, to more easily cluster and talk within an elementary school was described by the following teacher:

Well, maybe because the staff is so much bigger, it’s maybe a bit overwhelming. You know and whereas elementary school, we all kind of get together and talk, and maybe in middle school there’s, I don’t know, how it works, you know, if there’s smaller groups around the school. (Teacher Focus Group, 10-03-11)

It seems the size of a school’s staff does have influence on the community and perceptions of wellness within the setting and sense of community. This was reinforced by a principal’s challenge of assembling an entire high school staff for even a typical staff meeting. The principal recognized this challenge and said:

Yeah, we have about, I have about 75 staff, that’s two teacher faculty meetings, counting 35. Yeah, I just think that just core-wise, you know, you give an opportunity to, you know, for everybody to be in the same room and hear each other and be part of a, and know each other. Yeah, ‘cause you need to know each other in order to build community. You can’t be on a professional level first.
You have to have that personal connection. It's easier than in an elementary school. (Principal Focus Group, 10-27-11)

The principal described the necessity of scheduling two staff meetings to accommodate staff's personal and work schedules. Structuring staff meetings in this way reduced the opportunity for the entire community to see each other and to further broaden relationships. Routinely, elementary schools have just one staff meeting a week and there isn't a need to split the meeting due to staff size. Holding an additional high school staff meeting can accommodate those staff who have coaching duties, supervise after school clubs (i.e., drama, debate, chess, etc.), or have childcare pick up times that align better with a flexible staff meeting schedule. Again, offering two staff meeting times is done to better support the school staff while ensuring everyone receives consistent information and opportunities for input. Nevertheless, the practice of offering high school the option of attending a morning or afternoon staff meeting provides staff with a measure of decision-making discretion. This measure of decision-making may help reduce staff feelings of stress at work because they have a greater sense of control.

*Stress.*

There were numerous descriptions of what results when one isn't feeling in control, and when there is more being added to one's plate. One teacher described feeling stressed from having too much on her plate and less resources to compensate or assist her. She would subsequently go home and yell at her husband in frustration. This suggested a response where the emotional stress is displaced, in this case with her spouse. There were mixed responses as to how to handle the full plate. Some felt that it would be
hard not to accept other assignments, such as from one’s principal. This was described by a participant in the following way:

I feel like that they’re, maybe it’s just my own personality, but I feel like there is that expectation, like, Well, you’re gonna say no? We need you to do this. (Teacher Focus Group, 10-04-11)

In this high accountability environment there was a feeling among participants of more work with less support. Current job demands for teachers include added assessments around academic content standards while support staff face added duties due to the consolidation of staff positions. One support staff participant described the need to be an octopus with “eight hours and eight legs to get everything done.” Principals, on the other hand, continue to work in settings that are similar to middle management. Oftentimes, they must determine how to lead and manage new expectations from district leaders while attending to the needs of between 35 (elementary) to over 100 (secondary) staff.

Lack of balance.

Descriptions of imbalance, either in one’s work setting or in one’s personal life, were described within all of the focus groups. Imbalance could occur when one of the dimensions was not being met. In some cases a person could have an unmet need, such as in the area of social wellness, and actually come to work in order to fill this need. In other cases a dimension of wellness, such as physical, may be suffering due to an injury and subsequently affecting one’s work. A principal participant described such a challenge by saying:

It’s hard not to focus on your physical malady. I fell off a ladder last week, you know, and I have been in pain for the last ten days. And it was hard for me to concentrate on all those other things when all I can do is focus on my pain. You
know, and so you reach into the reservoir of those other places to say "I can’t keep doing this. I have to reach into the, and find balance again. (Principal Focus Group, 11-01-11)

The balance between work, home, and life were clearly strained when one dimension of wellness took more precedence than the others. School staff reported personal concerns such as home repairs, debt, and care for children as things that competed for their attention. These competing priorities affected one’s focus at work and resulted in feelings of imbalance. One principal participant described multiple financial challenges that included; unexpected car repairs, a broken home furnace, and a tax audit by the State. These multiple demands required a measure of control from the principal as this person navigated these home projects while at work. The emotional demands of not “dropping any balls” both at work and home were clear. Again, it was clear that a measure of balance was needed between work and home priorities in order to reduce stress. Others found balance to be a challenge too. A support staff member said the following:

I’ve had an experience where I went to, I went and said that there was something that I didn’t feel I could do and maintain balance in my life, that it was just that one thing too many that I couldn’t do. And was basically told to do it anyway. And, so many levels, that that’s a really hard thing. And, you know, that work/life balance thing you’re trying to figure out and the, just feeling like you’re valued or heard, and in so many different areas like that, that’s a struggle. And then undermine my physical well-being because I am one of those emotional eaters. Then give me all the chocolate in the building. So I think that-I’ll come to your room and get some. (Support Staff Focus Group, 10-10-11)

It was clear the person’s wellness, in this case eating habits, was effected by their perceptions of maintaining balance and resulting stress when things felt out of balance. The examples described above serve to highlight the balance of work and life, and the balance among various dimensions of wellness. In addition, another contributing factor
The following describes the various ways school staff reported this particular stressor in their work lives.

**Metaphor of a full plate.**

There were frequent descriptions of more on the “plate.” This metaphor suggests a continual adding of work responsibilities that is similar to a meal plate becoming too full.

As both a teacher and a head coach, I do not feel that my superiors understand the time necessary to be successful both in the classroom and on the field. They keep putting more and more on my plate to the point where my personal health, family and social life are negatively affected. (Survey Respondent, 05-11-11)

The previous quote highlights how little a staff member feels their supervisor fully understands the demands placed on them over and above their teaching and coaching duties. Absent a conversation, how would the supervisor know that the staff member had these feelings? The next participant described increased feelings of pressure as more was added to their plate.

I think the demands of teaching are enormous and it feels like there is an increasing pressure each year. This year was a difficult one because it seemed more and more was put on our plate. My personal morale was very low this year, as was the general staff morale at my school. (Survey Respondent, 05-11-11)

The conversation about full plates seems to be a frequent one in schools. Yet, how does larger society view educators? There is a perception, among larger society, that teachers do not have as significant workloads as other professions. Since everyone has gone to school, there is a belief among many people that they know what teachers actually do. Are they aware of the many challenges that were described in the focus groups? This perception is incomplete because it frames teaching around what many experienced in school years ago. This picture does not account for societal, political,
economic, technological, curricular, and immigration changes that affect today’s classrooms.

The effects of more being added to one’s plate were found in numerous teacher focus group responses. For example, a teacher described the challenge of supporting herself and others while managing the feeling that everyone’s plates are full. Another teacher recognized that her feeling of a full plate might never go away. Instead, this person established a boundary around work and said, “Our plate is never gonna be clean. So just put a boundary around it” (Teacher Focus Group, 10-04-11). She went on to say that she had to find ways to balance time for work, her family and herself because her work would always be there. A school administrator similarly described, “more and more gets put on my plate and this is just not reasonable anymore” (Principal Focus Group 11-01-11). Descriptions of lower morale, negative effects on health, and difficulty feeling positive, were all mentioned when job demands exceeded a person’s present level of coping. The metaphor of a full plate captures the demands made on both teachers and administrators lives.

Administrators have the added stressor of presenting themselves in a certain way to staff. They are highly visible leaders in the school community, and their behaviors and actions are frequently seen as a measure of the climate of the school. Administrators’ descriptions of having a poker face at work are described in the following section.

Poker face metaphor.

A school leader used the metaphor poker face to describe how he feels he has to present himself to his staff. In the game of poker a player’s facial expressions, body language, and behavior can tip other players to what particular hand (arrangement of
cards) the person may be holding. The reaction from other players is influenced by the perception of other cardholders’ behaviors and body language. The administrator said the following:

You know that poker face that I try to put out to the world is ‘I’m not up here and I’m not down here. I’m just steady and consistent,’ but I, just because that’s the look I’m putting out to the world doesn’t mean that’s how I’m feeling. (Principals Focus Group, 10-27-11)

The principal’s internal dialogue was different than the external dialogue with those at work. It was interesting to hear administrators’ descriptions of their image within the school, and how they present themselves to others. Again, the overarching theme was to appear calm and poised as the leader. One participant said the following:

What we’re trying to do is provide good leadership for staff. And sometimes that means we need to be rocks. Right? We just be solid. We’re just solid. You know we never get too high, we never get too low, steady. Right? (Principal Focus Group, 11-01-11)

Another administrator described the need to “always try to stay as even keeled as possible.” The importance of modeling balance as the leader was cited as the primary reason. Does this take a toll on an administrator? It depends on how the administrator cultivates support, resources, and a sense of balance. A veteran administrator shared the following story that helps describe the emotional deposits and withdrawals that take place during a work day. He said:

Well administrative life is like the grape and raisin. Have you heard this story before? So when you come to work in the morning, you’re full of excitement and you’re all blustery like a grape, and then the first problem comes in and like they extract some of that juice out of you. And the next issue happens and more things get taken out now and at the end of the day you’re like a shriveled up little grape and you just can barely get your way home. And then you get home with your family, you know, relax a little bit, sleep, you come back, you build up into a grape again. And then you come to school the next day as a grape and then
people extract things. The grape and the raisin. So that's really like administrative life. (Principals Focus Group, 10-27-11)

The cycle of energy depletion and renewal help remind administrators of the challenges of the job and the necessary steps of renewal to meet the daily demands. Administrators, among the three job categories, also have greater decision making discretion in their roles and this may explain the reported differences in wellness scores.

It is important for school leaders to be mindful of the emotional strain that comes from having to maintain a poker face. Principals' duties include ensuring a safe and orderly environment and these conditions have been found to be essential components of school improvement. Yet, any worker's pursuit of an orderly purposeful existence can be challenged with various work demands and role strains (Thoits, 1983).

The metaphor of needing to possess a poker face can have both a cost and a benefit for a school administrator. When a person demonstrates deep acting, they may actually internalize the positive emotions they are projecting toward others (Grandey, 2003). Deep acting can be seen as positive motivation for maintaining a poker face at work at times. While a school administrator may not necessarily come to work feeling joyful or positive, there is an expectation among principals that they need to present a positive and confident image to the community. Grandey (2003) found that the positive emotion one displays can transfer to others. At the same time, the person engaged in deep acting may benefit from an improved mood, too. In addition, as previously cited, an employee often views their supervisor as representative of the larger organization. Thus, an employee who sees their supervisor as positive and confident may view their
organization in a similar way. So, there are, at times, multiple benefits to deep acting and maintaining a poker face.

A cost to maintaining a poker face is the personal emotional toll of having to continuously manage one’s emotions, especially during times of conflict and stress. These situations aren’t simply customer service related deep-acting behaviors such as when you are greeting a parent in the main office. Instead, these poker face situations may relate to when a student is missing, a parent enters the office upset, or when a student is emotionally out of control. Each of these situations, along with the administrators’ efforts to maintain a poker face, may result in one feeling emotionally and physically depleted at the end of the workday. This experience of going through a roller coaster of emotions throughout the day can be taxing on the body and mind.

Ultimately, professionals may engage in unhealthy behaviors such as over eating (stress related) as a means to comfort oneself. Balance is important and there may be a variety of approaches to achieving a healthy balance for the individual. This points to the need for individuals to develop personal support networks, such as friends and family. It cannot be assumed that work will provide the needed support.

*Decision making discretion.*

A final element within the theme of stress was a positive description of the reward of empowerment that comes with being given decision-making authority. This level of control was important toward attainment of the feeling of success at work. One participant described this positive emotion in the following way: “[The] greatest reward for my accomplishments are: 1.) trust of principal in my integrity regarding flextime when I have put in extra effort on a project or intervention, and 2.) empowerment to
decision making” (Survey Respondent, 05-11-11). Another participant, however, perceived a lack of decision-making input from the principal and said the following: “To promote emotional wellness, I would like my principal to make decisions with the people it will impact, instead of on his own and assuming our concerns/needs” (Survey Respondent, 05-11-11). Each of these quotes highlights the benefit when a school leader allows a measure of decision-making authority, and the cost when they limit these opportunities. Allowing for greater input can contribute to feelings of social wellness through greater collaboration and conversation with others. The following major theme, social wellness, describes staff’s current and preferred social interactions.

**Social wellness.**

Social wellness was defined within this study as “your relationships and interactions with the people around you; co-workers, students, supervisors/principals,” centering on relationships and interactions among peers and with supervisors. School staff described the link between feelings of connectedness and perceptions of social wellness. The importance of cultivating social wellness was described in the following example, the teacher said:

And she (speaker) did a wonderful thing, and it was also about knowing yourself and knowing your co-workers and then working in a team, so it was just like the whole morning was just doing like a personality test and knowing yourself and then have you work with your team. And so it was kind of cool ‘cause they divided the whole staff into our different groups. (Teacher Focus Group, 10-04-11)

The professional development session to which this teacher referred centered on knowing more about one-self and others. It was evident that schools could intentionally foster greater social connections and understanding through professional development.
Aside from school day professional development, social wellness was developed outside of school, too. Out of school opportunities to socialize expanded the social networks of staff especially when elementary grade-level teams or middle and high school content area departments frequently interact only with their own respective groups. One specific and frequently described way of developing social wellness was through school staff happy hours. These could be organized either by the school administration or staff. It was reported that if staff collaboration occurs through workday interaction such as whole staff meetings or team professional learning community sessions, then collegiality (a different form of social interaction) typically took place outside of school. Collegial gatherings after the school day were promoted in a variety of other ways. For example, staff engaged in physical activity through bowling or group exercise classes. In another case, staff socialized through events such as watching a middle school play. The middle school staff then went out afterwards for pizza and conversation. This activity was sponsored by the school’s Positive Behavior Intervention Support team (PBIS). PBIS is a program supported by the State Department of Education to develop positive student behavioral supports. An element of the program is a component to develop a positive climate and connectedness among staff. As a result, the middle school’s PBIS team sponsors a variety of activities throughout the year to further friendship and collegiality.

The relationships and interactions with coworkers and supervisors were very important to participants. One’s social wellness was positively or negatively affected by the emotional wellness of coworkers and supervisors as described below.

I think relationships in the school, or helping to treat you in the school, kind of affect how you are physically sometimes. I think our, I run through the day think, when someone you know, I don’t really experience this really firsthand, but I
think when people don’t say hello to you or turn the other way or maybe you don’t talk to people or, I think that can affect your blood pressure, affect the stress that you have, or affect your mood. (Teacher Focus Group, 10-10-11)

This simple act of greeting someone in a friendly way was an example of how various dimensions of wellness, such as social and emotional, overlap with each other. When someone does not feel another person is being friendly with a smile or greeting, then the (perceiver’s) social wellness is not the only dimension to be affected; the person’s emotional and physical wellness can be impacted, too.

**Emotional wellness.**

The emotional wellness dimension for this study was defined as “your ability to feel positive and enthusiastic about life and the ability to speak openly about your feelings and worries” (Sackney, 1991).

One respondent described the importance of relationships and their influence on well-being. “I would rather have my relationship with my workers and be able to talk to my principal and do that, and have an emotional sounding board with my colleagues” (Teacher Focus Group, 10-04-11). This ability to talk with a coworker or supervisor was an important component of emotional wellness. Speaking openly with a supervisor was enhanced when a supervisor recognized their role in creating the conditions for this to happen. As one principal said:

> You know as I try to work with a teacher or work with a staff member. I always try to tap into the emotional first, make some sort of, make sure that the first conversation or the first words aren’t straight to business. And it’s something to connect personally, or even if it’s just a “good morning. (Principal Focus Group, 11-01-11)

Establishing rapport was attributed to developing an emotional connection prior to work related conversations. The groundwork for other conversations was laid by simple
gestures such as a friendly greeting. A principal described the goal of mutual respect as an integral part of establishing an authentic conversation with staff and said:

> Well there's a totally different conversation when there's mutual respect. It's just natural. I mean, you have a teacher that you respect a lot, and what they do. You're gonna have really frank, honest discussions, and they would say whatever they felt, about you or whatever the situation is, and you respect their opinion, you know. You can have a much more guarded conversation with somebody who's, you know, kind of a slug in school, you know. I mean you could. It's a much different conversation, you know. It's not gonna be like tell me about your aspirations and ambitions, you know, about, get to work and do your job, you know. (Principal Focus Group, 11-01-11)

For this principal, establishing this mutual respect required some level of contact with each staff member. In the case of elementary schools, the number of staff that an administrator would have to connect with could be fewer than 30 people. For middle schools and high schools, the numbers would increase to 70 and 100, respectively. This ability to learn a large number of staff members' hopes, dreams, and ambitions is a greater challenge in large schools. Support staff within a high school, for example, criticized a new principal for not knowing all the staffs' names. Yet, another support staff member could recognize how the principal’s simple gesture of saying “hi” had positive effects toward staff members’ emotions.

> But the fact that he even said, you know, attempted to even say “hi” to you. I think that’s great, too. You know, I mean, there’s, like you said, there’s a lot more people to know the names of them, and I think just the situational, you know, it’ll happen. It’ll come. He’ll get to know everybody. (Support Staff Focus Group, 10-10-11)

Simple greetings of hello show positive regard for one another and interconnectedness among staff. At one elementary school, a support staff member noticed the difference between her current school and previous schools she had worked in. “And some people don’t bother to say ‘hello.’ But you walk down our hallways and
everybody says ‘hello’” (Support Staff Focus Group, 10-11-11). This feeling of welcome
can also be generated through friendliness as described in another school. One staff
person said:

But I think just the morale of, the climate of the building is so important. And we
strive for a friendly feeling at the school and I think people notice subs that come
into the building or visitors. The comment on how often that, “Wow, what a
friendly building,” or, and, I just think it makes you all feel just more connected, I
guess you know, liking our job. (Support Staff Focus Group, 10-10-11)

Another component was a positive outlook toward students and their growth. A
positive outlook was reported as a way to view students in a healthy, non-deficit lens as
the following principal explained:

I'd say the stronger the emotional intelligence working in the school, the ability to
feel good about progress, feel good about, even when challenges come, they feel
okay that you recognize that that’s why they’re working at a school, ‘cause
challenge is there. It’s a much healthier outlook than feeling that there’s
something wrong with the children because they don’t know how to do this or
that, or they act this way. (Principal Focus Group, 11-01-11)

Descriptions of a positive outlook also help with morale and the emotional
wellness of the school community. For example, positive staff interactions were
described as having an impact on enjoyment at work, attitude, and the overall work
environment. A support staff member spoke to the impact of good connections at work:

I think just having good connections with people you work with, makes it more
fun and enjoyable to be at work, which can have a more positive attitude about
coming to work and being at work. If you’re not having a great day, they’re there
to say, “Hey,” you know, “we’re here. Let us help you.” (Support Staff Focus
Group, 10-11-11)

Not everyone, however, encounters the positive verbal support described by the
support staff member above. One staff member’s perception is that the emotional
wellness needs of students were above that of the staff and seldom were positive comments heard from the supervisors:

The emotional wellness of the kids is put way above the emotional wellness of the employees. Positive vibes are to be given to the students always, but the employees seldom receive positive comments from superiors. (Survey Open Response, 05-11-11)

While the primary charge of school is to educate and care for the children, an unintended outcome (described in the previous quote) is for staff to feel that they are not being valued as much as the students.

The emotional wellness dimension was thus described by participants through school morale, coworker and supervisor emotional support, greetings such as hi, hello or good morning, and rapport. The last component helped foster the conditions for more meaningful conversations.

*Environmental wellness.*

This major theme centered on school staff perceptions of their wellness in relation to their immediate workplace surroundings. School staff described a number of environmental impacts on their wellness. Some examples included the cleanliness of a school, evidence of mice droppings, trash that is not routinely picked up, room temperature concerns, and the quality of drinking water. The most frequently mentioned environmental concern, however, centered on natural lighting. Specifically, participants described the importance of lighting within their work environments. Lighting of workspaces and the brightness of the spaces were frequently described in the transcripts as impacting one’s emotional well-being. In one high school there were far fewer windows than another high school. This was a reflection of the 1970s school
construction design where energy conservation measures took the form of less windows within the school's architecture design. Subsequently, fewer windows meant less energy loss due to heat transfer during Minnesota winters. The impact of less windows and lighting was described within the following teacher focus group:

In our area there are no windows. And so, I really don't see the daylight from the time in the parking lot until I leave the parking lot. And people don't think that that's a big deal, but it really is. The halls are really, it's really dark. I mean, it's not dark, it's boring. It's like this color (referencing a color in the focus group conference room). And we don't have any—not that this is boring—but we don't have any pictures or anything on the walls. (Teacher Focus Group, 10-04-11)

The importance of adequate, natural, lighting was echoed by teacher and support staff participants. A support staff member described how a lack of natural lighting created a feeling of being "enclosed." Another support staff member shared the opposite view because this person had a work area that allowed greater natural light and thus the teacher felt "more positive and brighter."

The support staff focus group participants went on to discuss the perceived effects of the natural lighting on their productivity. They described feeling more creative and motivated with their work, "The office I'm in, I usually, every time I go in turn the light off 'cause I just have a huge window, 'cause natural light makes me feel so much better."

Lighting and decorations (student work, student art along with other art and decorations) were described as important for one's energy level and overall feelings.

It was clear that any form of natural lighting would be preferred over a windowless space. What is unique to our geographic region is the fact that our Minnesota climate results in staff having less exposure to natural light during the winter season. The importance of attending to the environmental needs of school staff are just
Wellness improvement ideas for school leaders.

This section of my findings relates to staff impressions of ways school leaders could enhance their school work environments in order to maximize staff wellness. Focus group participants were asked to imagine and describe the ideal work environment for staff well-being. In addition, if they had the opportunity to speak with their supervisor about staff wellness improvement ideas, what they might say. The next sections represent their recommendations that included: 1.) a supportive environment at work, 2.) ideas for a calming work environment, and 3.) feedback on current district wellness initiatives.

Supportive environment at work.

Ideas for developing a supportive work environment were described by each focus group. One foundational idea was to create a supportive environment through a recognition that people make mistakes, and this is all right within the school system.

I think a lot of it would be for people to be real supportive and understanding of each other when stuff happens. And, you know, I think we try and do this but, you know, it doesn’t, it’s not, it doesn’t work out as well as it should I think a lot of times. But it’s okay for people to make mistakes but to still be able to affirm them and, you know, just to let them not be afraid to fail when they’re trying something new and that kind of thing. (Principal Focus Group, 11-01-11)

Allowing for mistakes was described as a natural step toward building a staff’s capacity for trying something new and learning. Another way to develop a supportive environment is through social connections such as various getting-to-know-you type of activities. One of the activities is described by the following teacher:
I think some of the cool things I’ve seen at school, just a few people to pop in there. Like, for some of the new staff, we’ve set up these things called “My Favorite Things.” And like people put their picture up and put some of their favorite things underneath it. And it’s all in the staff lounge. And people have actually participated which is kind of like, you know, will people actually participate in this? It’s like all over the wall and people are coming in and reading them, and it’s just fun to learn about each other and be a little bit connected, like “Oh, I might know something about you,” or “have something in common with you.” (Teacher Focus Group, 10-04-11)

Recognizing what people have in common with each other seems to matter to school staff. Other activities as described earlier in the findings, such as a personality type inventory (conducted during a staff meeting) or a staff outing to a middle school play, were also seen as ways to be proactive with the development of interpersonal relationships and a supportive environment. Staff meetings, while essential for information distribution and collaborative decision-making, are another medium for the development of greater connections among staff. The school leader exercises considerable influence in forming the agenda, content, and schedule for staff meetings. A school leader’s influence was described during one teacher focus group (10-04-11) in the following way, “But our principal made a big deal. I mean, he was just like, “You, should. If you want to talk to somebody this is such a good thing.” The comment was in reference to the principal’s advocacy for staff accessing the Employee Assistance Program (EAP). This free and confidential service is available to all staff and centers on counseling for individuals or families. The school leader, by taking the time to include this on the agenda, shows support for staff needs and fosters a supportive work environment. Staff often see the leader as the one to initiate various school improvement efforts, including a supportive work environment. “And I mean, truthfully, that’s how I
feel. It's the leader. Yeah, that’s the one who builds the morale” (Teacher Focus Group, 10-04-11).

However, school leaders do not have to solely develop these types of offerings. Most, if not all, schools have sunshine committees. These committees organize staff wedding and baby showers along with cards/flowers for bereavement during the loss of a close family member. The sunshine committee also organizes staff happy hours, socials, and school day potluck (lunchtime) meals. Each of these activities are meant to create greater cohesion and connection among staff.

Another idea, whether followed up by the principal or a committee, was to do a collective community service activity. This was different than more frequently described happy hours or the less frequently described physical fitness related opportunities. The community service (social wellness) activity relates to this study’s survey item around spiritual wellness. “This school fosters giving to those in need.” Essentially, staff members were looking for other ways to connect besides a happy hour social that oftentimes meant drinking alcohol in a bar/restaurant.

Calming work environment ideas.

Aside from social gatherings, both during the day and afterward, school staff described ways to develop a calming work environment. Seemingly small, efforts such as beginning each special education team meeting with a time for quiet and reflection was described by a special education teacher as significant for their wellness. She initiated this during each meeting by using a chime. “Just for everyone to have like 30 seconds of silence” (Teacher Focus Group, 10-04-11). This was found to be a positive practice by the special education team and one they have incorporated into their regular routines.
During the business of the workday, the special education teacher could intentionally bring a level of awareness and calm to her team.

Intentionally centering oneself and others was one way to create a calming work environment, and similarly addressed were ways the physical environment could help to create a climate of calm, too.

It was like, “that doesn’t bug me”. And all of a sudden it was like, “Oh my God, it’s my environment.” And it does. It’s like magic when you paint a wall or you clear out crap, the broken stuff in your room, your classroom. The broken bookshelf and the dust in the hallway and the, you know, I do. I think it all matters. (Teacher Focus Group, 10-04-11)

Creating a sense of order was important, and hearing positive responses from others further validated the change someone makes. A teacher said:

And just for myself, I cleaned out my office and like organized it, and I would like wait for people to come visit me and be like, wait for them to notice what changed. I’m like, “see, I moved that over there.” You like, and why, and now I realize that was important to me and I didn’t know why. (Teacher Focus Group, 10-04-11)

Other ideas that were noted include a desire for longer, duty free, lunch periods that would allow for longer socializing, time to eat, and time for walks outside. Some school staff felt it was not acceptable to leave the school building during a lunch hour.

Feedback on current district wellness practices.

Focus group participants had mixed views of the district wellness initiatives. Within my school district there are districtwide wellness offerings that range from a fall wellness walk (around a local nature preserve) to yoga classes at the high schools. In addition, individual worksites (school and district facilities) have their own offerings that range from wellness speakers to exercise classes. Some participants described cost as a positive factor in signing up for school or district-based wellness offerings. For example,
eight sessions of yoga classes were offered for a total of $30 for the entire series. This compares to an average of $17 to $20 per session at local yoga studios. However, one focus group described how the frequency with which she attends her health club’s yoga class can reduce her costs even more.

Well, and I know that when they started the yoga classes a few years ago, that was before we belonged to a club, but I really, after having kids, wanted to get back into yoga. I love doing yoga, except I looked at the cost of doing the district yoga classes versus belonging to LifeTime. Well, I think it was, ended up being cheaper with as frequently as I go, to belong to LifeTime, especially with the district incentive, which is a huge lifesaver. I mean $20 for 8 times, it’s fantastic. So, that’s why I typically will go to LifeTime instead of yoga or zumba. (Teacher Focus Group, 10-03-11)

Cost was not the sole concern of staff as the environment, within the class itself, had an impact on staff’s comfort level with even attending a class, “because at the club, those classes are very intimidating because people in there are intense” (Teacher Focus Group, 10-03-11), whereas a school-based yoga class provides a safer environment to try yoga with your peers. An individual would both have a familiar setting and the comfort of taking a class with colleagues. Convenience was an interrelated factor in staff utilization of such offerings. For example, when the yoga class is offered immediately after work and in one’s own school it eliminates travel time and the excuse of not wanting to go to the gym. Peers will seek each other to join the class and thus supporting each other’s wellness. Not everyone has participated in competitive sports or taken part in structured exercise programs. This lack of experience may result in feeling intimidated when in an exercise class. Again, district-wide offerings can reduce the intimidation of large health club exercise classes by providing a smaller setting with your immediate peers as participants.
At times, it is necessary to take a broader picture of what is currently taking place within school settings to promote staff wellness. A participant said the following to describe what was taking place within their particular school:

And I also think it was important to kind of take a look at our perceptions, 'cause I sat here for a while and I kept thinking, “Oh yeah, this would be great and this would be great, and then after seeing this list I kept thinking, “Oh, my principal does that. Oh, you know what? He did that, too.” And that was really great. So, I think we get these ideas and notions in our head that maybe we don’t have as much support or this, we’d like this better, but it’s important to take a step back and look at the other things that are being done. And maybe ways, that maybe that they’re being done and to what level they could be carried out more successfully so that they made a bigger difference. (Teacher Focus Group, 10-03-11)

District or individual’s responsibility for wellness.

As staff had an opportunity to discuss their perceptions of staff wellness offerings, some wondered whether it was the role of the district to provide wellness opportunities; others described the benefits of the programs. One benefit was the Wellness Incentive where staff who worked out at least eight times per month (at an approved health club or wellness center) would qualify for a $20 monthly reimbursement. This was seen as a motivator to work out and described by a teacher in the following way:

Because I think our district is really trying, you know we’ve got the fitness incentive or the fitness club incentive, but the other incentive that my husband and I are always readily use is the race incentive that most people don’t even know about. (Teacher Focus Group, 10-03-11)

In addition to reimbursements for exercising each month, staff could also try other exercise, nutrition, or wellness related classes with a maximum amount of $50 for this current year. This was separate from another $50 of funds toward participation in races such as; running, cycling, or triathlons. Each program served to motivate staff in different ways to try new exercise programs and sustain them, too.
The findings within this chapter present a picture of school staff wellness from the lens of teachers, support staff, and administrators. The following areas emerged as dimensions of wellness that need further development and support: social, emotional, and environmental wellness. School staff were also able to articulate possible differences in the elementary, middle, and high school settings that accounted for the variability in survey response scores. These reported differences offer another lens toward the specific wellness needs of school staff. Finally, the findings provide recommendations for school leaders as they work to promote and protect the wellness of school staff. These recommendations will be further discussed in the next chapter, Summary and Discussion.
CHAPTER 3
SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

This final chapter consists of four sections. The first section provides a brief summary of the study’s research questions and relates relevant research literature to the findings. Section two describes the data collection and analyses processes. The third section discusses the summary of key findings, and the fourth section discusses the implications of the findings, offering school leaders specific recommendations for improving their school staff wellness. It is through the development of a better understanding of the wellness needs of school staff that recommendations are made to further inform school leaders of programs and supports for school employees.

Summary of Research Questions and Relevant Literature

Research questions.

This study was conducted to learn more about the wellness needs of school staff; administrators, teachers, and non-licensed school staff (paraprofessionals, clerks, custodians, food service staff, etc.). Subsequently, there were two main research questions that guided this study. The first question was aimed at determining the most important wellness needs within the six dimensions of wellness framework.

*Research Question #1: What are the wellness needs of teachers, non-licensed staff, and administrators?*

The intent of this first question was to guide the research toward deductively and inductively exploring school staff wellness. The second question was pursued in order to
gain a better understanding of school staff recommendations regarding optimal ways of enhancing their wellness needs. If programs are meant to support school staff, then it seemed logical to first ask them what mattered most for their wellness.

**Research Question #2: In what specific ways can district leaders promote staff wellness based on the self-described needs of school staff?**

The second research question is important because of the positional authority of school leaders. While school leaders oversee school budgets, curriculum implementation, instructional reform, and a range of other duties, they also influence the climate and direction of a school through their advocacy of specific initiatives. Seeing school staff as more than just employees but as individuals with distinct wellness needs can further support school staff within a context of a six dimensional wellness framework. Together, the two research questions guided this study’s mixed methods design.

**Summary of Key Findings**

Within this study there were statistically significant differences found within the survey findings. Specifically, the social, emotional, spiritual, intellectual, and environmental wellness dimensions all showed statistically significant differences between job categories. In addition, differences were found between elementary, middle, and high school settings. There were also statistically significant differences between male and female respondents, with female respondents reporting better spiritual wellness than males. Finally, those under age 26 were found to have statistically better spiritual wellness than the other age groups. These survey findings served as a guide for the focus
group research into both what accounted for the reported differences and whether these wellness areas were important to the participants. What emerged from the focus group findings were school staff describing important social, emotional, and environmental wellness needs. Further, descriptions of job demands as external factors, "full plates" at work, and supportive communication were other significant findings. The survey findings and focus group findings suggest that school leaders should be mindful of the social and emotional needs of school staff while recognizing that needs differ across job categories. Each of these key findings will be described in further detail in the following sections.

**Social and emotional wellness.**

The social and emotional needs of school staff frequently emerged within the focus group discussions as important issues. These two dimensions of wellness are intentionally merged within this theme because of the overlap between them. In this next section, participants described how their emotional wellness was impacted by their social wellness.

Within school worksites, moments for staff to socialize with other adults may be limited to passing in the hallways, which can serve to promote or diminish social connections. What may seem like simple gestures during these hallway interactions can actually have profound impacts on the social and emotional wellness of staff. For example, two positive interactions (such as simply saying hello or smiling) were described as impacting feelings of connection or disconnection. However, not every school employee found these simple, friendly, gestures as regular occurrences within their school.
Social connectedness.

Inside school worksites, existing schedules do not provide teachers with many opportunities to interact with other adults during the workday. This is due to instructional schedules that require the teacher’s direct contact with students and there may not be any way to reduce the amount of overall student contact time. Long stretches of instructional time with little to no adult contact can influence staff feelings of social isolation from their peers. One teacher focus group participant stated how the workday schedule provided significant and continuous contact time with students, oftentimes up to four hours, which led to a need for more adult contact. Another support staff participant described situations where they perceived to be unseen by their administrator. This person was also in a role where they had little contact with other staff. Promoting social wellness at work can help reduce the potential for social isolation often found in school classrooms and in certain roles.

Job demands as external forces.

Job demands were found to affect all staff and are part of every work setting. School staff described several external forces that influenced their wellness. These included schedules with too many meetings, lack of decision-making discretion, and associated stress from the demands of the job. Each day there are numerous routines that are established as part of one’s autonomy in the workplace. However, factors such as too many meetings and little to no input toward decisions can compound one’s feeling of work related pressure. The next section will begin by describing the subtheme of schedules as an influence on school staff wellness.
Schedules.

The work environment of a school is structured in such a way that allows school staff more or less time to connect with other adults, depending on one’s role within the school. For example, school secretaries and school principals have more opportunities and time for adult contact than do teachers or paraprofessionals. This is due, in large part, to instructional requirements where teachers and paraprofessionals are expected to teach content standards throughout the day.

Differences in the size of worksites.

It is also important to recognize the differences between work sites, elementary and secondary, because school staff reported various influences on their wellness that ranged from the size of their school buildings to the size of their school staff. One high school, for example, offered their staff the option of attending either a before school or after school staff meeting. This helped accommodate staff work schedules while managing the size of the staff. Larger schools also resulted in situations where a staff member may not regularly see other members of their staff. Elementary and middle schools because of their size had more opportunities for informal contact. It is important to be mindful of the quality and nature of social interactions because many school staff have limited opportunities for social connections during the workday.

Stress.

Stress is both a normal and expected part of life; however, developing healthy ways to cope with stress can be challenging for many adults. Within the findings, a support staff member described how she would bake cookies with her granddaughter to reduce her stress and then consume too many of them. This was in reaction to a
particularly stressful week where she felt the pain of a student who had been engaging in prostitution. A principal described how the stress would eat away at her stomach lining and that stress was constant within her work life. And finally, a teacher described how she would displace her stress from work by yelling at her husband when she came home. Each of these individuals described the impact of stress in their lives, each being a sample of ways people cope with this inevitable part of life. Stress, while inevitable, was also described in terms of more being added to one’s “plate” along with administrators’ descriptions of having to maintain a “poker face” at work. The following sections will describe both of these metaphors.

Metaphors.

Metaphors, overall, serve an important cue for the researcher because they can point to a partial abstraction and serve as an important pattern-making device (Miles & Huberman, 1994). It was thus striking to hear metaphors such as “full plates” and “poker faces” emerge within the findings. Each time they served as important descriptors for what the school work environment was like to the participants.

First, all staff had a variety of descriptions of too many work demands that led to feelings of having a full plate. Again, there were numerous descriptions of more being added to one’s workload without anything being removed. These feelings can reduce staff members’ feelings of empowerment and autonomy. This was not the only metaphor that emerged in the findings.

Next, administrators recognized and described how they serve as role models within the organization and at times to appear “unflappable.” They saw themselves as having to be steady and even keeled. A “poker face” metaphor was present in the
findings and used by an administrator to describe how the leader presents a certain emotional state to staff while suppressing actual emotions. Huy (1999, p. 343) describes this tendency as part of how "organizational actors" present themselves to others and are part of their collective action within their work environment. He cites an example of a banker who might show the emotions of reserve and discretion whereas this differs from how someone who works at Disneyland or a funeral home presents themselves to others. In each work setting there is expected behaviors for the staff member. The suppression of emotions, however, is an area not investigated within this study but an area of interest for future studies.

School leaders described how they frequently handle many staff, student, and family needs throughout a typical school day. This results in small reductions in the administrator's energy reserves. Baumeister and Heatherton (1996) suggest that these types of energy depletions make it more challenging for people to exercise willpower in a variety of ways such as overeating or not exercising. Both actions can subsequently have a negative impact on one's health. External supports, however, have been found to replenish the reserves and restore a measure of balance in this person's life. And while a school leader may be internal to the school, he or she can serve as external support for school staff, too.

Supportive communication.

A final area for discussion within the social and emotional wellness dimension is supportive communication. While opportunities for collegiality and collaboration were important to staff, it was clear that supportive language from peers and supervisors were
equally important. There were frequent observations from administrators about the emotional exhaustion that occurs when working with “negative” staff.

During the course of many pre-service teaching experiences, teachers often hear to avoid the lounge lizard in the staff lounge/break room. The lounge lizard refers to someone who gossips and is often negative with his or her comments. Negativity and gossip are not reserved to the staff lounge and the impact of those who drain energy from others can be significant. A principal earlier described the impact that one person’s continuous complaining could have on the climate of a high school department. This was seen as a “drain” on everybody else.

Twenty-one years ago my mentor teacher, Sarah Corson, had guided my cohort of new teachers to be mindful of whether we were seen as an energy source or energy drain to others. She was quick to recognize that there are days when you want to share some negative aspects of your day, but one should look at the overall context of how this impacts the emotions of others and yourself. She may be right as Kahn et al., (2006, p. 803) found that “the more teachers engaged in supportive communication in which they discussed pleasant aspects of the job, the less likely they were to experience burnout.” Yet, are these behaviors and affinity to negative conversation a result of job demands? These supportive conversations, especially positive feedback, can add to teachers’ positive social/emotional support (Kahn et al., 2006). It is important to underscore the importance of genuineness when offering honest communication. As cited earlier, individuals can quickly perceive the authenticity of communication.
Relevant Literature to the Key Findings

This section will begin with a review of the six dimensions of wellness, which is the conceptual framework that shaped this study’s design. Next, I will discuss the following concepts: decision-making control, growth/fixed mindsets, deep acting, perceptions of rejection or acceptance, and thriving. These will be related to the study’s key findings and provide actionable recommendations for school leaders.

Conceptual framework: six dimensions of wellness.

Renger et al.’s (2000) six dimensions of wellness served as the conceptual framework for this study and included the following six dimensions: spiritual, intellectual, physical, environmental, social, and emotional wellness. While there is disagreement about a uniform definition, it is generally agreed among researchers that wellness is multi-dimensional (O’Donnell, 1996; Sackney et al., 2000; Renger et al., 2000). Most frameworks for wellness include between five and seven dimensions (Corbin, Pangrazi, & Franks, 2000). The most frequently cited sub-dimensions include physical, social, intellectual, emotional (mental), and spiritual. While staff wellness is seen as one of eight components in a Coordinated School Health model, what is missing is a conceptual framework within staff wellness itself.

Later in this chapter, I will discuss how a framework for staff wellness has not been advanced within school settings. This absence can lead to a simplified view of school staff as mere workers completing assigned tasks during the contractual workday. Instead, viewing school staff as unique individuals with specific wellness needs creates a different view of these valuable individuals. The next section will begin by sharing the
first key finding of staff perceptions that there are more and more assigned duties that contribute to their descriptions and metaphor of full plates.

**Key finding: perception of a full plate related to decision making/choice.**

Within the focus groups, school staff frequently referenced that their plates were full. Descriptions of more being added to one’s workload, without anything being taken away, were common occurrences. These feelings can reduce staff members’ feelings of empowerment and autonomy. One way to counter these perceptions and improve conditions is by providing greater decision-making authority with school staff. When workers have greater decision-making authority in areas that affect them, they experience greater motivation (Halvorson, 2012). Halvorson states, “Again and again, research has shown that when people feel they have choices, and that they are an integral part of creating their own destiny, they are more motivated and successful” (2012, p. 113). The importance of choice and even the perception of choice are essential for fostering a measure of control within one’s work environment.

An example to illustrate this concept involves a recent web site change within my school system. School staff already experienced two previous cycles of professional development, as our district has made two other web site changes in the last four years. The current change to a new web site design will result in further required professional development for school staff. While the professional development is a requirement, there is flexibility in the structure of the professional development. This is a place where school leaders can provide a measure of choice within the required professional development offering. For example, once school staff members receive their initial web training overview, they can be given a choice to work in the school computer lab, their
classroom, or at home. The location does not matter and each individual can have the same expectation to develop their own web page, yet there can be choice in when and where they accomplish the task. Choices such as these do not always have to be large ones.

Choices are important because they afford a measure of decision-making discretion with the school staff member. And decision-making discretion was one element that Spreitzer and Porath (Harvard Business Review, Jan-Feb 2012) found to be necessary for individuals to *thrive* at work. They offer four ways to develop thriving within the organization that include: providing decision-making discretion, sharing information, minimizing incivility, and offering performance feedback. They suggest that individuals and organizational performances thrive when there are key elements for their success and one of them is discretion in decision-making.

The positive effect from decision-making discretion can impact feelings of control while serving to strengthen the emotional climate in the school. Feelings of control can contribute to one's emotional wellness, too. The next key finding will connect the social and emotional needs of school administrators to the concept of deep acting. The findings and relevant literature to this social/emotional wellness need can also be useful for other school staff, especially school clerks because of the significant amount of contact they have with staff, students, and families.

**Key finding: deep acting and maintaining a poker face.**

Within the study, two specific metaphors emerged within the data. One, most notably, was a school administrator's description of having to possess a *poker face* at work. The administrators saw themselves as needing to be seen as emotionally strong
and confident with their staff. Projecting this emotional exterior would seem to come at a cost to one’s emotional interior. This practice, however, relates to the concept of *deep acting*.

Deep acting, as defined by Grandey (2003), is when someone tries to experience and internalize the positive emotion they are projecting to someone else. This is often done to convey a certain positive message or image to the other person. The initiator, one who is deeply acting, may not always feel the projected behaviors, yet when they apply deep acting skills then the result is that the recipient often reports more positive interactions. For example, a school administrator may feel the need to put on a *poker face* with a parent who has become quite angry. Instead of matching the parent’s anger, the administrator may take a calm, gentle, tone. The school administrator may want to express a different emotion but instead exhibits a form of “deep acting.” This may be beneficial in a number of ways.

Grandey (2003) found that individuals who utilized the *deep acting* practice were observed to have greater positive interactions with customers than those who were doing surface acting (putting on a positive face because they felt they had to). Conversely, surface acting is a process by which someone is merely expected to present warmth because it is a job expectation. Grandey (2003) found that staff who present more surface acting behaviors reported being more emotionally exhausted.

School leaders oftentimes find themselves having to present a positive and confident image to staff, students, and families. The task can be made easier if school leaders recognize that their presentation of *deep acting* has positive effects on those they encounter. School administrators’ application of deep acting can also serve to reduce
their feelings of emotional exhaustion. School support staff and others can utilize this practice, too. School support staff are frequently in front line roles with significant contact among school parents or guardians. These interactions can sometimes be very tense and a measure of deep acting can help to foster the recipient’s feelings of a positive interaction. How an individual perceives these interactions is important and is described within the next key finding around the impact of simple greetings that create feelings of connectedness with others.

**Key finding: perceptions of acceptance, rejection, or isolation.**

Strengthening social interactions at work while reducing misunderstandings can serve to strengthen the emotional wellness of school staff. A number of participants described negative feelings when someone did not greet them in the hallways at work. They did not feel visible to the other person. In contrast, the opposite feeling was described when someone smiled at them, made small talk, and took an interest in their wellness. They felt they were part of a warm and welcoming community.

When someone is not greeted or smiled at in the hallway, it is important to distinguish how the recipient is interpreting the perceived slight. Does the recipient perceive rejecting or ignoring behavior from the other person? Molden et al., (2009) described how people respond to situations where they perceive that someone intentionally rejects them or whether someone is ignoring them. In the first situation, people feel anxious and regret over what they may have said. In the latter situation, a person who is ignored will make efforts to re-engage (a promotion mindset) with the person. Perceptions of being ignored or rejected are important areas to be addressed
within a healthy emotional climate. These perceptions can also lead to feelings of isolation.

Feelings of isolation can emerge when someone does not feel connected with another person, and this feeling of isolation can lead to loneliness. Thus, a reduction in social isolation can impact feelings of loneliness, Barsade (2012). Barsade found loneliness can come from isolation or estrangement from others and that it manifests from “the critical human need to belong.” (NY Times, 01-29-12, p. 8). This innate human need for belonging is supported through positive social and emotional interactions.

A first step to fostering greater social and emotional wellness is developing an awareness of how simple greetings, such as saying hello or smiling can have a positive effect on another person. Conversely, not smiling, avoiding eye contact, or not greeting someone can have the unintended effect of communicating that one is being rejected, ignored, or both. Simple actions appear to have significant impacts.

Incivility, another related behavior, was also found to have its costs on the climate within an organization, Spreitzer and Porath (Harvard Business Review, Jan/Feb 2012). When a boss made comments that demeaned and belittled, then an employee’s response was often to intentionally decrease performance efforts. It is important for school leaders to develop civility in the organization and to model this behavior. Incivility is one form of language that must be attended to within the school work environment. Another form of language is supportive communication. This following section describes relevant studies to supportive communication.
Supportive communications related to organizational support and staff commitment.

Supportive communication in the work environment was found to impact staff perceptions of organizational support, their feelings of commitment, and turnover intent. First, Maertz et al. (2007) found that, due to the frequency of contact and interactions between supervisors and employees, the supervisor becomes the focal point of the organization. He offers specific examples of ways that leaders can show positive supervisor and organizational support and said the following:

> For instance, supervisors could regularly ask employees how they can help them do their job better and show personal consideration. They could instill fair methods for making workgroup decisions and even allow exceptions to rules in extreme circumstances to help employees. (Maertz et al., 2007, p. 1072)

Thus the school leader not only influences staff’s perceptions of supervisory support, but also on the entire organization’s support for them. Rousseau and Aubé (2010) found another effect, one where both supervisor and co-worker support had a positive effect on the employee’s affective commitment to the organization. In their study, supervisors were found to have more of an affect than co-workers. Both supervisor and co-worker support, however, can be rendered ineffective by insufficient resources for the worker. If the worker feels there aren’t sufficient resources to meet goals, then the worker may not respond to supervisor or co-worker support.

Kuvaas and Dysvik (2009) also found employees’ perceptions of their supervisor influenced their turnover intent, affective commitment, and attitude. So, it makes sense that school administrators should be very conscious of the impressions they send to school staff.
An area in which most school leaders have less understanding is how staff interpret daily contact with administrators and the way school leaders’ verbal and written contact influence staff behaviors. This study emphasizes this distinction for school leaders. The following section connects this study’s key findings to relevant literature. The implications and recommendations of how to address these wellness needs are expanded later in this chapter.

Implications

There are a number of implications the findings of this study presents for school leaders. Specifically, I will describe how: advancing a framework for wellness in school worksites broadens support for school staff wellness needs, improving relationships can strengthen the emotional climate, addressing job demands can improve perceptions of supervisor and organizations support, providing choice can influence well-being, and how perceptions of social disconnect from others affect one’s feeling of isolation. I will begin with advancing a staff wellness framework in schools, and then describe the other key findings along with their related implications.

Schools as worksites not solely learning sites: advancing a staff wellness framework

One significant contribution of this study is advancing a framework of wellness within a school setting. People often think of schools as learning institutions but not necessarily as work environments. Yet, organizational climates can affect the wellness of school staff along with the educational outcomes of the students. Ramarajan and Barsade (2006) found context to be very important for understanding the influences of burnout on
nursing staff. Their findings suggest that the organization bears an important role in determining the conditions that lead to staff burnout. Instead of viewing a staff member's burnout as symptomatic of individual differences, it is suggested that an organizational issue may be the cause. Educators are similar to nurses, nurses provide care for patients and educators provide care for students. As a result, school leaders would benefit by seeing their school staff from a dimension of wellness, not simply as an employee within the organization. A broadening of the context and understanding of the school's role would help strengthen wellness supports for school staff.

*Improving relationships.*

School leaders would benefit by establishing relationships and a school climate that fosters greater social connection. Kruse and Louis (2009) describe how improving school cultures can help school leaders better meet their goals of ensuring student progress and achievement. Three areas were found to be essential for the development of a strong school culture: a professional community, organizational learning, and trust. It is interesting to consider how a teacher could be surrounded by students all day and yet, feel isolated. The missing component would seem to be a connection with other adults. Increasing adult contact time during the school day may not be possible. However, school leaders can first develop their awareness that social wellness and emotional wellness has as much importance as the intellectual (skill) development of their work force. They will also benefit from an understanding of the implication of *deep acting* in the organization.
Deep acting.

Staff members such as cooks, custodians, and school clerks have a greater volume of adult interactions during the day. These front line staff members can come under a large amount of stress. I have seen this occur with my own school secretary and lead cook supervisor. The roles they have can be compared to the type of contact that occurs between a customer and a service representative.

Though Grandey’s concept of deep acting relates to the work of service representatives, school staff have a similar role with families and the community. Recently, I had an experience similar to Grandey’s deep acting when I visited my local bank (a branch of a larger national banking system). I recall how the banking representative smiled, greeted me, asked how my day was going, and even offered me coffee. It was when my banker left the office area to retrieve a form that I noticed a large checklist pinned to the bank representative’s bulletin board. Essentially, it was a protocol list for working with clients and described a sequence of behaviors when working with a customer. On one level, I felt that this was simply a deep acting sequence enacted by my banker. However, in spite of seeing the protocol sheet, I felt the banker was genuine with her emotions and thus I internalized a positive experience. The result was that I made a connection between the relevance of conveying positive behaviors at work and the impact it can also have on how we feel about ourselves.

As described above, school leaders would benefit from further professional development on ways to encourage staff to internalize the positive emotions they are trying to project to others. Even though this may start out as deep acting, the result can be positive for both the actor and the audience. Equally, all school staff would benefit
from professional development in these areas because of the customer service environment of schools.

**Job demands as external forces.**

The implication of job demands as being external forces is that staff members feel less empowered to enact their own change versus being simply told what to do. This can foster feelings of less control with their work environment and more resentment toward their school leaders and district leadership. An “us versus them” mindset can emerge that reduces the connection between staff and administrators within a larger school system.

Job demands and perceptions will always be a part of school worksites; however, improving school staff’s feelings of choice with a greater emphasis on their inner experience can foster a greater sense of autonomy (Halvorson, 2012, p. 115). When school staff believe they have a choice in the decisions that affect them and how they are able to carry out various tasks, then this may help diminish school staff feelings of being overwhelmed from the perception that there is too much on their plates. Sweeney & Witmer (1991) similarly found that perceptions of personal control are associated with one’s feelings of mastery and confidence. This can lead to staff having more positive feelings of self-worth (mentally and physically) and fewer reported ailments.

**Addressing job demands: decision-making discretion.**

Choice was found to be an important issue with the empowerment to decide as being one of the greatest rewards for a staff member’s accomplishment at work. Within this study, a survey respondent described how one way to further emotional wellness was through the principal making decisions “with the people [the decision] will impact, instead of on his own and assuming our concerns/needs” (Survey Respondent, 05-11-11).
This example serves as a reminder of the importance that choice and decision-making discretion has to the health of the worker.

Affording staff opportunities for perceived or real choice may not be enough to enhance workplace well-being. Parker and Martin (2009) found that school leaders should be conscious of addressing the job demands of teaching and be aware that teachers' psychological and cognitive presence hold as much importance (Saks, 2006) as the employees being physically present at work. Worksite wellness practitioners often refer to this as presenteeism. In other words, one can be at work physically but not mentally engaged in the work (Ramajaran & Barsade, 2006). The employee could basically have “turned over” mentally but continue to show up to work. This person may also be responding to job burnout and is not able to find employment elsewhere. Subsequently, the employee continues to physically show up to work each day but is not mentally engaged with the work. So a measure such as attendance may not fully capture whether a staff member is feeling equipped to handle the job demands of working in a school setting, nor does it indicate whether they are truly present in their work.

Addressing job demands: prevention or mastery focus matters.

If school staff and school leaders have limited capacity to change certain variables such as student conduct, sufficient time for collaboration, professional recognition, and poor relationships, then how can school leaders address other cognitive supports to further staff perceptions of well-being at work? One approach suggested by Parker and Martin (2009) is a shift to reevaluate one’s cognitive approach toward various demands and one’s orientation toward mastery of skills. The implication of this is that some school staff, when presented with inevitable school day challenges, will take an approach
of failure avoidance while others will view the challenges as learning opportunities for personal improvement. Molden et al. (2009) describe tension, sadness, stress, and anxiety as behaviors associated with this type of prevention focus.

Addressing job demands through a growth mindset.

School staff members display a variety of ways in which they respond to work or personal challenges. I have found that a number of school staff demonstrate behavior that present themselves as “being perfect” rather than in ways to “get better” at certain work related tasks. The implication of this is that some school staff, when presented with inevitable school day challenges, will take an approach of failure avoidance while others will view challenges as learning opportunities for personal improvement.

Yet, school leaders can take a proactive stance by first acknowledging that staff will make mistakes and view them as they would student mistakes. Carol Dweck, Stanford Professor, (2006) describes this concept in terms of either having a fixed or growth mindset. Fixed mindset individuals are more concerned with being right, the appearance of being right, and hiding mistakes. Growth mindset individuals, however, look at mistakes as learning opportunities and ways to capitalize on them. Halvorson (2011) would describe growth mindset individuals as pursuing “getting better” goals where improvement was the purpose. These all have important implications on how staff members interpret communication from their school leaders. This is both due to a school leader’s supervisory role and positional authority within the school.

When school systems embrace these practices then there is a greater likelihood that students will benefit as well. Students may benefit by adults who apply the social psychology principles of developing a growth mindset and getting better goals. At the
right developmental age, students can be engaged in an understanding of how these principles affect their emotional well-being and the adults who teach them at school. Ultimately, when all school staff—teachers, principals, and support—engage in language and practices that support a growth mindset then problems and mistakes are seen as learning opportunities and opportunities for communication.

**Supportive communications.**

School administrators often have just one class in human resources and this class tends to focus on the hiring and removal of teachers. What may be more helpful are ways to engage with staff around supportive and meaningful conversations. School leaders can take proactive steps to learn and apply techniques for supportive communication. They can also teach staff these practices so that there is a greater likelihood of the practices becoming part of the school culture. Ultimately, the techniques can help all school staff better cope with the inevitable stressors in life.

School leaders’ interactions with school staff could have an especially more pronounced effect on staff’s social and emotional wellness than most people realize. This has importance because of the way school staff view their supervisors. Some school staff may view their principal as independent of the school system while other staff may view the principal as an agent of the school district. This should matter to leaders because of the way staff ultimately view the organization (Maertz et al, 2007). According to Maertz et al. (2007) supervisors should provide more visible signs of organizational support and visible signs of supervisor support. In a school environment, organizational support may take the form of more visible resources such as curricular materials or books for the classroom and media center. Simply saying, via letters, e-mails, and memos, that the
organization wants to help school staff may help increase school staff feelings of positive organizational support to them. Ideally, verbal support should be followed through with actions and resources.

The implication of school leaders not developing an awareness of effective communication strategies can further feelings of disconnection within a school. For example, one participant described how her principal never seemed to smile or acknowledge them in the hallway. This negative interaction may simply be that the school leader was self-absorbed or focused on the many responsibilities of the job, but the consequence of this behavior was for the teacher to feel invisible to the school leader. To take it a step further, such actions, even when unintended, can affect the emotional climate of the school community.

Subsequently, school leaders need to be conscious of what they say to staff, how their actions impact others, and how others perceive their words and actions, their message. As mentioned earlier, school staff (similar to staff in other organizations) form impressions of both supervisory and organization support based on their interactions with their immediate supervisor. While school administrators described their personal need to be seen as: even keeled, unflappable, and like-a-rock, there is also a need to genuinely take an interest in the needs of the school staff. Wellness can be affected when school staff ruminates over conversations and actions that they perceive as rejection or being ignored. When someone feels they are being rejected, they may grow anxious. When they feel they are being ignored, they may feel sad or angry. None of these are productive emotions for the individual or organization, and ultimately take away from helping students learn.
Recommendations

The previously mentioned implications highlight the importance of addressing the wellness needs of school staff and the related literature demonstrates a range of interventions to support the key findings. Specifically, this study found social and emotion wellness, job demands as external forces, stress, perceptions of a full plate, and support from one’s supervisor to be key wellness needs that ought to be addressed by school leaders. The following recommendations are based on the key findings, implications, and relevant research. The first section centers on ways school leaders can further positive social interactions in ways that can meet a variety of staff needs. The second section offers specific strategies for promoting greater positive social interactions at work that extend beyond the more typical after work happy hour. The third section provides methods of supportive communications, skills and strategies to better cope at work

_Fostering school interactions to promote rather than diminish school staff wellness._

_Beyond the happy hour._

School leaders would first benefit from an awareness that school-based social interactions has an impact on the wellness of school staff. Participants in this study described how opportunities for improving school social interactions may be both planned and spontaneous. Not all staff members are as social as others. Each person has a preferred style of interaction and these differences need to be considered within the broader context of a school worksite. One size does not fit all and school leaders can use a blend of ideas to promote greater social interactions.
One of the most common forms of school socialization is through an after work “happy hour.” These often times have a more gentle moniker/nickname such as choir practice. Yet, as described during the focus groups, not everyone wants to sit at a bar or restaurant and consume alcoholic beverages. While one does not have to drink alcohol in these settings, the majority of one’s peers do. This particular form of socialization certainly meets a number of staff’s needs but not every person. Thus school leaders would be wise to first think broadly about ways to develop social and emotional connections. Next, the school leader, a committee, or small group within the school could develop regular opportunities for social connections such as through a bowling alley outing or by attending a school play together. Each of these examples, were described as successful activities to promote greater staff social wellness.

*Simple connections: the 10-5 way.*

If staff members are feeling socially disconnected or isolated are there some relatively easy ways to form connections? Within this study, participants reported not being acknowledged, at times, by peers or supervisors. A smile or friendly greeting in the hallway was described as ways people formed stronger connections with each other.

One simple, proactive way of encouraging this behavior is presently being practiced by Ochsner Health System. They have initiated an approach, termed the “10/5 Way,” in order to strengthen social support among their employees and patients.

We educated 11,000 employees, leaders, and physicians about the impact of social support on the patient experience, and asked them to modify their behavior. When employees walk within 10 feet, they must make eye contact and smile. When they walk within 5 feet, they must say hello. Since the introduction of 10/5, Ochsner has experience an increase in unique patient visits, a 5% increase in patients’ likelihood to recommend the organization, and a significant improvement in medical-practice provider scores. Social support appears to lead
to not only happier employees but also more-satisfied clients. (Harvard Business Review, Jan-Feb 2012, p. 102)

Educating school staff on the benefits of this pro-social practice may lead to benefits similar to that which Ochsner Health System found when they made this practice part of their organizational culture. The practice at Ochsner Health System may seem contrived but its full affect may be more influenced by the degree to which this practice is seen as a job requirement by staff or internalized as a way to strengthen one’s own wellness and that of others.

*Supportive communication.*

In addition to modeling language that counters negative self-talk, school leaders can also model language that is supportive, too. Asking staff, “is there anything else that can be done to help you do your job?” is one specific example of positive supervisor and organizational support. This skill can be developed and optimally used if it comes from a spirit of genuineness, then it may have even greater meaning as found by Grandey (2003) deep acting.

Another way school leaders could further improve the wellness of school staff is by engaging in language that fosters a better understanding of the motivation behind a request or policy. For example, a school leader might preview an expectation surrounding a school district’s policy on the acceptable use of technology. Another example might be previewing expectations around deadlines and whether they seem realistic.

Language that strengthens rapport and the emotional climate are necessary because it creates a more caring and friendly work environment. Ashkanasy and Daus
(2002) offer specific language that can help administrators generate a stronger emotional climate. They state the following:

Create a positive and friendly emotional climate through modeling. Remember the old adage, “Children learn what they live”? Managers should model healthy emotional expression, which includes: attention to emotion perception in the workplace (“Stan, I notice that you seem anxious about this proposal. What can be done to address your anxieties?”); warm and sincere expressions of positive emotion; and constructively assertive and appropriate expressions of negative emotion. Leaders should attempt to be as genuine as possible when expressing emotion and honest in their communication about it. (Ashkanasy & Daus, 2002, p.82)

Language such as Ashkanasy and Daus describe above are familiar to many educators because the language is consistent with good teaching practice. One school approach called Responsive Classroom is based on the importance of teacher language that promotes healthy, positive, social interactions. One specific example within the language is the use of “I notice…” statements. These serve as conversation starters rather than to shut down a conversation. If we expect staff to use positive and encouraging language with children, then we need to hold the same expectations for the adults at school, too. What Ashkansay and Daus offer is comparable language that generates a deeper understanding of the other person’s needs.

Maultsby (1995) also provides a number of suggestions for individuals on how to cope with the inevitable stressors of life through positive self-talk. His book Coping Better: Anytime Anywhere is a valuable resource for school leaders looking to develop supportive communications skills, and he offers specific examples based on one’s self-identified needs. One helpful suggestion he provides is to remember that we are all fallible human beings. Thus, we are all prone to making mistakes and not being perfect. He offers a variety of specific communication skills to counter any negative self-
perceptions while increasing our positive self-acceptance. The power of positive self-talk and countering tactics for negative self-talk are ways school leaders can model and encourage this behavior in others.

Conclusion

A more holistic approach to viewing employee wellness as comprised of various dimensions of wellness may help school leaders better frame their staff's wellness needs. A workforce of engaged staff who are equipped to handle the demands of school worksites and be more emotionally present to engage with people and projects, can role model healthier lifestyles for students. A shift from seeing employees as a cost of doing business—a budget item for the school district, to viewing them as valuable assets (Roslender, Stevenson, & Kahn, 2006) will help foster creative approaches to employee wellness beyond health risk assessment surveys and incentives. Both have their place in a comprehensive wellness program, but what is missing are assessments of school staff wellness from a social and emotional dimension. These can be significantly improved through professional development and supervisor support.

The findings of this study, related research, discussion, and recommendations can serve as additional reference points for worksite wellness in school settings. If our nation's most valuable asset is our youth, then the next most important asset would likely be school staff that work with students each day. The wellness needs of this important workforce should have priority.

This study's findings and related research suggest that school staff's social and emotional wellness needs have important implications for other school systems. The
language school leaders use along with the approach they take toward fostering greater opportunities for social connection can have profound effects on the social and emotional wellness of school staff. In doing so, there is a greater likelihood of staff being more emotionally and intellectually present at work. This greater level of engagement is what is needed to meet the varying needs of students and the expectation of teaching children to high levels.

The recommendations provide opportunities for school leaders to develop a school community that better understands their wellness needs and that of their coworkers. Similarly, school leaders may benefit by sharing this approach with their supervisor and district office staff. The result can be a more system-wide understanding of school staff wellness, which can lead to an expansion of the wellness framework to non-school sites in the district. Finally, another benefit is that school leaders become better equipped to handle their own wellness challenges.

In closing, this study adds to the body of literature pertaining to school worksite wellness and offers valuable resources for promoting and protecting the health and wellness of school staff. School leaders who are mindful of their employee wellness needs can better determine the best places to direct resources that can help employees thrive at work. This may lead to a reduction in employee turnover while also improving staff perceptions of a positive work environment. This study adds to the limited body of knowledge about wellness in school workplaces. What are lacking in these studies, however, are qualitative studies that inform both researchers and practitioners about the holistic wellness needs of individuals and how those needs define wellness and shape programs to meet and improve specific situations.
APPENDIX A

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Goals
- Identify wellness needs of school educators.
- Provide wellness programs and education based on identified staff wellness needs.

Conceptual Framework
Dimensions of Wellness
- Social
- Emotional
- Physical
- Spiritual
- Environmental
- Intellectual

Validity
- Triangulation amongst surveys, open responses, and focus groups.
- Identifying commonalities, discrepancies, and unique elements.

Research Questions
- What are the wellness needs of teachers, non-licensed staff, and school administrators?
- In what specific ways can district leaders promote staff wellness based on the self-described needs of school staff?

Methods
- Surveys of school staff.
- Focus group interviews of school staff.
## APPENDIX B

### MAPPING RESEARCH QUESTIONS TO DESIGN AND METHODS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What do I need to know?</th>
<th>Why do I need to know this?</th>
<th>What kind of data will answer the questions?</th>
<th>Where can I find the data?</th>
<th>Who do I contact for access?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How do administrators, teachers, and non-licensed staff describe their respective wellness needs?</td>
<td>There have been very few studies of school employee wellness.</td>
<td>Survey of school employees (clerks, cooks, custodians, nurses, paraprofessionals, principals, and teachers)</td>
<td>Utilize SurveyMonkey as survey tool.</td>
<td>School District’s Research and Evaluation Office; approval (REA Director and Asst. Superintendent approvals) to conduct the study. Building principals; access to school staff.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What specific ways can district leaders promote staff wellness for all employees based on the self-described needs of staff?</td>
<td>Understanding the health needs of staff can lead to greater productivity and fewer absences.</td>
<td>Focus group interviews.</td>
<td>Focus groups interviews of school staff.</td>
<td>School District’s Research and Evaluation Office; approval to conduct the study.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### APPENDIX C

**MAPPING RESEARCH QUESTIONS TO DATA COLLECTION**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What do I need to know?</th>
<th>Why do I need to know this?</th>
<th>What kind of data will answer the questions?</th>
<th>Mapping Survey Questions</th>
<th>Mapping Focus Group Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>How do administrators, teachers, and school support staff describe their respective wellness needs?</em> [Wellness: physical, spiritual, social, emotional, intellectual]</td>
<td>There have been very few studies of school employee wellness.</td>
<td>Survey of school employees (clerks, cooks, custodians, nurses, paraprofessionals, principals, and teachers)</td>
<td>See below.</td>
<td>See below.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical</td>
<td>Each area is part of my framework for wellness.</td>
<td>Whether this is important to staff or not</td>
<td>24,25, 26,27,28, 29</td>
<td>2,3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5,6,7,8</td>
<td>2,3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Spiritual</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>30,31,32, 33, 34, 35</td>
<td>2,3</td>
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<td>Social</td>
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<td></td>
<td>9,10,11,12,13</td>
<td>2,3</td>
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<td>Emotional</td>
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<td></td>
<td>14,15,16,17,18</td>
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<tr>
<td>Intellectual</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>19,20,21,22,23</td>
<td>2,3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What do I need to know?</td>
<td>Why do I need to know this?</td>
<td>What kind of data will answer the questions?</td>
<td>Mapping Survey Questions</td>
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<tr>
<td>What specific ways can district leaders promote staff wellness for all employees based on the self-described needs of staff?</td>
<td>Understanding the health needs of staff can lead to greater productivity and fewer absences.</td>
<td>Focus groups.</td>
<td></td>
<td>5,7,8</td>
</tr>
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</table>
APPENDIX D

SCHOOL STAFF WELLNESS SURVEY

Wellness Survey

"Measuring School Employee Perceptions of Wellness"

Section One-Personal Information

Please respond to each of the following items in pencil by shading the appropriate bubble response on SurveyMonkey. For example, for statement #1, if the majority of your employment is teaching, you should check bubble (a).

1. Please enter your job title
   a. Teacher
   b. Administrator
   c. Paraprofessional
   d. Clerk
   e. Cook
   f. Custodian
   g. Nurse/health associate
   h. Other (please specify: ______________________)

2. I am
   a. Female
   b. Male

3. I am part of the following age bracket
   a. Under 26
   b. 26-35
   c. 36-45
   d. 46-55
   e. Over 55

4. I have spent most of my working assignment at a (n)
   a. Elementary School
   b. Middle School
   c. High School
Section Two – Perceptions of Organizational Conditions

The next set of questions are about the general climate in your school. Using the choices listed below, please answer the following in terms of how it really is in your school, not how you would prefer it to be. Please be as candid as possible, remember, all your responses will remain strictly anonymous. For the following items, please check the bubble which indicates how you feel about the statement. Please use the following response key.

a. Always
b. Often
c. Sometimes
d. Rarely
e. Never

Environmental Wellness
5. Any environmental workplace concern of mine is addressed quickly by my supervisor.
6. My physical surroundings enable me to complete my job demands successfully.
7. Environmental problems (i.e. noise, poor air circulation, poor air quality, temperature extremes) around me at work are remedied quickly.
8. This school can be described as “environmentally conscious,” cares about their employees’ physical surroundings.

Social Wellness
9. The people I work with are honest, open, and direct with me.
10. I can ask for help from my co-workers.
11. My school provides informal opportunities for people to socialize and to get to know each other.
12. I enjoy working with my colleagues.
13. Constructive humor, laughter, and “having fun” at work is encouraged at my school.

Emotional Wellness
14. Morale is high in this school.
15. I look forward to coming to work.
16. The people I work with offer emotional support if I need it.
17. I have meaningful discussions with my immediate supervisor about my goals and life aspirations.
18. Effective achievement of my job responsibilities is rewarded in ways that are meaningful to me.
Intellectual Wellness

19. I have the opportunity to contribute to decisions which directly affect my work in the school.
20. My job responsibilities provide me with sufficient challenge.
21. This school provides me with opportunities to learn and to develop my skills.
22. I feel that opportunities for job promotion are available to me.
23. I believe my talents and abilities are well utilized in this school.

Physical Wellness

24. I feel comfortable taking a sick day if I have a cold, flu, or other debilitating or contagious disease.
25. This school encourages its employees to establish and maintain a healthy program of physical fitness by providing facilities.
26. This school encourages employees or encouraging the use of health facilities.
27. This school provides healthy and nutritional snacks (i.e. in vending machines, at staff meetings) and meals (i.e. cafeteria).
28. I feel comfortable taking “quiet time” during the course of my day to relax, think, and take a break from the rush and noise of my work.
29. My personal physical fitness is separate from my job requirements and demands.

Spiritual Wellness

30. In this school there is a real sense of connection with the world at large.
31. We are urged to set aside time for personal reflection and growth in this school.
32. This school values the relationship among everyone who works here.
33. This school fosters to giving to those in need.
34. This school promotes health and inner peace.
35. In this school we are encouraged to actively seek a sense of purpose in our lives.

Open Response Question

36. What else would you like me to know about your wellness needs at work?
APPENDIX E

FOCUS GROUP RECRUITMENT E-MAIL TO DISTRICT-WIDE STAFF

Focus Group Opportunity

Staff Perceptions of Wellness at Work

Dear Bloomington Schools’ Staff, September 20, 2011

My name is Raymond Yu, and I am principal at Oak Grove Elementary and a doctoral student at the University of Pennsylvania’s Graduate School of Education. I am writing to invite you to participate in a focus group to help me learn more about employee perceptions of wellness at work. These focus groups serve as follow up data collection to my Wellness Survey last spring. My goal with this project is to do my part to improve work conditions for all educators and I’d really value your input.

The data you provide will be confidential with no identifiable information about you. You will be compensated with a $20 gift card. As an added incentive, each focus group participant will be entered into a drawing to receive one of four $50 gift cards.

If interested in participating, please e-mail me at rvu@bloomington.k12.mn.us or leave me a message at 952-681-6850 with the dates (see below) that work best for you.

October Focus Group Meeting Information

Time: 3:30 PM- 4:30 PM
Location: Oak Grove Elementary Conference Room
1301 West 104th Street, Bloomington, MN 55431
Dates: Monday, October 3, 2011 K-12 teachers*
       Wednesday, October 4, 2011 K-12 teachers*
       Monday, October 10, 2011 K-12 Support Staff**
       Wednesday, October 11, 2011 K-12 Support Staff**
*Teachers: K-12 teachers, social workers, special education teachers, specialists (art, music, media, physical education).

**Support staff: Paraprofessionals, health associates/nurses, custodians/engineers, food service, school clerks.

Ultimately, I hope the data helps develop programs that better support the wellness needs of our most valuable resource, you.

Best wishes,

Raymond Yu

Principal, Oak Grove Elementary
Hello everyone, and welcome to our focus group discussion. Thank you so much for joining me today. I appreciate you sharing your time with me, and I just want to say a few things before we get started.

My name is Raymond Yu, and I’ll be the facilitator of our conversation. Again, I’m a mid-career Doctoral student in Educational Leadership at the University of Pennsylvania and am working on my dissertation, School Staff Perceptions of Wellness at Work.

Let’s start with introductions. Please share your name and where you work, we’ll just go around the room.

The overall goal today is to hear your perceptions of wellness at work. There are presently a limited number of studies related to school employee wellness. And basically, I want to better understand school staff’s perceptions of workplace wellness. You are the experts, and I want to learn from you.

This is a voluntary study, and I will be taking some notes and using digital audio recorders so I don’t miss anything important. The voice recordings will be transcribed to help me better analyze the data (your responses). It will also help me, if necessary, revisit our conversation with you to be sure I have your responses correct.

Ground rules:
I would like everyone to speak. What is said in here stays in here. (Vegas rules)
I’ll trust you will abide by the rules outside of the room. There are no right or wrong answers. I want to know what you think.

So, imagine you’re at a bar, oh, right, this is about wellness. Okay, imagine you’re in a coffee shop or Jamba Juice with your best friends, hanging out and the topic of wellness at work comes up. That’s the kind of conversation I want to generate with everyone. Or think of this like talk radio, we want to keep the conversation going.

The total length of time of the focus group meeting is expected to be about sixty minutes and up to ninety minutes. There’s no right or wrong answer to the questions I will ask. We want to hear what each of you thinks and it’s okay to have different opinions.

Do you have any questions so far?

Again your participation here today is totally voluntary. So, if you are okay with moving forward, I would like to get your consent.
APPENDIX G

FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

1. What’s something you’ve done for your wellness in the last 24 hours? (ice-breaker/opener)

2. Please take a look at the six dimensions of wellness. (Show chart paper list of wellness dimensions that include: social, emotional, intellectual, spiritual, and environmental, along with definitions) This is not a definitive list. It is a list that captures the range of what people typically think of, though.

As I mentioned, there’s not a lot of research out there on staff’s perceptions of their wellness needs at work. That’s why I’ve asked you hear today. I’m very interested in hearing your thoughts on each of these elements. Would it be helpful to have a work environment that supports your spiritual wellness, for example? (If so, we’ll later talk about your ideas for what that might look like.) Where should we start, someone want to get us started?

3. Of these six dimensions, what are most or least important to you at work? Why?

4. Think of a time when your well-being was undermined at work. Tell me about it.

5. Imagine you could create the ideal work environment for staff well-being. Describe it for me. Prompt: Anybody have ideas about this?

6. I did a wellness survey last spring, and I noticed some differences among groups, along the following questions. Do these matter to you or not? Prompt: Tell me your thoughts.
(Share a handout with the survey questions that had greater variability among participants.)

7. If you were sitting down with your supervisor or boss, what would you want to tell them about ways to promote greater staff wellness? Prompt: How could your current work environment be improved to promote greater wellness?

8. What do you think was the most important part of our discussion today?

Well, we’ve come to the end of our questions. Thank you for your honest opinions. You were tremendously helpful at this important stage of my dissertation. I really appreciate your help.
## APPENDIX H

### RESULTS TABLE FOR ONE WAY ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE

#### BY JOB CATEGORY

**ANOVA**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wellness Dimensions</th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
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<td>Total</td>
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APPENDIX I

RESULTS TABLES FOR STUDENT NEWMAN-KEULS POST TEST

BY JOB CATEGORY

Environ

Student-Newman-Keuls\textsuperscript{a,b}

<table>
<thead>
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<td>2.00</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1.5179</td>
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<td>3.00</td>
<td>111</td>
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<td>1.00</td>
<td>327</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig.</td>
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<td>1.000</td>
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</table>

Means for groups in homogeneous subsets are displayed.
\textsuperscript{a} Uses Harmonic Mean Sample Size = 35.930.
\textsuperscript{b} The group sizes are unequal. The harmonic mean of the group sizes is used. Type I error levels are not guaranteed.

SocialW

Student-Newman-Keuls\textsuperscript{a,b}

<table>
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Means for groups in homogeneous subsets are displayed.
\textsuperscript{a} Uses Harmonic Mean Sample Size = 35.930.
\textsuperscript{b} The group sizes are unequal. The harmonic mean of the group sizes is used. Type I error levels are not guaranteed.
### EmotionalW

Student-Newman-Keuls\(^{a,b}\)

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Means for groups in homogeneous subsets are displayed.

a. Uses Harmonic Mean Sample Size = 35.930.
b. The group sizes are unequal. The harmonic mean of the group sizes is used. Type I error levels are not guaranteed.

### IntellectualW

Student-Newman-Keuls\(^{a,b}\)

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<tr>
<td>3.00</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig.</td>
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<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Means for groups in homogeneous subsets are displayed.

a. Uses Harmonic Mean Sample Size = 35.930.
b. The group sizes are unequal. The harmonic mean of the group sizes is used. Type I error levels are not guaranteed.
### PhysicalW

Student-Newman-Keuls\(^{a,b}\)

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Job Category</th>
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<td>2.2500</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>2.3432</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sig.</td>
<td></td>
<td>.478</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Means for groups in homogeneous subsets are displayed.  
\(a\). Uses Harmonic Mean Sample Size = 35.930.  
\(b\). The group sizes are unequal. The harmonic mean of the group sizes is used. Type I error levels are not guaranteed.

### SpiritualW

Student-Newman-Keuls\(^{a,b}\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2.0000</td>
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<td>3.00</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>2.3736</td>
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<td>Sig.</td>
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<td>.835</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Means for groups in homogeneous subsets are displayed.  
\(a\). Uses Harmonic Mean Sample Size = 35.930.  
\(b\). The group sizes are unequal. The harmonic mean of the group sizes is used. Type I error levels are not guaranteed.
## APPENDIX J

### TABLE OF RESULTS FOR ONE WAY ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE

**BY AGE GROUPS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wellness Dimensions</th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>environ</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>1.584</td>
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<td>.396</td>
<td>1.635</td>
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<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>108.791</td>
<td>449</td>
<td>.242</td>
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<td>Total</td>
<td>110.375</td>
<td>453</td>
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<tr>
<td>SocialW</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<td>Total</td>
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<td>IntellectualW</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>.343</td>
<td>1.299</td>
<td>.270</td>
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<td>Within Groups</td>
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<td>447</td>
<td>.264</td>
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</tr>
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<tr>
<td>PhysicalW</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
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<td>Within Groups</td>
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<td>Total</td>
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<td>SpiritualW</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>.871</td>
<td>3.172</td>
<td>.014</td>
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<td>Within Groups</td>
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<td>447</td>
<td>.274</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>126.143</td>
<td>451</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
TABLE OF RESULTS FOR STUDENT NEWMAN-KEULS POST TEST
BY AGE GROUP

Environ

Student-Newman-Keuls\textsuperscript{a,b}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I am part of the following age bracket</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Subset for alpha = 0.05</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Under 26</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>1.7222</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. Over 55</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>1.8781</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. 46-55</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>1.8880</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. 36-45</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>1.9498</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 26-35</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>1.9805</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sig. .059

Means for groups in homogeneous subsets are displayed.
\( a \) Uses Harmonic Mean Sample Size = 52.076.
\( b \) The group sizes are unequal. The harmonic mean of the group sizes is used. Type I error levels are not guaranteed.
### SocialW

**Student-Newman-Keuls**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I am part of the following age bracket</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Subset for alpha = 0.05</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. Over 55</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>1.7104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Under 26</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>1.7222</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. 36-45</td>
<td>108</td>
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<td>.190</td>
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Means for groups in homogeneous subsets are displayed.

- a. Uses Harmonic Mean Sample Size = 51.933.
- b. The group sizes are unequal. The harmonic mean of the group sizes is used. Type I error levels are not guaranteed.

### EmotionalW

**Student-Newman-Keuls**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I am part of the following age bracket</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Subset for alpha = 0.05</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Under 26</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>1.9000</td>
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<tr>
<td>e. Over 55</td>
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Means for groups in homogeneous subsets are displayed.
**Intellectual**

Student-Newman-Keuls$^{a,b}$

<table>
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<td>99</td>
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Sig. .1710

Means for groups in homogeneous subsets are displayed.

a. Uses Harmonic Mean Sample Size = 51.933.
b. The group sizes are unequal. The harmonic mean of the group sizes is used. Type I error levels are not guaranteed.

**Physical**

Student-Newman-Keuls$^{a,b}$

<table>
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<tr>
<th>I am part of the following age bracket</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Subset for alpha = 0.05</th>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. Over 55</td>
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<td>d. 46-55</td>
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<td>b. 26-35</td>
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Sig. .254

Means for groups in homogeneous subsets are displayed.
a. Usage Harmonic
b. Mean Sample Size = 51.933.

b. The group sizes are unequal. The harmonic mean of the group sizes is used. Type I error levels are not guaranteed.

**SpiritualW**

Student-Newman-Keuls\textsuperscript{a,b}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I am part of the following age bracket</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Subset for alpha = 0.05</th>
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<td>a. Under 26</td>
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<td>e. Over 55</td>
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<tr>
<td>c. 36-45</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. 46-55</td>
<td>99</td>
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<tr>
<td>b. 26-35</td>
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<td>Sig.</td>
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</table>

Means for groups in homogeneous subsets are displayed.
a. Usage Harmonic Mean Sample Size = 51.933.
b. The group sizes are unequal. The harmonic mean of the group sizes is used. Type I error levels are not guaranteed.
APPENDIX L

TABLE OF RESULTS FOR ONE WAY ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE

BY WORK ASSIGNMENT

ANOVA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wellness Dimensions</th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Environ</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
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<td>2.541</td>
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<td>.268</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>2.839</td>
<td>10.860</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>446</td>
<td>.261</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>122.273</td>
<td>448</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### APPENDIX M

#### TABLE OF RESULTS FOR STUDENT NEWMAN-KEULS POST TEST

BY WORK ASSIGNMENT

---

#### Environ

Student-Newman-Keuls\(^a, b\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I have spent most of my working assignment at a (n)</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Subset for alpha = 0.05</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>b. Middle School</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>1.7990</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Elementary School</td>
<td>249</td>
<td>1.8842</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. High School</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>2.1190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig.</td>
<td></td>
<td>.153</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Means for groups in homogeneous subsets are displayed.

a. Uses Harmonic Mean Sample Size = 125.791.

b. The group sizes are unequal. The harmonic mean of the group sizes is used. Type I error levels are not guaranteed.

#### SocialW

Student-Newman-Keuls\(^a, b\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I have spent most of my working assignment at a (n)</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Subset for alpha = 0.05</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>b. Middle School</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>1.7428</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Elementary School</td>
<td>248</td>
<td>1.7703</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. High School</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>1.9519</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig.</td>
<td></td>
<td>.602</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Means for groups in homogeneous subsets are displayed.

a. Uses Harmonic Mean Sample Size = 125.225.

b. The group sizes are unequal. The harmonic mean of the group sizes is used. Type I error levels are not guaranteed.
### EmotionalW

Student-Newman-Keuls<sup>a,b</sup>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I have spent most of my working assignment at a (n)</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Subset for alpha = 0.05</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Middle School</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>2.0598</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Elementary School</td>
<td>248</td>
<td>2.0990</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. High School</td>
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<td>2.3375</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig.</td>
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<td>.550</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Means for groups in homogeneous subsets are displayed.

a. Uses Harmonic Mean Sample Size = 125.225.

b. The group sizes are unequal. The harmonic mean of the group sizes is used. Type I error levels are not guaranteed.

### IntellectualW

Student-Newman-Keuls<sup>a,b</sup>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I have spent most of my working assignment at a (n)</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Subset for alpha = 0.05</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Middle School</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>2.0086</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Elementary School</td>
<td>248</td>
<td>2.0769</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. High School</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig.</td>
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<td>.286</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Means for groups in homogeneous subsets are displayed.

a. Uses Harmonic Mean Sample Size = 125.225.

b. The group sizes are unequal. The harmonic mean of the group sizes is used. Type I error levels are not guaranteed.
### PhysicalW

#### Student-Newman-Keuls\(^{a,b}\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I have spent most of my working assignment at a (n)</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Subset for alpha = 0.05</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>c. High School</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>2.3045</td>
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<tr>
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<td>248</td>
<td>2.3657</td>
</tr>
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<td>b. Middle School</td>
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<td>.377</td>
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</table>

Means for groups in homogeneous subsets are displayed.

a. Uses Harmonic Mean Sample Size = 125.225.
b. The group sizes are unequal. The harmonic mean of the group sizes is used. Type I error levels are not guaranteed.

### SpiritualW

#### Student-Newman-Keuls\(^{a,b}\)

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<tbody>
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<tr>
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<td>.325</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Means for groups in homogeneous subsets are displayed.

a. Uses Harmonic Mean Sample Size = 125.225.
b. The group sizes are unequal. The harmonic mean of the group sizes is used. Type I error levels are not guaranteed.
REFERENCES


The Educational Testing Service Policy Information Report "Parsing the Achievement


