

Perceptions of the Impact of
Community School Model on Student Well-Being and Resilience:
A Case Study Utilizing Photo Elicitation

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Abstract of the Dissertation

Perceptions of the Impact of
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Millersville University, 2019

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Highlighted as barriers to attaining well-being, Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and toxic stress provide an explanation for poor academic, social, and behavioral outcomes for students. This qualitative case-study examines the impact of the school setting, including policies, programs, and practices, in supporting the well-being and resilience of students. The multi-faceted elements of well-being (Duff, Rubenstein, & Prilleltensky, 2016) and resilience theory are the under-pinning themes woven throughout the study. A comprehensive case study utilizing photo-elicitation was completed with one community school to explore: (1) how this school implements the principles of the community school model (Institute for Educational Leadership & Coalition for Community Schools, 2017); (2) the perception of students and staff on the operation of the principles within the school, and lastly; (3) if these efforts support the well-being needs of students and build resilience.

Keywords: Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES), toxic stress, trauma informed, well-being, wellness, resilience, community schools, photo elicitation, case-study.

Signature of Investigator _____ Micah Beaston _____ Date __3/18/2019__

Dedication

To each student who taught me the importance of this work.

Acknowledgments

Thank you to my family for their patience during this program and especially while I was writing this paper. Dave, your encouragement and commitment to me and our family was my security throughout this program. Thank you for sticking by my side and supporting me. Izzy and Isla, you have grown up as I have worked my way through bachelor's, master's, and doctorate programs. Thank you for your understanding, support, and patience all these years. Thank you to my parents for encouraging and supporting me every step of the way in my education and my career. You have made this possible for me.

Thank you to Dr. Karen Rice, my chair, teacher, mentor, and bunk-mate. You have opened my eyes to a new understanding of what being a social worker means. Your adventurous spirit, intellect, and endurance inspire me to keep growing, improving, and pushing forward in my career. Thank you to Dr. Tiffany Wright for sharing your expertise as a member of my committee. Your perspective was a valuable addition to my work and I appreciate your willingness to support me. Thank you to Dr. Heather Girvin, my soul-sister, for your wisdom as a teacher and supporting me as a committee member.

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Chapter One: Introduction and Relevance for Social Work

This study explains the importance of supporting student well-being and resilience in schools, identifies measures that schools are utilizing to support the well-being of students, and explores the perspectives of students and staff from one community school on how those supports impact the well-being and resilience of students. For the purpose of this study, I will use the terms *wellness* and *well-being* interchangeably as necessary because I found that these terms are used in the literature, for the most-part, to describe the same phenomenon; wellness as a “synergistic state” requiring satisfaction in multiple domains as defined by Duff et al. (2016) and well-being as a desired “state of affairs” in life overall and obtained within diverse domains of life (Prilleltensky, 2013). In researching studies on both wellness and well-being, I found that more prevalently, researchers used the term wellness as it pertains to physical and mental health (Belton, 2018; Casucci & Baluchi, 2019; Gurzo et al., 2018; Mason et al., 2018) and research on well-being encompassed a broader sense of human needs and the satisfaction of needs beyond physical and mental health (Masten, 2014; Morrow, 2002; Phan, Ngu, & Alrashidi, 2016; Ryan & Deci, 2001; Stanton, Zandvliet, Dhaliwal, & Black, 2016). For that reason, I adopted the term well-being as the primary expression used for this research, however the term wellness is used in reference to Duff et al. (2016) research which used these terms interchangeably but titled the framework “wellness domains”.

According to the Association for Children’s Mental Health (2018), one in five students has a diagnosable emotional, behavioral, or mental health disorder. Additionally, one in ten young people have a mental health challenge that is severe enough to impair their functioning at home, school or in the community. This impairment typically requires youth to receive additional support in these settings. Children spend about half of the time they are awake at

school, making the school building a logical setting to provide the environment and school related supports that enhance their well-being (Randick & Dermer, 2013). Due to the number of children and adolescents that the U.S. public school system serves, it is in a unique position to support the academic, emotional, mental, physical, and social needs of youth (Randick & Dermer, 2013). Suldo et al. (2016) examined the implications of the “dual-factor model” (p.435) of mental health on a comprehensive set of outcomes including “academic adjustment, social adjustment, identity development, and physical health” (p.435). This research concluded that individuals have basic psychological needs for “competence, autonomy, and relatedness” (Suldo et al., 2016 p. 436). Well-being of youth can be influenced by the extent to which these needs are met within the school environment, home, and community (Suldo et al., 2009).

Increasingly, mental health capacity and functioning have been acknowledged as a necessary part of effective education and the overall academic success of students (Read, Aldridge, Ala'i, Fraser, & Fozdar, 2015). Additional research by McLeod (2012) found four types of problems that serve as predictors of academic non-achievement, including: depression, attention problems, delinquency, and substance use. These problems cover the two major dimensions of emotional and behavioral problems: (1) internalizing problems- inward-directed forms of distress such as depression and anxiety; and (2) externalizing problems- outward-directed forms of distress such as conduct disorder and impulsive behavior (McLeod, Uemura, & Rohrman, 2012). The researchers concluded that youth who have diagnosed mental health problems perform lower academically than other youth. Additionally, researchers found that youth with emotional and behavioral disorders have the lowest graduation rate of any students with disabilities. According to national data, only 40 percent of students with emotional, behavioral, and mental health disorders will successfully graduate from high school. This is

substantially lower than the national average of 76 percent for other students (Association for Children's Mental Health, 2018). Complex trauma affects behavior, academic performance, and drop-out rates in schools. The National Childhood Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN) defines complex trauma as:

Children's exposure to multiple traumatic events—often of an invasive, interpersonal nature—and the wide-ranging, long-term effects of this exposure. These events are severe and pervasive, such as abuse or profound neglect. They usually occur early in life and can disrupt many aspects of the child's development and the formation of a sense of self. Since these events often occur with a caregiver, they interfere with the child's ability to form a secure attachment. Many aspects of a child's healthy physical and mental development rely on this primary source of safety and stability (www.nctsn.org, 2016).

Externalizing behavior, poor academic performance, and truancy are by-products of trauma in childhood, making children who experience trauma less likely to achieve their full academic potential (S. D. West, Day, Somers, & Baroni, 2014).

Defining Well-Being

Researchers have offered diverse definitions of well-being over the years that explain this concept as multi-faceted (Blachman & Lukacs, 2009; Lippman, Anderson, & McIntosh, 2009; Ryan & Deci, 2001; Soutter, O'Steen, & Gilmore, 2014; Traylor, Williams, Kenney, & Hopson, 2016). This study explores a holistic and practical definition of well-being provided by Duff et al. (2016) which describes wellness as a synergistic state cultivated from the satisfaction of needs in six domains: interpersonal, community, occupational, psychological, physical, and economic (Duff, Rubenstein, & Prilleltensky, 2016). Well-being is something we seek as humans as a

“state of being with life” and within diverse domains of life (Prilleltensky, 2013). Duff et al. (2016) states that people who have positive subjective well-being experience less psychological and physical problems, have better relationships, live longer lives, have a more efficient work ethic, have fewer absences from work, and are less likely to die by suicide (Duff et al., 2016).

Adverse Childhood Experiences

Barriers to attaining positive well-being can start as early as birth. These issues can interfere with physical and mental development and have devastating implications on one’s health for the remainder of their life (Center for Youth Wellness, 2016). When considering organizational change to support the well-being of students, it is important to understand the complexities of the barriers that impede students’ success in school and life. Troubling experiences in childhood, more commonly referred to as Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) have been scientifically proven to negatively impact the development of children leading to mental, behavioral, and medical issues in both childhood and adulthood (Hunt, Slack, & Berger, 2017; Pachter, Lieberman, Bloom, & Fein, 2017).

A study through the Kaiser Permanente Health Organization in California in collaboration with the Center for Disease Control conducted by Felitti et al. (1998) looked at the relationship of childhood abuse, neglect, and household dysfunction on the leading causes of death in adults. It became widely known in the educational, medical, and psychological fields as the Adverse Childhood Experiences Study (ACEs). ACEs are defined by researchers as childhood experiences that can have deep-seated effects on a child’s mental and physical development which can continue to impact quality of health over their entire lifespan (Edwards et al., 2002). Felitti et al. (1998) defined three different categories of ACEs comprising the ten recognized ACEs domains: (1) Abuse- physical, emotional, sexual (2) Neglect- physical, emotional and (3)

Household Dysfunction- mental illness, incarcerated relative, mother treated violently, substance abuse, and divorce (Center for Youth Wellness, 2016). Researchers from the Center for Youth Wellness (2016) used findings from the ACEs study to further research the impact of “toxic stress” on youth. Toxic stress is defined as the “extreme, frequent, or extended activation of the body’s stress response without the buffering presence of a supportive adult (Center for Youth Wellness, p. 4). Powerful, re-occurring and/or prolonged stress such as ACEs can have a detrimental impact on children’s mental and physical growth. These implications on a child’s developing mind and body can in turn have a profound impact on a lifetime of health (Center for Youth Wellness, 2016).

Students who experience ACEs are at a greater risk of difficulty in school as a result of the impact of the toxic stress in their life (Hunt et al., 2017). Research suggests that educational organizations could take a more prominent role in supporting the well-being of youth as school districts have the opportunity and accessibility to reach these students better than any other helping person or institution (Cronholm et al., 2015). Studies have found a marked increase in behavior and attention problems in children as young as five after exposure to adverse childhood experiences (Hunt et al., 2017; Metzler, Merrick, Klevens, Ports, & Ford, 2017; Pachter et al., 2017; Plumb, Bush, & Kersevich, 2016; Stasulane, 2017). These studies show not only a correlation between ACEs and health issues in adults but also a connection between ACEs and childhood behavioral problems. If children had externalized behavior problems as a child, they have an increased risk for depression and anxiety disorders once they grow up to be adults (Hunt et al., 2017). Children who have experienced abuse, neglect, and other ACEs are more likely to engage in health risk behaviors such as sexual promiscuity, drug and alcohol abuse, and over-

eating leading to obesity. These behaviors are risk factors for some of the outcomes that were found in the Kaiser study including heart disease and premature death (Hunt et al., 2017).

Researchers have studied the continuity of intergenerational abuse, neglect, and household dysfunction among families and conclude that ACEs do not typically begin and end in one lifetime as (Ford et al., 2016). Factors such as lack of education, unemployment, and poverty increase the cyclical effects of these adversities. Without a break to this cycle, these traditions will continue to span generations producing similar results. Equipping schools with the knowledge and tools to address these needs within the school environment is essential to effectively intervening in the increasing mental and behavioral health issues that schools are managing today (Cooper et al., 2017). This change could impact long-term mental health stability and sustainability (S. D. West et al., 2014). If implemented, students may be able to identify challenges in themselves and their environment and would more likely be able to appropriately advocate for their needs (Garn, McCaughtry, Martin, Shen, & Fahlman, 2012). ACEs cause stress, which can have a devastating impact on the development of a child (Pachter et al., 2017). Re-occurring stress faced over an extended amount of time can lead to a phenomenon known as toxic stress.

Toxic Stress

Human brains continuously develop over the course of a lifetime but one of the most important developmental time periods is in early childhood between birth and five years old (Center for Youth Wellness, 2016). Positive and negative experiences shape the child's brain and its functioning during this early time period as a result of neuroplasticity (Center for Youth Wellness, 2016). Researchers recognize three different types of stress that impact human development: positive stress, tolerable stress, and toxic stress (Center for Youth Wellness, 2016;

Pachter et al., 2017; Walkley & Cox, 2013). Positive stress is stress that comes before a big test or game which is short-term by nature. This type of stress can be viewed as positive as it has the potential to propel people to work harder to accomplish their goals. Tolerable stress is more severe and could potentially harm a child's brain but because it is not long-lasting, a child's brain can recover from the impact with time. Lastly, toxic stress is when the body's stress response is activated extensively and frequently without the buffering presence of a supportive adult (Center for Youth Wellness, 2016). Stress associated with adverse childhood experiences falls into this category. Toxic stress causes serious problems for the brain's development and is particularly harmful to the shaping of a child's growing brain. Youth require a strong relationship with a caring adult to build resilience and buffer the impact of toxic stress (Leitch, 2017; Neal, 2017; Soto, 2016). A caring adult is defined as a supporter who provides "guidance, emotional support, and stability" for youth (Neal, 2017, p.246).

When faced with stress, bodies react with a "fight or flight" response (Center for Youth Wellness, 2016). Once stimulated by stress, the brain releases hormones that activate the production of adrenaline and cortisol. The body produces adrenaline for the short-term impact of stress by increasing the body's heart rate and dilating the pupils so that the body is prepared to fight or run. Over time, the frequency and duration of stress can lead to problems with regulating the body's response to stress triggers (Center for Youth Wellness, 2016). This can cause individuals to respond to stress in irrational, inappropriate, or unhealthy ways. Cortisol is produced for the long-term response to stress by increasing blood pressure and sugar levels and regulating the body's metabolism and immune system (Center for Youth Wellness, 2016). Over-activation of the body's stress response system can lead to serious consequences for a person's mental health, physical health, and well-being. If left untreated, the implications can be seen

across the educational, health, and public safety systems (Center for Youth Wellness, 2016). Outcomes in these domains include school truancy and drop-out, (Plumb et al., 2016), long-term physical and mental health issues (Finkelhor, Shattuck, Turner, & Hamby, 2015), and risky-behavior that can lead to involvement with law enforcement and in some cases, incarceration (Bowles, DeHart, & Webb, 2012).

Research from Prevent Child Abuse America (2016) recommends six strategies to protect children from the effects of toxic stress by supporting well-being and building resilience. These strategies include: (1) change the discussion from “what’s wrong with you to “what happened to you and how can we help fix it?”; (2) recognize toxic stress as the largest public health issue of this generation; (3) build critical collaboration by implementing a universal approach and connecting with diverse organizations; (4) promote safe, stable, nurturing relationships and environments; (5) prevent intergenerational transmission of toxic stress and (6) promote hope. One way that some schools and human service organizations address the impact of trauma for those within their care is training staff to implement practices that are trauma informed.

Trauma Informed Care

Research affirms that the majority of the population has experienced one or more ACE (Plumb et al., 2016) and suggests that trauma informed care approaches become the normalized culture instead of the exception to the rule (Blitz, Anderson, & Saastamoinen, 2016; Carello & Butler, 2014; VanderWegen, 2013). The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) defines four factors of Trauma-Informed Care, (1) Realizing that trauma has a widespread impact on individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities and has an understanding of paths to recovery; (2) the ability to recognize the signs and symptoms of trauma in clients, staff, and others in the system; (3) integration of trauma

knowledge into policies, programs, and practices; and 4) seeks to avoid re-traumatization of individuals (Leitch, 2017, p.3).

To provide an equitable level of support and access to a quality education, it is necessary for schools to utilize a universal approach to eliminate barriers within the educational system (Stasulane, 2017). School staff can grow frustrated with student behavior that interrupts the learning environment and they can unintentionally re-traumatize students by not regulating their own personal emotions (Stasulane, 2017). Common language in trauma informed care is “do no harm”, which links staff and students to the understanding that the school environment should be one of safety and support and should not cause unnecessary harm (Carello & Butler, 2014; Plumb et al., 2016). Trauma informed care focuses on changing the language used in practice, which in turn, changes the mindset on the problem (Ford et al., 2016). It is imperative that staff understand the relationship between ACEs and student behavior to effectively work with students who have experienced trauma.

Schools that lack a trauma informed culture seek to discipline or punish students who break the rules even though suspension and expulsion disciplinary practices have been found to exacerbate problem behaviors instead of minimizing them (Ford et al., 2016). Students held outside of the classroom or school setting for discipline reasons fall behind in their academic work. This can cause students to have feelings of inadequacy, frustration, and confusion when they return to the classroom or school (Ford et al., 2016). Schools that are trauma informed consider alternatives to traditional disciplines such as restorative practice approaches (Anderson et al., 2014). The restorative practice approach is grounded in the idea that when wrong has been done by someone, the best way to move forward is not to punish the wrong-doer, but to repair the relationship through strategic communication (Kehoe, Bourke-Taylor, & Broderick, 2018).

School staff who use this approach place a strong emphasis on repairing and sustaining relationships with both staff and students (Kehoe et al., 2018). Some of the goals of restorative practices are to proactively teach social and emotional skills as a preventive measure to increase student empathy, self-awareness, and reflective-thinking (Kehoe et al., 2018).

The Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 (ESSA) and the Individuals with Disabilities Act of 2004 (IDEA) are the federal policies that address the treatment of behavioral issues within school settings. These two policies are the strongest influential factors for schools in developing local policies and processes (Plumb et al., 2016). These policies provide greater accountability for states and schools to provide a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) to every student who walks through their doors. This includes children with disabilities and children with behavioral and mental health problems. As a means to proactively address and support students with behavioral problems, Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) programming was added to the IDEA which includes grant money for training school staff to implement PBIS in schools (Plumb et al., 2016). PBIS is a program that supports the behavioral needs of students through a tiered intervention approach. Unfortunately, the PBIS programming falls short on including a trauma informed care approach. Without this understanding backing the concepts of PBIS, staff cannot truly understand the importance of building resiliency in students and therefore, these needs will not be met within the school setting (Plumb et al., 2016).

Building Resilience

Resiliency components are credited by researchers as the only protective factors capable of buffering the impact of adverse childhood experiences and toxic stress (Center for Youth Wellness, 2016). Resilience is defined as “the ability to thrive, adapt and cope despite tough and stressful times” (Avellaneda-Cruz, 2016 p.3).

Understanding resilience in the context of ACEs and toxic stress is evident when comparing two different children who have experienced similar adversities or two children that grew up in the same dysfunctional home but had two different outcomes. Resilience can explain how some children manage to persevere and grow up to be healthy, productive adults despite tremendous adversity. Without resilience, children with similar experiences grow up with extreme behavioral, emotional, and mental health issues that impact their functioning and overall well-being and health for the rest of their lives.

During stressful situations, when the Autonomic Nervous System (ANS) is in a healthy balance, which researchers call the “resilient zone” (p. 6), people are better able to utilize learned problem-solving and strategic thinking. While in the resilient zone, people are less likely to be reactive about situations and more inclined to engage in pro-social behaviors. Figure 1.1 illustrates ANS rhythm when it is in the balance. This figure represents why adverse events, such as those referenced in the ACE study are associated with mental and physical health problems. When events push a person out of the resilient zone, the dysregulation can affect “emotional, cognitive, and behavioral symptoms... and well-being in many negative ways” (Leitch, 2017, p. 6). Individuals can learn to remain in and return to the resilient zone (Leitch, 2017) and measures can be taken to promote the development of resilience skills within the youth’s environment (Masten, 2014).

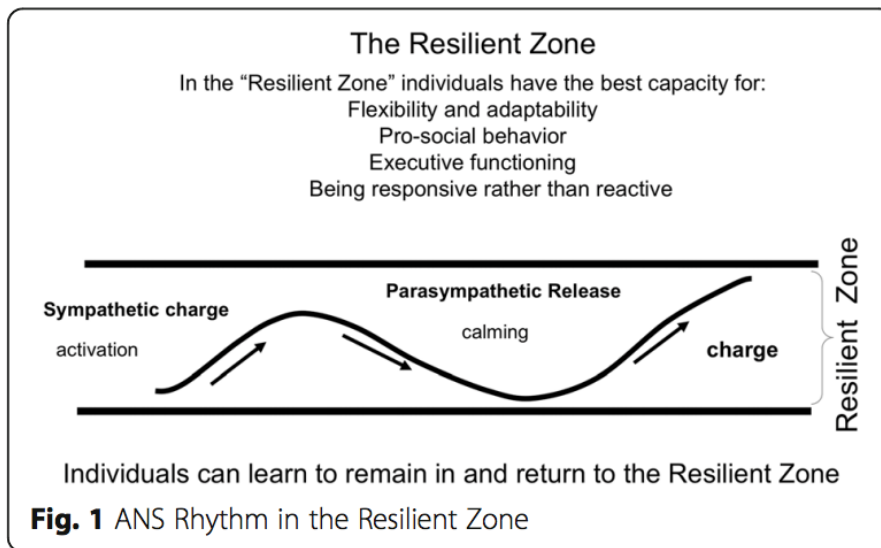


Figure 1.1 *The Resilient Zone*

To support well-being and resilience in students, schools can implement organizational policies and programming to meet the six domains of wellness and build resilience in youth. Beyond supporting these individual concepts, this organizational change can support student success in school which ultimately benefits their trajectory in life and can prevent the intergenerational transmission of toxic stress. This type of organizational change can support resilience and increase student success in school (Hefferon et al., 2009).

Organizational Change to Support Student Well-Being

Moving beyond an individual focus on well-being, it is necessary to evaluate the institutional barriers that impede student well-being, as well as the organizational change that can promote well-being and resilience in students. Grounded in the rational systems theory of approach (Northouse, 2019), the traditional public-school model incorporates an industrial organizational mindset (Bruce, 2017; Gidley, 2008; Oberman, 2007). When these traditional principles are applied to an organization focused on human growth, they fail to provide the balance of flexibility and support that is necessary to educate the whole child within the

educational domain (Murray, Hurley, & Ahmed, 2015). This mechanistic structure used in many school districts across the country leaves little room for human connection in the school setting.

When schools neglect to prioritize student well-being needs, they lose the human connection that is necessary to drive student learning to a higher level (Murray et al., 2015). Ida Oberman (2007), who founded the whole child progressive model of education explained that schools should not be a place where students learn to follow directions on worksheets and homework assignments, but a place where both students and adults can have meaningful learning experiences that help to shape their understanding of the world around them. Gidley (2008) called for a change to the traditional model of schools to better address the needs of today's students. She concluded that school models must be re-invented by "spatial and temporal expansion into life-long learning in physical, architectural, and social spaces that breathe with the community" (p. 246). When schools can cultivate the imagination of youth through education, they enable them to have a "more positive, creative and empowered vision of the future" (Gidley, 2008, p. 246).

Theoretical Framework

This research looks at the diverse approaches and interventions schools use to support the well-being and resilience of students and thoroughly examines the perceptions of students and staff from one selected model. To be able to suggest the importance of "what" schools do, it is necessary to back-up and look at "why" schools would consider prioritizing the well-being of students by utilizing funding, resources, and energy to support these needs. Theories focused on psychosocial development, environmental impact, and the cultivation of resilience provide a lens in which to view the subsequent literature review and research.

Psychosocial Development

Erik Erikson was trained in psychoanalysis and reformed Freud's theory into one of the most popular and widely accepted theories of human development (Robbins, 2016a). Erikson's eight stages of psychosocial development expanded upon Freud's development model with three additional stages of development beginning in young adulthood. The stages that relate specifically to children and youth are stage four and five of this model. In stage 4, industry vs. inferiority, children are between the ages of six to twelve, entering their early years of school, and exposed to a world of opportunity and challenges. They begin to develop new skills in various domains and they want recognition for their gains and contributions. Through the attainment of these abilities and acknowledgment, children develop a sense of agency and competence. If left unresolved, children will develop lifelong feelings of inferiority and inadequacy (Robbins, 2016).

In stage 5, identity vs. role confusion, the youth is approaching or experiencing adolescent, physical, and hormonal changes. The youth struggles to understand the past, present, and future view of self. This period of adjustment and conflict can cause a great amount of stress often magnified by new expectations from parents. According to Robbins (2016), "tolerance, understanding, and guidance" can help the youth to achieve an "integrated identity" (Robbins, 2016 p. 225). When resolved successfully, youth gain a lasting, strong sense of self. If left unresolved, the individual is left with confusion about who he or she is which can lead to delinquency, psychosis, and role and identity confusion (Robbins, 2016).

Ecological Perspective

Another theory that helps to explain the social structure and processes that impact student well-being is the ecological perspective. This theory provides an over-arching understanding of

the impact of the school, home, and community environments on student well-being. Germain introduced social work research to the ecological perspective as a “unifying paradigm” that can apply to the diverse models of social work practice (Robbins, 2016). Germain (1980), introduced ecosystems theory which focuses on the interactions and negotiations between people and their respected environments. This theory explains that people as well as the environments they are associated with are constantly changing and shaping each other. The process of this adaptation is unceasing and reciprocal and includes the biological, psychological, social, and cultural domains (Robbins et al., 2012). This perspective focuses on human growth, development, and potential as it views humans as purposeful and goal oriented. It explains that humans desire identity, competence, self-determination, self-esteem, and community in both a social and physical setting (Felder & Robbins, 2012).

Resilience Theory

Research on mental health and risk factors grew after World War II due to an increased interest in finding elevated risk factor probabilities for mental health disorders (Masten, 2014). The findings from this early research soon unveiled diversity in outcomes for children who had experienced similar traumatic events yet had very different outcomes (Masten, 2018; B. H. Walker, Anderies, Kinzig, & Ryan, 2006). These findings inspired an entirely new brand of research intrigued by the children and adults who were doing well despite their early adverse experiences. Researchers in social science fields who were interested in determining how some people were able to bounce back or escape the harmful impact of trauma and severe adversity coined the term resiliency from its Latin root meaning “to rebound” (Masten, 2014). Research evidence supports that resilience is not something that humans are born with but rather it is something that can be taught, learned and practiced (Prevent Child Abuse, 2016). Everyone has

the ability to become resilient, but it takes the right environment and people to introduce and enhance this skill (Sanders, Munford, Thimasarn-Anwar, & Liebenberg, 2017).

During the 1970s, Rutter studied the intergenerational transference of poverty and disadvantage (Breda, 2018) and Garmezy (1971), studied the connection between genetics, environmental risks, and vulnerability. Garmezy's studies of risk revealed that vulnerability contributes to negative outcomes later in life (Garmezy, 1971). Factors associated with his research on vulnerability include history of mental illness in family, prenatal or neonatal issues (maternal malnutrition or inadequate neonatal care), household dysfunction, and problems in the larger social environment (poverty, crime, or war) (Garmezy, 1971). During the 1980s, Werner published findings from a longitudinal study over several decades that looked at children born into adverse social conditions (Breda, 2018). Werner noticed something that fellow researchers on adverse experiences were finding as well, which was the relationship between vulnerability and negative outcomes was not universal. Some people experience negative outcomes in response to adversity and vulnerability, but not everyone. Moreover, some people have exceptional outcomes after facing adversity. Early researchers used terms like invincibility and invulnerability (Breda, 2018; Garmezy, 1971) to describe the concept that is now referred to as resilience (Breda, 2018; Hefferon et al., 2009; Ledesma, 2014).

Across disciplines, scholars have adopted unique definitions of resilience that pertain to their field of work. To better coordinate an all-encompassing definition of resilience that is relevant to diverse fields of study, leading researchers on resilience came together to adopt a basic systems definition of resilience with the goal of communicating ideas and knowledge across disciplines. These researchers define resilience as “the capacity of a system to adapt successfully to significant challenges that threaten the function, viability, or development of the

system” (Masten, 2018, p. 16). According to researchers, resilience is comprised of multiple inter-related variables including positive self-esteem, healthy coping skills, adaptability, risk-taking, optimism and perseverance (Ledesma, 2014). Researchers have defined resilience as a trait, a process, an outcome, a characteristic, and a broad concept that incorporates each of these definitions (Masten, 2018). Individual and family resilience research has its roots in systems theory as well as stressing and coping models (Masten, 2018). An important conclusion of the systems framework is that resilience is not a singular trait. As systems theory explains, resilience emerges from dynamic interactions between systems including diverse relationships and resources (Masten, 2018).

Resilience can involve more than just bouncing back to the original state a person was in before they had a traumatic experience. A different kind of research on traumatic experiences highlights a phenomenon that goes beyond “rebounding” after a traumatic or adverse experience. Post-Traumatic Growth (PTG) is a phenomenon that describes when a person may experience personal growth beyond their original or normative state of functioning after a traumatic experience (Hefferon, Greal, Mutrie, & Greal, 2009). The level of suffering sustained during a trauma can propel some people to not only recover but increase their motivation, satisfaction with relationships and life in general, and attain a more positive outlook on life (Hefferon et al., 2009). Though it is a different concept than resiliency, PTG aligns with resilience theory components. Some people who have experienced PTG may become more appreciative of the relationships they have and can expand upon these relationships when experiencing PTG. Some people who experience PTG may cultivate a stronger spiritual connection after a traumatic event which enhances their hope and purpose in life. Those who have experienced life-threatening illness or tragedies may have a new appreciation for health and safety. Any of the six wellness

domains (Duff et al., 2016) that may have been compromised by a traumatic event are more likely to be recognized with high importance and appreciation by those who experience Post-Traumatic Growth.

Researchers looking at what keeps students from dropping out of school interviewed “resilient youth” who overcame obstacles to finish high school in an effort to target variables that could be used to support youth in drop-out prevention programs. Researchers defined resilience as: “the process of, capacity for, or the outcome of positive adaptation despite the presence of high risk” (Lessard, Fortin, Marcotte, Potvin, & É., 2009, p. 21). High risk was indicated by “the presence of personal, family, and school risk factors” (Lessard et al., 2009, p. 21). The indicator of resilience in this study was evidenced by graduation from high school (Lessard et al., 2009, p. 21). Researchers found three protective strategies of resilient students, (1) significant positive relationships- having the support of friends, teachers, or other adults; (2) positive inner discourse- belief in themselves and their ability, good problem solving skills, demonstrate self-efficacy and self-esteem; and (3) resourcefulness- knowing where and how to get help they need (Lessard et al., 2009).

The knowledge and study around resilience theory expresses the plausibility that systems can promote resilience by focusing on skill building and capacity to improve responses to challenges. Stakeholders such as parents, schools, and communities have an interest in the development of resilience in diverse systems as an investment in the future of their children, community, and society (Masten, 2018).

Relevance to Social Work

The primary mission of the social work profession is to enhance human well-being and help meet the basic needs of all people, with particular attention to the needs of those who are

vulnerable, oppressed and living in poverty (The National Association of Social Workers, 2008). Research on student well-being and resilience aligns with NASW ethical principles including; dignity and worth of the person, and the importance of human relationships. Research on student well-being is equally important to the social work field as it is to the educational field because it is the necessary foundation for comprehensive human growth (Colistra, Schmalz, & Glover, 2017). This research aims to identify school interventions that support the well-being needs of students. As highlighted throughout the introduction of this paper, it is imperative to support these needs in this environment because (1) schools districts have the opportunity and accessibility to reach these students (Cronholm et al., 2015); (2) psychosocial development left unresolved leads to life-long issues effecting self, relationships, and the larger social environment (Robbins, 2016b); (3) people and environments interact, negotiate, and shape each other (Crosby, 2015; B. H. Walker et al., 2006); (4) and resilience is the key component to buffering the impact of adverse experiences and is something that can be taught, practiced, and learned (Center for Youth Wellness, 2016; Masten, 2014, 2018; A. J. Walker & Walsh, 2015).

Chapter 2: Literature Review

To better understand the depth of the well-being needs of students, it is necessary to thoroughly review the research conducted in each domain of wellness as defined by Duff et al. (2016). As highlighted earlier in this paper, this definition describes wellness as a synergistic state cultivated from the satisfaction of needs in six domains: Interpersonal, Community, Occupational, Psychological, Physical, and Economic (Duff, Rubenstein, & Prilleltensky, 2016). Defining well-being is an important step in the journey to understanding the importance of supporting student well-being in schools. Research defining well-being by Duff et al., (2016) focuses on adult needs but can be adapted to apply to youth. For example, most youth do not have a job and therefore would not be able to satisfy the career focus of the occupational wellness domain. However, associated with this domain is the concept of deriving meaning from what you do, having clear channels of communication and having the tools necessary to complete a task. This idea can correlate to a student's experience in the educational environment. Students may benefit from a sense of purpose in the learning environment and would also benefit from the necessary social, emotional, and comprehensive skills necessary to be successful in the classroom (Morse & Allensworth, 2015).

Interpersonal

Research on the six domains of wellness (Duff et al., 2016) describes the first domain, interpersonal wellness as the satisfaction of relationships with important people such as family, friends, and colleagues. This research relates to stage 5 of Erickson's theory, identity vs. role confusion. According to Robbins (2016), "tolerance, understanding, and guidance" can help the youth to achieve an "integrated identity" (p.225). Indicators in this domain include number of friends, fun activities with peers, feeling supported, heard, valued, appreciated, and treated with

respect (Duff et al., 2016). Research by Traylor et al. (2016) includes data collected in 2001 and 2005 from 37,354 middle and high school students in seven states from a secondary analysis of data from the school success profile. Findings suggest that student's diverse friendships are important to understanding the child's well-being and that friend support is important for a child's subjective well-being (Traylor et al., 2016).

Community

For the second domain, community well-being, Duff et al. (2016) explains that a "sense of belonging" and satisfaction with "one's place in the community" is necessary. Indicators of community well-being include "sense of community; feeling accepted, respected, and safe; and having pride in community" (Duff et al., 2016). Colistra et al. (2017) completed a qualitative phenomenological study to explore relationship building within a community center and how relationships may enhance the health and well-being of fourteen attendees. The research findings support the conclusions from Duff et al. (2016) by describing the importance of interactions with community groups as they contribute to social wellness, positive interdependence, positive community welfare, and healthy relationships (Colistra et al., 2017). Duff et al. (2016) merges this domain of community well-being with the next domain, psychological well-being. Humans have a need for relationships and therefore community is an important part of psychological well-being. (Duff et al., 2016).

Psychological

Duff et al. (2016) explains that for the third domain, psychological well-being to grow, humans require practical wisdom including authenticity, practicality, and values (Duff et al., 2016). Indicators of psychological well-being include "perceived self-efficacy, self-esteem, mastery, sense of control, spirituality, flow, meaning, growth, and engagement" (Duff et al.,

2016, p. 130). Gale et al. (2014) examined the relationship between psychological well-being and physical frailty in 2,557 men and women. Researchers in this study discussed a correlation between psychological well-being and physical health. They indicated that a strong sense of psychological well-being protects against developing physical frailty and other physical health issues (Gale, Cooper, Deary, & Aihie Sayer, 2014).

Occupational

The fourth domain of wellness as defined by Duff et al. (2016) is occupational well-being. This domain is determined by a person's satisfaction with their job and is indicated by, "resources to do the job, clear job description, channels for communication, deriving meaning from what you do, and a positive working relationship with one's boss" (Duff et al., 2016, p.130). Research conducted by Shanafelt (2012) used a survey with a probability-based sample of persons aged 22-65 from the United States to research occupational burnout. Findings suggested that occupational burnout can decrease professionalism, lead to broken personal relationships, alcohol abuse, and suicidal ideation (C. P. West et al., 2012).

Physical

Duff et al. (2016) defines the fifth domain, physical well-being, as the satisfaction with one's overall health and wellness. Duff et al., (2016) reports that there is a correlation between physical well-being and overall well-being. Indicators include "feelings of vitality, energy, and self-evaluations of health" (Duff et al., 2016, p. 130). Research by Chmiel et al. (2012) utilized a stratified random sample of 738 middle aged adults in Luxembourg to study subjective well-being and the comprehensive conceptual model proposed by Diener et al. (1999). Out of the seven domains that were measured, health, work, finances, free time, people, housing, and

financing, the life domains of finances and physical health had the only statistically significant scores when measuring subjective well-being (Chmiel, Brunner, Martin, & Schalke, 2012).

Economic

Indicators of economic well-being defined by Duff et al. (2016) as “money for food, shelter, clothing, medical care, saving for retirement and a feeling of financial security” (p. 131). Niedzwiedz et al. (2015) utilized a longitudinal panel survey using a face to face computer assisted interview with 18,324 individuals between the ages of 50-75 from 13 countries to research the relationship between financial distress and socioeconomic inequalities in well-being. The research concludes that life-course socioeconomic advantages lead to higher well-being and that reducing financial distress may help improve overall well-being (Niedzwiedz, Pell, & Mitchell, 2015). Looking at this domain through a different lens, a study completed by Coley et al. (2012) with a focus on social emotional learning used a representative, longitudinal sample of children and adolescents from low-income urban neighborhoods. The sample consisted of 2,437 students between the ages of 2-21 years of age. Findings suggested that poor housing quality is linked with worse behavior and emotional functioning, and lower cognitive skills (Coley, Leventhal, Lynch, & Kull, 2013).

Educational Models

After extensive research on educational models that address the well-being of students, I identified four educational approaches found to be key players in addressing student well-being needs. The four educational models explored in this literature review include; (1) trauma informed schools; (2) Social Emotional Learning (SEL); (3) Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child Model and lastly; (4) the Community School Model. This literature review

highlights the policies, programming, and practices schools are utilizing to address the needs of the whole child and support student well-being within each of these four educational models.

Trauma Informed Schools

Trauma informed school approaches seek to address poor behavior and social engagement through strategic collaborative efforts including shared values, goals, policies, practices, and people to produce a healthy and supportive school environment (Plumb et al., 2016). The most important part of a trauma informed approach in schools is school-wide or “universal” implementation (Greenberg et al., 2018; Plumb et al., 2016). Universal implementation in school settings builds a trauma-sensitive culture that can support all children, regardless of history, to be able to reach their full academic potential. According to Plumb et al. (2016), there are five core components of trauma sensitivity included in every effective model of organizational based trauma informed care: (1) training faculty and staff on the impact and prevalence of trauma- staff need training on the biological concept of trauma and how it affects the brain and child development; (2) adopting a school-wide perspective shift- providing staff with information on adverse childhood experiences promotes understanding and enables staff to see student behaviors from a different perspective. Children with behavior problems are not simply “disobedient”, they are trying to meet their needs in the only ways they know how. They may need attention, they may be experiencing symptoms of toxic stress, they may not know how to express their emotions or ask for help and therefore disrupt the classroom environment; (3) creating healing relationships among staff, caregivers, and students- teacher empowerment to build positive, trusting relationships with students which helps students feel safe in school, (4) maximizing caregiver capacity- collaboration between families and school teams provides the support that students need to be successful and the support that families need to build positive

relationships with their children and reinforce the positive skill- building at home; and lastly, (5) facilitating student empowerment and resiliency through interventions that are tied to school wide Positive Behavior Intervention Supports (PBIS) which provide students with a sense of hope and power that impacts their current functioning in school and empowers them for future success (Plumb et al., 2016).

Research on trauma informed approaches in the school setting support the inclusion of student voice in the implementation of trauma informed intervention models (S. D. West et al., 2014). Research completed by West et al. (2014) used six focus groups to study the perceptions of thirty-nine female students ages 14-18 who have personally struggled with and witnessed externalizing behaviors within the school setting. The purpose of this study was to better understand the lived experiences of students with exposure to trauma and how this trauma may impede their full potential in the learning environment. The researcher asked the participants about the perceived causes of these externalized behaviors and what they believe the school should do to improve the school culture to reduce these behaviors. Students' most common answer to address behavior concerns in the classroom was to encourage respect of others and improve behavior management practices. In addition to addressing behavior concerns, students advocated for alternatives to traditional discipline practices. In this example, students suggested more use of the "monarch room" which is an alternative to discipline in which students can go to receive support and guidance for their specific emotional support needs. School staff are on-hand in the monarch room to support students in re-directing or de-escalating their emotions (S. D. West et al., 2014).

Social Emotional Learning

To effectively address student behavior concerns, it is necessary for school professionals to teach and model these skills within a safe and supportive environment (McCormick, Cappella, O'Connor, & McClowry, 2015). One way that schools teach these skills in the classroom is by utilizing Social Emotional Learning (SEL) programming. There are many different types of SEL curriculums and models but the primary focus of any SEL approach is to educate students on (1) emotional literacy and (2) problem solving. These two factors are key elements in building resiliency, which is proven to buffer the impact of childhood trauma (Plumb et al., 2016). Some school based SEL programs include curriculum designed to deliver education on pro-social and emotional skills in culturally appropriate ways. Other SEL programming takes a more universal approach that incorporates Social and Emotional Learning into the school climate, which reinforces this mindset throughout the entire organization (Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger, 2011). In a meta-analysis of 213 school-based, universal Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) programs, which included 270,034 students in kindergarten through twelfth grades, researchers concluded that students who participated in SEL significantly improved their social and emotional attitudes and behavior and experienced an 11 percent gain in academic performance in comparison to a control group (Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger, 2011b).

Extensive research on social and emotional learning and its impact on adolescents in the educational environment supports a multi-dimensional approach to educating students (Durlak et al., 2011b, 2011a; McCormick et al., 2015). SEL has been linked to improved school attitude, behavior, and performance (Durlak et al., 2011b). Researchers agree that SEL programs are more likely to be effective if they follow four recommended practices that form the acronym

SAFE- sequenced, active, focused, and explicit (Durlak et al., 2011b). Staff should have sequenced step by step training, students should be engaged in active forms of learning, school practices should focus around skill development, and students should have explicit learning goals. In a meta-analysis of after-school programs that seek to develop social and emotional skills in children, findings suggest that programs that follow the SAFE practices are more effective than those that do not (Durlak, Weissberg, & Pachan, 2010).

There is a push for the expansion of implementing SEL programs in schools despite mixed findings on their effectiveness (McCormick et al., 2015). These mixed findings could be due to limited information on the delivery of programming across diverse school settings. This suggests that SEL programs are highly effective in some types of schools and not as effective in others (McCormick et al., 2015). Some research suggests that schools that have the most to gain from a social emotional intervention are schools with poor climates (McCormick et al., 2015). SEL programming can be utilized within other educational models to promote skill-building in these areas (Durlak et al., 2011a; McCormick et al., 2015).

Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child Model

Roeser et al. (2000) suggests that schools should design a single set of interventions that focus on building capacity among students instead of coming up with unique interventions for individual problems. Interventions could include building academic skills, motivation, and strategies to address emotional, academic, and social challenges (Roeser, Eccles, & Sameroff, 2005). The Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child (WSCC) model was developed by the ASCD Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) and the US Center for Disease Control (CDC). This educational model provides a framework that promotes the collaboration of educational and health programs, policies, and practices (Chiang, Meagher, &

Slade, 2015). The ten components of the WSCC model are (1) family engagement; (2) community involvement; (3) health education; (4) physical education and physical activity; (5) nutrition environment and services; (6) health services; (7) counseling, psychological, and social services; (8) social and emotional climate; (9) physical environment; and (10) employee wellness. The WSCC model presents a framework for schools that values the importance of a learning environment which ensures each student is emotionally and physically healthy, safe, engaged, supported, and challenged. In addition to school culture, the model provides a framework for school systems to evaluate, streamline, implement, and sustain the district policies, processes, and practices (Chiang et al., 2015; Murray et al., 2015).

Research by Morse and Allensworth (2015) found that creating meaningful roles for students to inform the implementation of the WSCC framework produces positive outcomes for students and organizations. After reviewing schools that implement the five tenets of the WSCC model, Morse and Allensworth (2015) found deficiencies that, by incorporating the student voice, could better amend the implementation of the framework. The researchers highlight four goals to empower students and support student voice: (1) engage all students as stakeholders in every grade level and every subject for the purposes of teaching, learning, and leading; (2) expand expectations to allow every student to become an active and equal partner in school change; (3) provide teachers and students with supportive, responsive, and systematic approaches to school improvement; and (4) validate the experience, perspective, and knowledge of every student by creating and sustaining meaningful school and community oriented roles (Morse & Allensworth, 2015). The researchers outlined their findings which provide guidelines and recommendations to implement these four goals to support student voice and empowerment. Recommendations include regularly assessing student needs, creating a database of resources for

youth development, developing curricula that integrates community resources for learning and teaching, providing students with a safe and supportive environment where students can connect with supportive and nurturing adults, creating youth and adult teams with the goal of long-term social changes, balancing short term and long term goal of community change, recognizing and rewarding youth for their participation in community organizations, and ensuring that youth receive the respect and support needed to take on responsibility as a key stakeholder in the improvement of the school (Morse & Allensworth, 2015).

Community School Model

The U.S. Department of Education (2015) defines full service community schools as public schools that work collaboratively with “local educational agencies and community-based organizations, non-profit organizations, and other public or private entities” (U.S. Department of Education, 2015, para. 2). The Department of Education describes the purpose of full service community schools as providing “comprehensive academic, social, and health services for students, students’ family members, and community members” (U.S. Department of Education, 2015, para 2). These schools develop collaborative partnerships with community-based organizations, parents and families, the private sector, and the government in order to create and enhance the delivery of supports within the school setting (Anderson-Butcher, Paluta, Sterling, & Anderson, 2018). Community schools recognize the importance of providing resources and a supportive environment for parents to establish connection to the educational experience (U.S. Department of Education, 2015).

First introduced in the 19th century, the community school model incorporates a multi-systemic approach to education due to the belief that diverse domains of children’s well-being impact learning. For learning to begin, basic needs must be satisfied. Community schools set

out to remove barriers to learning by utilizing the resources of their surroundings (Galindo, Sanders, & Abel, 2017). The community school model is flexible to the needs of each school environment in which it is implemented, but at its core, the model holds to a strong set of principles: (1) pursue equity; (2) invest in a whole-child approach to education; (3) build on community strengths to ensure conditions; (4) use data and community wisdom to guide partnerships, programs, and progress; (5) commit to interdependence and shared accountability; (6) invest in building trusting relationships; and (7) foster a learning organization (Institute for Educational Leadership & Coalition for Community Schools, 2018).

To better understand the impact of the community school framework on the outcomes of students, researchers conducted a case study of four Title I schools in a large urban school district from 2011-2014. The study explored outcomes of the adoption and implementation of the community school approach in these chosen schools due to their designated status as “school improvement” meaning they were mandated to undergo districtwide improvement efforts aligned to No Child Left Behind act (NCLB) accountabilities. Two of the schools were identified as “focus schools” which is a designation given to the lowest ranking 15 percent of schools in the nation (Anderson-Butcher et al., 2018). Researchers utilized a mixed-methods approach incorporating record reviews, survey of teachers and staff, and interviews with key stakeholders to collect data (Anderson-Butcher et al., 2018). Outcome data was collected after the implementation of the community school framework for two years. Researchers looked at the framework’s effectiveness on student achievement and findings indicated that state academic report cards improved at three out of the four schools, office discipline referrals dropped 22.5 percent, absenteeism dropped 37 percent, and teacher and staff perceptions on the Community

and Youth Collaborative Institute's School Experience Survey (CAYCI SES) were found to be more favorable after two school years (Anderson-Butcher et al., 2018).

Throughout the interviews and surveys conducted, teachers and staff reported the importance of professional development opportunities that incorporated PBIS and trauma-informed classrooms within the community school framework. Outcome data revealed that schools had more substantial reductions in office discipline referrals when teachers utilized these evidence-based strategies with fidelity (Anderson-Butcher et al., 2018). During interviews, stakeholders communicated the importance of a strong, clearly-defined infrastructure and organizational structure. Also noted by stakeholders was the necessity for consistent meetings with all community partners to review progress, examine current challenges, and problem-solve (Anderson-Butcher et al., 2018).

A study by Galindo et al. (2017) evaluated the effectiveness of a community school from the perspective of teachers and staff who work in an elementary school that utilized the community school framework with 200 kids in kindergarten through fifth grade. Researchers used a mixed-methods approach to review documents relative to the community schools policies and practices. The study comprised 28 individual interviews with teachers and staff of the community school, and 14 interviews with parents of students who attended the school (Galindo et al., 2017). Researchers concluded that full-service community schools can remove barriers to learning, which can improve the educational experiences of students (Galindo et al., 2017). Three themes emerged from the research findings: (1) the school provides meaningful educational opportunities for its students and services that benefited families such as literacy classes and housing and health services; (2) even during a recessionary period, the school managed to provide resources and services because of a sustained relationship with over 20

community partners; and (3) although the school successfully implemented the model in many aspects, perceptions of some of those who were interviewed indicated that there are feelings of cultural invisibility and marginalization which resulted in inequitable distribution of resources (Galindo et al., 2017). Interviews with parents highlight the importance of a community of parents that can connect with each other as mutually beneficial sources of information, support, and response to needs (Galindo et al., 2017).

Research conducted by Fehrer and Leos-Urbel (2016) in five community schools in Oakland, California comprised 37 interviews with principals, teachers, community school leaders, and partnering community organizations to investigate the necessary elements of effective community school implementation. Researchers used the Children's Aid Society's four community school capacities to frame the findings to examine how the targeted schools provide services to meet the comprehensive needs of students, foster collaboration between multiple stakeholders, promote coherent goals and organizational direction, and ensure long-term commitment to sustainability of this work (Fehrer & Leos-Urbel, 2016). These four capacities are: comprehensiveness, collaboration, coherence, and commitment. (1) Comprehensiveness- community schools offer services to students and parents in combination with partner organizations to break down barriers to student learning. Researchers found that the Oakland schools provided services including physical health and mental health services, tutoring, parent education, after-school programming, and field-trips (Fehrer & Leos-Urbel, 2016); (2) Collaboration- community schools incorporate strategic involvement of all stakeholders through community outreach and relationship building. In addition, researchers found that the Oakland schools held partnerships with 20 or 30 community organizations and each school had at least one primary relationship with an organization which allowed for a more significant presence on

the school campus (Fehrer & Leos-Urbel, 2016); (3) Coherence- community schools, community partner organizations, policies, and programming work together to achieve a shared vision and goal. The Oakland schools integrated the community school's mission into the academic core of the school. Each community school manager plays an important role in aligning the community partner activities with the goals of the school (Fehrer & Leos-Urbel, 2016); lastly, (4) Commitment- community schools are committed to the sustainability of the work. The Oakland school staff described their partnerships as strategic. The partners supported student learning by aligning school goals with available school and community resources (Fehrer & Leos-Urbel, 2016).

In order for schools to assist in the development of resilience in their students, it is necessary to create policies, practices, and programming that support building this attribute. Ultimately, the development of resilience will support the cultivation of well-being in students which will yield better outcomes for students while they are in school (Durlak et al., 2011a; Masten, 2014). In addition, this solid foundation can provide sustainable wellness for the rest of their lives. Only this transformational shift of mindset and practice will terminate the intergenerational impact of adverse childhood experiences and toxic stress for today's youth (Center for Youth Wellness, 2016).

Along with Psychosocial development, Ecological systems, and Resilience theories, the following research is framed by the community school principles and the six domains of wellness in order to explicate the relationship between (1) how this school implements the principles of the community school model; (Institute for Educational Leadership & Coalition for Community Schools, 2017) (2) the perception of students and staff on the operation of the

principles within the school; and lastly, (3) if these efforts support the well-being needs of students and build resilience.

Research Question: What are the perceptions of students and staff of the impact of community school model on student well-being and resilience?

Educational Model Chosen for Research.

Complex barriers impede student success in school and life. Students who have experienced adverse childhood experiences are at a greater risk of difficulty in school as a result of this stress in their life (Hunt et al., 2017). School districts have the opportunity and accessibility to reach students and their families in a strategic way by offering access to resources, providing opportunities that promote empowerment, and fostering an environment of equity and trust. These practices can buffer the impact of toxic stress and significantly improve developmental outcomes for students (Stasulane, 2017). After a review of literature on the multi-faceted domains of well-being and four models of education, I selected to further investigate the community school model for the purpose of this research due to its comprehensive framework that aims to support the academic, social, and health needs of students, families, and the community connected to the school. This concept aligns with the psychosocial, ecological, and resilience theoretical frameworks that guide this research.

Chapter Three: Methodology

To determine how this educational model supports the well-being and resilience of students, I pursued a case study of a middle school that implements the community school framework. The explanatory case-study design was useful to describe the operational links between the community school model and the perceptions of its impact on students (Yin, 2007). Case study methods are used to collect data from multiple perspectives to investigate a phenomenon that exists in one place and one time (Gerring, 2007). I used photo-elicitation during participant interviews to obtain diverse insights on this phenomenon and to provide an opportunity for those impacted by the school model to share their voice (Collier et al., 1986; Rose, 2016). I chose to use this approach in tandem with the case-study method because both of these designs are useful in collecting data from multiple perspectives on one phenomenon (Gerring, 2007; Linz, 2011; Rose, 2016; Yin, 2007). Collier et al. (1986) explains that using photographs during an interview can provide “communication bridges between strangers that can become pathways into unfamiliar, unforeseen environments and subjects” (p.99). Photo assisted interviews allow the participant and researcher to explore the photographs together and can relieve some of the stress on participants. As opposed to “subjects” of the research, participants instead become the “experts” (Collier et al., 1986, p.106). Photo elicitation is a data collection method used to bring about discussion and “create data and knowledge” (Glaw, Inder, Kable, & Hazelton, 2017, p. 1). Collier et al. (1986) describes photography as a method of research by explaining “It is through perception, largely visual and auditory, that we respond to the humanness that surrounds us” (Collier & Collier, 1986, p. 1). Human brains process visual information differently than verbal communication. Because of this, photographs can encourage clear thinking, descriptive responses, and personal connection to imagery by eliciting an

emotional response (Linz, 2011). Photos can function as both starting and reference points during interviews and the imagery is capable of connecting and crossing cultural boundaries (Collier & Collier, 1986). Using photos in the interview process can invite “open expression” yet maintain a “concrete and explicit reference point” (Collier & Collier, 1986, p.105). In addition to referencing Collier et al.’s (1986) groundbreaking introductory research which used photos within the interview process, I employed the six stages of photo elicitation as suggested by Rose et al. (2016) to collect data: (1) planning the practicalities, (2) the initial briefing, (3) printing the photos, (4) the photo elicitation interview, (5) analyzing the interview and photographs, and (6) presenting the results.

Because the community school model aims to meet the individual needs of schools, students, and families, each community school implements the framework in a unique way to serve its population in the best way possible (Fehrer & Leos-Urbel, 2016; U.S. Department of Education, 2015). The unique nature of each community school makes the case study approach the best fit for this research. Utilizing photo elicitation through this case study provided a comprehensive approach to incorporating student voice into the study.

Setting

Through the use of networking, I found a school district that implements the community school model in six of its twenty-one schools and requested permission to conduct research at one of these schools through a formal proposal. After reviewing the proposal, the district informed me that the study was approved and could be conducted at one of the district’s middle schools. This school was recommended as the research site for this study by the administration of the district due to its accessibility and the willingness of staff to participate in the research process. The Middle School is a community school in an urban public-school district in South-

Central Pennsylvania. To enhance the confidentiality of participants, the school district and Middle School will be kept confidential. At the start of the research, the School had just completed its third year of implementation of the community school framework. One should also note that the school building was under-going a massive construction project during the research process. Participants mentioned construction and the impact of the construction throughout the interview process.

In addition to utilizing the community school model, the Middle School is the only school in the country that has a refugee center within the school to support “newcomer” students including refugee and immigrant families that move to the area. This additional programmatic support makes the school especially unique not only to the community school framework, but to the entire United States’ public-school system. The district contracts with the local intermediate unit to employ administrative and support employees for the community school and the refugee center. Support employees for the refugee center hold the proper title of “cultural navigators” (Byler & Yacoub, personal communication, December 6, 2018). One of the supports that the employees of the refugee center provide to students and families of the school is translation in four different languages including Swahili, Arabic, Spanish and Nepali (Byler & Yacoub, personal communication, December 6, 2018). The cultural navigators facilitate communication between the family and the school and support newcomer student’s participation in educational experiences and interactions with school staff (Byler & Yacoub, personal communication, December 6, 2018). Without this footing, students would face a devastating barrier to their education. Cultural navigators play a role in bridging the family and school divide. Refugee center and community school employees host a “Welcome School Orientation” each year where staff explain and model the cultural expectations of the local community and teach the students

and families about the practices and policies of the school (Byler, personal communication, December 6, 2018). Some newcomer families who are connected with the refugee center take advantage of other services offered by the staff including language classes, hygiene lessons, summer camp, and an extended-day program (after-school program) for students. The extended-day program offers a daily meal and tutoring to students, as well as a variety of clubs in which students can choose to participate (Byler & Yacoub, personal communication, December 6, 2018). Last school year, the school hosted an International Night for staff, students, their family members, and the local community to celebrate their unique cultures through food, music, and dance. Other resources the community school offers to students include hygiene necessities, school uniforms, book bags, and a health clinic within the school which is available for free of charge to all students, families, and staff connected with the school (Bekele, Byler & Yacoub, personal communication, December 6, 2018).

Sample

Research in education and health supports the constructivist theory of education, which highlights the importance of student empowerment and student voice in education (R. L. Fischer, Wilsker, & Young, 2011). Providing students with an opportunity to use their voice and engage in opportunities to create the policies and processes that guide the practices of an organization supports students' development of skills and competence (R. L. Fischer et al., 2011). In addition, it improves the outcomes of overall student performance and organizational interventions. For this research, the unit of analysis was the entire population of the Middle School. I collected data from students who attend the School and staff who work at the School. To enhance the trustworthiness of the data in this qualitative study, I utilized cluster sampling in which the homogeneous group comprised of Middle School students and staff was divided into

heterogeneous groupings: 8th grade students, administrators, counselors, teachers, refugee center staff, and secretaries. After that, a simple random sample was selected in order to gain multiple perspectives from diverse stakeholders (Ahmed, 2009). The school district administration suggested the use of 8th graders as the population for this study because they have attended the School for a longer period of time and may have more to contribute to the research. According to published data on the PA school Performance website (see Table 3.1), the population of the Middle School consists of 507 students comprising the following ethnic group percentages: 2.17% Multi-Racial (not Hispanic), 7.69% Asian (not Hispanic), 16.96% Black or African American, 17.95 % White (not Hispanic) and 55.23% Hispanic. Percent Enrollment by Gender is 49.31% female and 50.69% male (see Table 3.2) (School Performance Profile, 2018). Saturation of data was met with a sample of the population including ten students and five staff. The cluster sample of students was comprised of one Asian student, two Black or African American students, two White students, and five Hispanic students (See Table 3.1). Half of the students interviewed were female and half male (See Table 3.2). The Middle School comprises 89 full and part-time staff in diverse professional positions including administrators, teachers, outreach workers and specialists. A representative sample of staff was drawn from a complete listing of Middle School staff members to enhance trustworthiness of findings. I interviewed five staff including one principal, one counselor, one secretary, one teacher, and one staff member from the refugee center.

Table 3.1

Percent Student Enrollment by Ethnicity

Ethnicity	Percent Enrolled
Asian (Not Hispanic)	7.69
Black or African American (Not Hispanic)	16.96
Hispanic (Any Race)	55.23
Multi- Racial (Not Hispanic)	2.17
White (Not Hispanic)	17.95

Table 3.2

Percent Student Enrollment by Gender

Gender	Percent Enrolled
Female	49.31
Male	50.69

Procedure

I sought out and utilized the support of the school social worker at the Middle School to serve as the gatekeeper for this research. The purpose of the gatekeeper was to assist in the coordination of scheduling of interviews, support contacting of students and teachers, and to provide an internal perspective for decision-making on data collection process (Høyland, Hollund, & Olsen, 2015; Reeves, 2010). The gatekeeper gave me a tour of the school and introduced me to key stakeholders on the leadership team including counseling staff, community school and refugee center staff, and school administrators. These staff provided their diverse perspectives of the School's implementation of the community school model which provided me with necessary contextual knowledge before interviewing participants.

With the assistance of the gatekeeper, I gathered names from the randomized cluster samples and arranged times to facilitate meetings with each selected participant. Upon introduction, I informed the participants: (1) of the purpose of the study, (2) that participation in

this study was voluntary and (3) ensured that their names would be kept confidential. Utilizing the guidance of school staff, district administration, and district research policy, I conducted all interviews within the counseling area of the school building and made every attempt to accommodate the best interest of all parties.

Consent and Confidentiality

To ensure student images included in the study depicted only students for whom the district has authorized photo consent determined by the school's photo policy, the district required me to use photos that were already published on the internet by district personnel. I provided participants with an assent form (see Appendix A) or consent form (see Appendix B) to complete if they were willing to participate in the study. Assent forms were given to students who were willing to participate in the study but were not of legal age to consent to the research. I asked students to have their parent/guardian to complete the consent form. Those who were willing to participate in the research returned the completed form to me with parent signature. If participants decided later that they did not wish to participate in the study, they were able to withdraw their consent/assent at any time. Using study codes on data documents, I maintained the confidentiality of each participant. A separate document linking the study codes to the participants' identifying information was locked in a separate location. Only the primary researcher had access to the identifying information.

Interview Guide

An important part of this research entailed establishing trust with the participants. To do this, I sought to build rapport with the participants during our first meeting while explaining confidentiality, consent, context and expectations of the interview process and also throughout the photo-elicitation interview. Before the interview began, I asked participants if they had any

questions about the interview process or the purpose of the research in an effort to minimize participant ambiguity. Photo elicitation proved to be a useful tool in helping participants to feel comfortable during the interviews and eliciting personal responses. The photographs invited participants to take the lead in the interviews and at times freely utilize their expertise before asking them about the photo (Collier & Collier, 1986; Rose, 2016).

During the photo elicitation interview, I presented fourteen photographs to participants to assist in the interview process. I chose photos from the school's website and social media accounts that portrayed qualities of the community school principles and wellness domains. Photos were first reviewed with the gatekeeper to ensure that participants would recognize the images and they would be useful in supporting the interviews. Showing one picture at a time, to one participant at a time, I asked students and staff to: (1) describe the photo and (2) explain what the photo meant to them. Photos included images from around the Middle School, for example, the front of the school building, a school dance, a classroom, and construction on the school (see Appendices C- P). Further interviewing occurred due to natural conversation with participants. At the end of the photo elicitation interviewing process, I asked each participant if there was anything else they wanted to share that was relevant to the focus of the study.

Data Analysis

Content analysis was employed to analyze participant responses from the photo elicitation interviews. Content analysis is a method of data analysis used to analyze written, verbal or visual communication (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). Participant explanations were analyzed and coded according to the community school principles: (1) pursue equity; (2) invest in a whole-child approach to education; (3) build on community strengths to ensure conditions; (4) use data and community wisdom to guide partnerships, programs, and progress; (5) commit to

interdependence and shared accountability; (6) invest in building trusting relationships; and (7) foster a learning organization (Min, Anderson, & Chen, 2017; U.S. Department of Education, 2015) and the Wellness domains: (1) interpersonal, (2) community, (3) occupational, (4) psychological, (5) physical, and (6) economic (Duff et al., 2016). Employing a deductive approach, I used the community school model principles and wellness domains as a framework to explore the relationship between (1) how the school implements the principles of the model, (2) the perception of students, staff, and parent/guardians on the operation of the principles within the school, and (3) the relation to how these efforts impact the overall well-being and resilience of students by buffering the impact of toxic stress and adverse childhood experiences.

After recording the photo elicitation process on an audio recording device, I then uploaded, saved, and transcribed each participant interview. To transcribe the participant responses, I saved and uploaded each participants' interview onto the Temi application (Version 1.10, 2019). The Temi application was useful to listen to and assist in the transcribing of participant interviews. Once I transcribed the interviews, I used line by line coding to indicate meaningful pieces of content applicable to the framework and then input the data points to excel organizing data by participant number and photo number. To complete second level coding, I coded content according to each community school principle and wellness domain and distinguished codes as negative or positive responses. Finally, I analyzed patterns of content quantitatively to present the existence of themes through frequency count and reflection of the percent of participants who reported that theme. This quantification allowed the research to be characterized in a way that is reliable and valid (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008).

Audit Trail and Peer Debriefing. To enhance the trustworthiness of qualitative research, White et al. (2012) recommends adhering to a “scientifically sound” method of data

collection to ensure that research is unbiased, dependable, and can be replicated by future researchers (White, Oelke, & Friesen, 2012, p.246). Adhering to the recommendations for management of large scale qualitative research, the following information outlines the comprehensive steps employed in the data collection process: (1) one person should take the role of managing the study including scheduling and data collection and analysis- for this study, one researcher attended to all aspects of the data collection process. I utilized the support of a gatekeeper within the school district to assist in the coordination of interviews. (Høyland et al., 2015; Reeves, 2010); (2) thorough documentation of data collection and analysis process- I kept a reflective journal to account for the comprehensive and consistent method of interviewing, transcribing, first level coding, and second level coding; (3) adhering to a strategic timeline for the data collection process- after receiving approval from the IRB, I outlined a plan to contact key school personnel, acquire necessary student and staff information to obtain sample, contact potential participants, schedule interviews, and obtain completed consent and assent forms; (4) ensure consistency in the data collection process- I followed a strict practice in the utilization of fourteen photos during the interview, two primary questions asked for each photo, and one summary question at the end of interview; (5) utilize an internal audit during key point(s) of the study- the expert reviewed the coded data and a peer debriefing was employed after all data was gathered and coded. Out of 1,221 total coded data points, the expert indicated divergence to 29 points. Because the expert is familiar with the school and students, she was able to provide perspective which further informed my interpretation of some of these coded data points. For some other discrepancies, I provided perspective and applied knowledge of the wellness principles and community school principles, which provided clarification of coding for the expert. An example of a discrepancy that occurred is as follows: one of the participants stated, “I

think that's good for families to know what's going on, how [it looks] and how safe it is". I coded this data in the psychological wellness domain, however, the expert disagreed with this classification. After a review of perspectives, in which I detailed the importance of safety to psychological wellness, we concluded that we would code this data point as psychological wellness. We reviewed each of the discrepancies and resolved each one through the peer debriefing process. We communicated our perspectives and rationale and were able to resolve each dissension; (6) communication with team members to keep process moving forward- I kept in contact with the gatekeeper throughout the research process so that I could arrange to meet key school personnel and study participants, disseminate and collect consent and assent forms, schedule time to interview participants, and work collaboratively through peer-debriefing process; (7) access to and use of appropriate resources to ensure results are found in a quality and timely manner- the gatekeeper was essential to supporting the efficiency and comprehensiveness of the data collection process. The gatekeeper provided a space for me to meet with the participants within the school for each interview session. The gatekeeper facilitated an appropriate time for students to leave class to participate in the study; lastly, (8) take time to enjoy the experience and have fun- during the data collection process, I was able to familiarize myself with the staff, students, and school. During downtime, I felt welcomed to conversations amongst school staff and found opportunities to learn more about the importance of relationships and collaboration in this school environment (White et al., 2012).

Researcher's Statement of Reflexivity

Qualitative research today cannot be separated from the author and cannot be understood without reference to the author's life (Creswell, 2007). As ecosystems theory explains, people as well as the environments they are associated with are constantly changing and shaping each

other. This concept aligns with this research which focuses on the interactions and negotiations between people and their respected environment. Due to this synergetic exchange, it was necessary for me to be conscious and reflective during the gathering and analyzation of data.

To better understand the background and purpose of my interest in this topic, it is helpful to know that I am school social worker in a nearby county and when initiating this research, was looking to find ways to better support the students in my district. I wanted to learn more about different educational models, what approaches are implemented to support students, and how effective they are in meeting student needs. As a school social worker who is trying to help meet the basic needs of students as well as help students reach their full potential, I am frustrated with the traditional approach to education. It is my belief that educational systems need to grow, change, and adapt to the ever-expanding needs of our students and families. Through this research, I hoped to gain further knowledge on the educational models, policies, programming, and practices necessary to provide a well-rounded educational experience that is truly valuable and can positively impact students for the rest of their lives.

The following results section reviews participant responses within the classifications of community school principles and wellness domains. Content was further analyzed to delineate negative and positive responses within each principle and domain. Findings are presented in both qualitative and quantitative form to comprehensively represent themes presented in research.

Chapter Four: Research Findings

Participant responses spoke to their perceptions of the community school's impact on student well-being and resilience. I analyzed and coded participant responses according to each of the wellness domains: (1) interpersonal, (2) community, (3) occupational, (4) psychological, (5) physical, and (6) economic (Duff et al., 2016) and the community school principles: (1) pursue equity; (2) invest in a whole-child approach to education; (3) build on community strengths to ensure conditions; (4) use data and community wisdom to guide partnerships, programs, and progress; (5) commit to interdependence and shared accountability; (6) invest in building trusting relationships; and (7) foster a learning organization (Min et al., 2017; U.S. Department of Education, 2015). The Duff et al. (2016) wellness domains align with the theoretical framework as way to respond to toxic stress and ACEs. The community school principles were used as a framework to analyze data as this is the approach implemented by the Middle School to respond to student needs. Student and staff interviews were conducted to answer the research question: what are the perceptions of students and staff on the impact of the community school model on student well-being and resilience?

Wellness Domains

In total, I identified 1,221 code classifications for the 447 participant responses. Out of those 1,221 classifications, I coded 45% ($n = 549$) of responses qualified as wellness domains as shown in Table 4.1. Most often, these responses were positively correlated with experiences and perceptions of school. Out of the 549 wellness domain codes, 90% ($n = 496$) qualified as positive perceptions and 10% ($n = 53$) qualified as negative perceptions. The following wellness domain categories detail direct quotes, qualitative analysis, and quantitative summaries from each wellness category.

Table 4.1

Responses Coded within Wellness Domains

Wellness Domains	Total <i>n</i>	Positive Reports %	Positive Reports <i>n</i>	Negative Reports %	Negative Reports <i>n</i>
Interpersonal	127	96%	122	4%	5
Community	112	98%	110	2%	2
Psychological	101	86%	87	14%	14
Occupational	133	83%	111	17%	22
Physical	52	87%	45	7%	13
Economic	24	87%	21	13%	3

Interpersonal. Research on the Six Domains of Wellness (Duff et al., 2016) concludes that satisfaction of relationships with important people such as family, friends, and colleagues is an important part of the first domain, interpersonal well-being. According to Duff et al. (2016) indicators in this domain include; number of friends, fun activities with peers, feeling supported, heard, valued, appreciated, and treated with respect (Duff et al., 2016). I utilized these indicators for coding and coded a total of $n = 127$ responses within this domain. Out of those responses, 96% ($n = 122$) qualified as positive perceptions of interpersonal wellness experience and 4% ($n = 5$) qualified as negative perceptions of interpersonal wellness experience.

Positive Perceptions. Interpersonal wellness is important to building resilience (Breda, 2018; Masten, 2014; Read et al., 2015). Resilience is not something that humans are born with but rather it is something that can be taught, learned, and practiced in a supportive setting with a trusted adult (Sanders et al., 2017). During the research process, some participants mentioned interpersonal wellness as a whole-school effort and mindset. Without resilience factors such as the support of a caring adult, toxic stress can impede healthy brain development (Center for Youth Wellness, 2016). The adult figure can be a parent/guardian, community member, or even a teacher. Staff four discussed the importance of providing a school setting that promotes caring

relationships as a core part of the Middle School while looking at a picture of the front of the building (see Appendix C):

What it means to me is a place that has touched the lives of everyone who comes through [the doors], that it's a place of refuge, a place of comfort and a place of learning and a place of relationships.

Research on trauma informed approaches in the school setting support the inclusion of student voice in the educational setting (S. D. West et al., 2014). Some student responses in this domain related to connection to staff and feeling supported by staff. Student Nine explained that he appreciated when teachers took time out of class to check-in with him and showed they were concerned if he was having a bad day:

They were willing to take the time and stopped the class period and be like, yo, what's wrong with you? How you feel, what's making you tick, how are you today.

This student continued to talk about the importance of relationships with staff during the interview. In discussing one of his favorite teachers who takes the time to share personal stories to develop a connection with students, Student Nine referenced a quote from his mother which he uses to describe someone he is fond of, stating:

She's my favorite batch of cookies!

Student Four explained the importance of relating to staff to form a connection:

She can relate to you, like she can kind of talk to you on your level... she has good stories too.

When I presented a picture of the leadership team which includes school counselors (see Appendix E), Student Three described her experience in working with school counselors and how they have helped her get through difficult times:

All the counselors are really nice. They try to at least make you feel better throughout the day. If you ever have a problem, like you ever feel really down about it, they try to help uplift you. They're really helpful during school when you have a problem or just they usually help you get through it and just get it over.

When I presented a photo of International Night (see Appendix P), Staff Four described his perspective on establishing a welcoming community:

Learn from one another, learn about one another... Sometimes what we do is we create perceptions of each other, which is unfair. So what we did is we did like a cultural celebration of cultures and we did it through food.

The school provides opportunities for students to get together socially with dances, dinners, and other activities, pictures of the dance elicited responses from students like this one from Student One:

We can have fun together...when we're at the dance people get more together, than what they do at school... maybe even like make some new friends or have fun with the friends that you do have good.

Negative Perceptions. Of the four coded negative responses pertaining to interpersonal wellness, two were attributed to the current construction project going on at the school. Staff One stated that, staff “morale” is impacted by the construction project. Student Two agreed that construction impacts the school environment and creates stress which is negatively impacting the way students treat each other. This would be a negative indicator of this domain as it represents students not treating each other with respect or valuing each other:

Sometimes something may have happened and like some stuff the students are not really getting along that much. Construction is like that atmosphere is not really good. You feel like it's just a little bit maybe chaotic because of everything going on and you think it's impacting the way students are treating each other even.

Community. For the second domain, community well-being, Duff et al. (2016) explains that a “sense of belonging” and satisfaction with “one’s place in the community” is necessary. Indicators of community well-being include “sense of community, feeling accepted, respected, and safe, and having pride in community” (Duff et al., 2016 p. 129-130). I coded a total of 112 responses within this domain. Out of those responses, 98% ($n = 110$) qualified as positive perceptions of community wellness and 2% ($n = 2$) qualified as negative perceptions of the

community wellness. As described in Resilience theory, stakeholders such as parents, schools, and communities have a vested interest in promoting the development of resilience as an investment in the future of their children, community, and society (Masten, 2018). As highlighted below, the Middle School understands the value of supporting every student regardless of background or need.

Positive Perceptions. Both students and staff mentioned that students of diverse cultures represent the Middle School. Student Ten stated, “I just think it's pretty good community”. Staff One referred to [the School] as a “very good melting pot”, also mentioning that she attended the school district as a child and has been employed by the district for 26 years. Staff Five found appreciation for the diverse student body while looking at a photo of some students in the classroom (see Appendix G):

That picture is a great example of what our society is, different colors, different people, different genders, all working for a same goal, to make everything better.

Staff Four described focus on community wellness as an intentional at the Middle School:

We embrace cultural differences, everyone is accepted. We preach family and although we preach it, we try to live by it.

Student Seven, described his experience and perspective of acceptance in the School community:

So like they just accept you for who you are, and I think that's amazing because you don't really find that in many schools. There's definitely like a popularity, but like it's not like, it's definitely a lot less and it's like, everybody here can be nice. It's like nobody's really mean unless like you aggravate them or anything. I like how there's no hierarchy.

When I presented a photo of International Night (see Appendix P), Students spoke to the feeling of everyone being welcome at the Middle School. Student Three stated:

I feel like the school's like warm, welcoming...to like different ethnicities, stuff like that. I don't really see any like, bad terms with other people from different ethnicities. I feel like everyone's welcome. Everything's okay.

Student Seven described the importance of welcoming refugees to the community as an important aspect of helping them to feel safe:

Refugees, people coming into the country... and they're just like trying to welcome them, make sure that they feel welcome and that they're safe.

Staff Four described creating a culture of acceptance at the Middle School:

Learn from one another, learn about one another. Sometimes what we do is we create perceptions of each other, which is unfair.

Students and staff mentioned how proud they are to be a part of the Middle School community,

When I showed a picture of the district offices (see Appendix I), Student Eight stated:

I've always been in the school district... so I would say it's pretty nice. There's a lot of opportunities because I have other friends that don't go to a school district like this and like they always say like they don't have as much opportunities as we do because like our school, like our school district is more diverse than theirs, so we get chances to meet more people like from different ethnicities.

After seeing a picture of the front of the school (see Appendix C), Student Two talked about how she will always feel a connection and a sense of pride associated with the Middle School:

Looking at that picture just reminds me of the first day when I came and walked through those doors and first came to middle school, just say, wow, this is actually my school and will be my school. Even [when] I move on.

Negative Perceptions. One negative comment affiliated with the community wellness domain came from Staff Four who is dissatisfied with the location of the community school which lacks proximity to its consumers:

When you think of a community school, it's supposed to be the hub of the community, but where we're located, and being that we have many of our families are walkers, it's far from where we're located. A lot of our kids are on the southeast side of town, and where we're located, it's almost two miles away. So that's the hardest thing.

Psychological. Duff et al. (2016) explains that for the third domain, psychological well-being to grow, humans require practical wisdom including authenticity, practicality, and values (Duff et al., 2016). Indicators of psychological well-being include “perceived self-efficacy, self-

esteem, mastery, sense of control, spirituality, flow, meaning, growth, and engagement” (Duff et al., 2016, p. 130). There were a total of 101 responses within this domain. Out of those responses, 86% ($n = 87$) qualified as positive perceptions of psychological wellness and 14% ($n = 14$) qualified as negative perceptions of psychological wellness.

Positive Perceptions. Erikson’s development theory concludes that adolescent youth struggle to understand their self (Robbins, 2016b). This can cause a great amount of stress often magnified by new expectations at home and school. According to Robbins (2016), support from an adult to provide tolerance, understanding, and guidance can help the youth to achieve a healthier self-concept. Students mentioned ways the school environment and extra-curricular activities increase their psychological wellness. Student Seven spoke to his experience of competing in cross country and how some of the skills he has learned have helped him in other areas of his life. He spoke to feelings of self-efficacy when faced with challenging situations:

When it's like the final sprint and you're like, oh, tired and like you have a whole bunch of people that you need to race to get us the highest placing that you can... you get to test yourself and test other people, see how well you could do. Like that you learn how to push through even when things are feeling really tough and like you got nothing left to give.

Parents seek to understand, engage, find meaning and a perceived sense of control by coming to the school to learn more about the school and meet staff. When parent psychological needs are met, they are better able to support their child/ the student in those same ways. When I presented a photo of back to school night (see Appendix F), Staff Four talked about the importance of meeting the psychological wellness needs of parents by providing practical information:

A lot of [parent turn-out] is our incoming sixth grade and parents because you know, unsure and nervous about the middle school experience. So they come, they come in droves, they come deep so they can learn about middle school and what we have to offer.

Resilience is comprised of multiple inter-related variables including positive self-esteem, healthy coping skills, adaptability, risk-taking, optimism and perseverance (Ledesma, 2014). Some staff members talked about the importance of supporting student psychological wellness through a resilience “mantra”, which relates to self-efficacy. When presented with a photo of construction (see Appendix L), Staff Four stated how the school supports students to get through this difficult construction phase:

We talk about resiliency, resiliency, that's been our mantra... it's tough, but um, we'll, we'll come out on the other side in one piece.

Staff Three spoke to the importance of maintaining optimism through the construction process by finding meaning in what is occurring in order to support psychological wellness:

Think of the time when you have all of this beautiful setting and clean surrounding nice classroom. Think about that and be optimistic. Forget about all of this, you know, without doing this we cannot get a better place.

Negative Perceptions. A total of fourteen statements qualified as negative perceptions of psychological wellness. Three of those statements came from students who spoke of the stress and worry they felt when having to go to the administration building to take an “English test” when they first came to the district. Because students did not know English very well, they doubted their ability to prove mastery of this subject which relates to negative psychological wellness. Students were reminded of this experience when presented with a photo of the administration building (see Appendix I). Student One and Two described their experience:

Student One: I was a little bit nervous when they say we had to take a test for English. I was confused because we didn't know no English.

Student Two: It was a bit scary, it was a little difficult since my English wasn't really good at that time.

Out of the fourteen negative perception responses of psychological wellness, four were attributed to the construction on the building. Staff Two stated her perception of the ongoing

construction as “chaotic” or a loss of sense of control which is a negative indicator of occupational wellness:

Construction is stress, stressed this morning. It's very, feels very chaotic compared to what we're used to and I feel like it's led to a lot of, as much as I love the team, it's a lot of disconnection.... it's just, it's just really, really challenging for everybody.

Occupational. The fourth domain of wellness as defined by Duff et al. (2016) is occupational wellness. Duff et al. (2016) explains that this domain is determined by a person's satisfaction with their job. Indicators for occupational well-being include “resources to do the job, clear job description, channels for communication, deriving meaning from what you do, and a positive working relationship with one's boss” (Duff et al., 2016, p.130). As discussed previously, the occupational wellness domain applied to youth correlates to a student's experience in the educational environment with teachers, peers, and having the right tools to do the job. Students benefit from (1) a sense of purpose in the learning environment and (2) the necessary social, emotional, and comprehensive skills necessary to be successful in the learning environment (Morse & Allensworth, 2015). I coded a total of $n = 133$ responses within this domain. Out of those responses, 83% ($n = 111$) qualified as positive perceptions of the occupational wellness and 17% ($n = 22$) qualified as negative perceptions.

Positive Perceptions. The ecological perspective explains that humans desire identity, competence, self-determination, and self-esteem, in social and structured settings (Felder & Robbins, 2012). Students mentioned teachers as a conduit to obtain occupational wellness. Student Nine described teacher flexibility to student needs as an essential part of his success during the school day:

I was like, Ms., I can't get this done in four days, it's going to take a little bit longer. Because I reached out, I reached out to understand it more, she's like, I'll give you whatever time you need to turn it in.

Student perceptions of teachers' abilities to support student learning was a re-occurring theme.

While looking at a photo of the front of the school (see Appendix C), Student Eight mentioned:

The teachers teach pretty good here, I would say, and they're just like, they teach well, they teach in a way I could learn.

Student Ten stated, "The teachers are good, they are helpful in learning".

In addition, students referenced opportunities in which teachers collaborate with students and provide opportunities to incorporate student voice and assign responsibilities to students.

The incorporation of student voice is an essential part of any student intervention (Morse & Allensworth, 2015; S. D. West et al., 2014). Student Six described his experience with having an assigned position on the technology team for the school. His explanations of responsibilities relate to positive occupational wellness as they reflect how he is deriving meaning in his educational experience and shows he possesses clear channels for communication with the teacher regarding the utilization of technology in student education:

We are kind of like, I guess you could say, admins for tech team, we work with [teacher] and kind of try and suggest things and try out what we're going to do beforehand, give input, discussions like that.

Staff described key contributors to their occupational wellness. While viewing a picture of students in a classroom (see Appendix G), Staff Three was reminded of an experience that explains how the refugee center can be a catalyst in supporting student and staff occupational wellness by providing the right tools for the job:

She had a question about the Swahili speakers and this student, ELL student wrote everything in Swahili. She asked them to write something and they did not know English, so they have limited English...he drew a picture, you know, it's obvious, but the writing isn't. So yeah, at times in the teachers come to us for help. So, I got those pamphlets, the posters and gave it to [refugee center staff], translated those and helped [the teacher] to understand what this guy was communicating.

In addition, Staff Three talked about his opportunity to report to the district administration on a regular basis to communicate strengths and needs of programming. He views this as an important part of his occupational wellness as it provides a clear channel of communication with.

District administration:

I'm talking about something about us and you know, contributing... you're bringing the valuable information to them, to the people who really make the big decisions.

Negative Perceptions. Out of the 22 responses that qualified as negative perceptions in the occupational wellness domain, the majority referenced student frustration, teacher frustration, and student behavioral issues for inability to get the job done. These experiences relate to the student's experience in the educational environment with teachers, peers, and having the right tools to do the job. If students perceive the environment as non- conducive to learning, student ability to derive meaning in the learning environment is negatively affected. Student One described experiences in classes when students refuse to follow directions from the teacher which negatively impacts other students' educational experience:

It get the teacher like frustrated. She's trying to do something, but the student don't pay attention to it and she thinks like, I think she think she lost her time. But at the same time, I think she's trying too. It's not always her fault it's the student's fault... not all the students pay attention to the lessons. Like I have an experience where my class doesn't pay attention to my homeroom teacher so not all of us can do our works because just some of the students don't want to make a good choice. The other students don't get the time to do it.

Student Six was reminded of his time in physical education class when students would not pay attention to the teacher, so other students were kept waiting until that student was ready to learn:

So there are some people who they just like, they won't run around and they'll just talk. And as a result we ended up sitting there for usually 20 minutes each time. It's just sitting there on the floor.

Physical. Duff et al. (2016) defines the fifth domain, physical wellness, as the satisfaction with one's overall health and wellness. Duff et al., (2016) reports that there is a

correlation between physical well-being and overall well-being (Duff et al., 2016). Indicators include “feelings of vitality, energy, and self-evaluations of health” (Duff et al., 2016, p. 130). “Physical well-being enhances our ability to experience psychological well-being and vice versa” (Duff et al., 2016, p. 130). I coded a total of 52 responses within this domain. Out of those responses, 87% ($n = 45$) qualify as positive perceptions of physical wellness and 13% ($n = 7$) qualify as negative perceptions of physical wellness.

Positive Perceptions. Participants mentioned diverse supports and services that the Middle School provides which align with this domain. In the physical domain, responses aligned with the Children’s Aid Society goal of comprehensiveness in which community schools offer services to students and parents in combination with partner organizations to break down barriers to student learning (Fehrer & Leos-Urbel, 2016). Student One talked about a service that she knows the refugee center provides to support the physical health needs of students and families:

I’ve heard about it, like a health lesson and then the parents can come in [and] the students too.

Student four discussed his gratitude for the opportunity to participate in sports this year. The district offered sport physicals for student athletes at the high school:

I might do track this year... I went to open gym last year, but for basketball, I didn't have my physical last year, got my physical year this year. I'm glad that they picked me up.

When shown a photo of the health center door (see Appendix N), Student Five gave her perspective of having this resource at school:

You know, if you have really have problem with insurance or anything, had a problem with your stomach, they can help you...for the flu shot.

Student Five talked about how resources like the health center provide peace of mind for health concerns which in-turns promote psychological wellness which indicators in his domain refer to:

Because like, because if something happened to my health, they're there for us so they're going to help.

Negative Perceptions. Out of the seven total statements that qualified as negative perceptions of physical wellness, all statements were related to either: (1) construction; or (2) walking to and from school. When shown a picture of the construction on the school, (see Appendix L) Staff One shared her safety concerns regarding the construction:

We shouldn't be here that's my personal opinion. We should not be in a building that's under construction. For what reasons? Safety reasons. Health reasons. Physical safety... I think, you know, people are getting sick faster.

Students echoed the staff's concern for safety. Student One stated:

I feel they're doing the right thing, but they're not either. They're good because they give us different type of school and then bad because they're doing it like with students in the school. What about if something's wrong and a student can get hurt?

When shown a picture of a school bus (see Appendix J), Student One expressed concerns for walking a long distance to and from school each day due to her health issues, when it is cold, she cannot walk the distance to school:

I walk in the afternoon. In the morning my mom brings me. On this [cold] day she's taking [me] because of the asthma.

Student five expressed safety concerns for walking a long distance to and from school:

For me it's not safe, like not fine to walk by myself.

Economic. Duff et al. (2016) explains the indicators of economic well-being as “money for food, shelter, clothing, medical care...and a feeling of financial security” (Duff et al., 2016, p. 131). A total of 24 responses applied to this domain. Out of those responses, 87% ($n = 21$) qualified as positive perceptions of economic wellness and 13% ($n = 3$) qualified as negative perceptions of economic wellness.

Positive Perceptions. Full-service community schools can remove barriers to learning, which can improve the educational experiences of students (Galindo et al., 2017). Basic needs were mentioned by participants as important facets of economic wellness. Staff Three spoke to the importance of the school lunch program in meeting the nutritional needs of students:

If this service was not in place, if there was no free lunch...these kids would be in a different, you know, situation.

Student One described the resources that she and her siblings received when they first started at the district:

Gave us the book bag, give us pencils notebooks, scissors, glue, they give us three shirts and three pants.

Students and staff both acknowledged the role that the Parent/Teacher Organization (PTO) plays in bringing, not only funding, but volunteers to the school to support the economic wellness of students. Student Two provided her perspective:

The [PTO] being a part of the school I think is nice because that means that we're getting more help for, for the school and for the students because the parents maybe like they might be bringing a lunch that we use for field trips or they might be giving us some of the money to buy, to use, to get the buses for field trips.

Staff One agreed that the PTO plays an important role in funding opportunities for the students:

They pay for field trips and they are always here for the concerts and everything.

Negative Perceptions. According to Staff Three, the Middle School is working to support economic wellness by buffering the impact of economic hardship and providing necessities to families. When I presented a photo of a collection of necessities donated to the school (see Appendix H), Staff Three discussed some of the barriers that families face in providing for their children that can significantly impact their economic wellness:

Parents because most of them, they have to work and [we help] bring these resources for their survival... the money they are bringing the little money, you know, like \$10, \$11 an hour. That doesn't make enough to support a family. 90% of students are below the poverty line.

Community School Principles

Out of the 1,221 classifications, 55% ($n = 672$) related to Community School Principles as shown in Table 4.2. Most often, these responses were positively correlated with experiences and perceptions of school. Out of the 672 Community School Principle codes, 96% ($n = 642$) qualified as positive perceptions and 4% ($n = 30$) qualified as negative perceptions. The following wellness domain categories detail direct quotes, qualitative analysis, and quantitative summaries from each Community School Principle category. The Community School Standards (2018) created by the Institute for Educational leadership and the Coalition for Community Schools define the guiding principles and descriptions. As noted in previous resilience research, stakeholders such as parents, schools, and communities have an interest in the development of resilience in diverse systems as an investment in the future of their children, community, and the greater society (Masten, 2018).

Table 4.2

Responses Coded within Community School Principles

Community School Principles	Total n	Positive Reports %	Positive Reports n	Negative Reports %	Negative Reports n
Pursue Equity	78	95%	74	5%	4
Whole Child	148	97%	143	3%	5
Community Strengths	57	96%	55	4%	2
Partnerships	87	97%	84	3%	3
Accountability	104	97%	101	3%	3
Trusting Relationships	107	96%	101	4%	6
Learning Organization	91	88%	80	12%	11

Pursue Equity. The descriptive definition of this principle from the Community School Standards (2018) was used as the indicator for this domain:

Community schools work actively to identify and confront policies, practices and cultures that keep students of different backgrounds and races from achieving equitable outcomes. Community schools proactively and intentionally empower those typically disempowered by barriers to participation (p. 4).

I coded a total of 78 responses within this domain. Out of those responses, 95% ($n = 74$) qualified as positive perceptions and 5% ($n = 4$) qualified as negative perceptions.

Positive Perceptions. As suggested by Stasulane (2017), educational organizations have the opportunity to take a more prominent role in supporting the well-being of youth as school districts have the accessibility to reach these students better than any other helping person or institution. Meeting the needs of the Middle School students and the surrounding community is a top priority for staff. Staff Four explained his perspective of supporting student needs while looking at a photo of a classroom (see Appendix G):

It kinda shows what we're really here for. We're here to service the students that sit before us. We're here to provide them with a free and fair education, a quality education. That's what we're here for, we're here to teach them and provide them with what they need.

Student Three explained her perspective while looking at a photo of International Night (see Appendix P):

I feel like it represents how [the School] like works because [the School] doesn't really care what ethnicity you are, like no matter where you're from or who or anything like they will like help you no matter what. Just like the doctor's thing, like, you might not have insurance, like they're still going to help you because they know that not everybody has certain opportunities.

Staff spoke about different resources that the Middle School offers to students and families to promote equity. Staff One talked about how the refugee center supports the Middle School families:

They have classes like all classes for the refugees that come over, like for the families do not understand any English, they also have a citizenship classes.

Student Two talked about how she received support in learning English:

They put me in an English class for one of my periods of the day...so I can learn and write in English, like actually speak it better.

Staff Three explained how the refugee center and community school staff educate newcomer families on attendance expectations and policies because many times, families do not understand what the school expects of their children, he mentions the English Language Learners (ELL) program:

So we contribute because absenteeism for the newcomers is a nightmare. They don't understand, you know, how absenteeism works and how they are put in problem, how they jeopardize themselves, you know, those kinds of things. So what we do is we get those [absentee/truancy] lists and go out and see and teach refugee and immigrant, ELL students and parents.

Both students and staff discussed the supports and resources that the Middle School offers to support the needs of students and promote equity. Staff Four described the teaming mindset behind this support:

Coming together for a cause to support kids in the school district in need, whether it be through a clothing item that you may not have or what have you. So this is about a team coming together, putting their minds together, putting their heads together to find ways to impact those who may not have all the necessary things they need.

Staff Three explained how resources such as the after-school program, health center, and free and reduced lunch funding are pivotal in meeting the needs of students:

We need to understand, you know, from where they are coming, what is the situation of, you know, living...and are their needs are fulfilled or not. Are they getting what they're supposed to be getting?

Resources mentioned by staff and students included uniforms, food, school supplies, and the extended-day program. The extended-day program offers many resources to students including tutoring, mentoring, and the opportunity to participate in clubs with organizations such as the

Boys and Girls Club and Girls on the Run. Student Two reported that before moving into the school district, she had never had social studies class before. She was very unfamiliar with United States history, politics, and culture. She talked about how beneficial the extended-day program has been in supporting her to breakthrough this barrier:

It's been really helpful because since all of this stuff is kind of new to me...stuff like the social studies class. I haven't, I never took it before. This is my first time and tutoring helps me understand it better and helps me out when I need.

These supports go beyond newcomer families, Staff Three explained that any family in the school community can use these resources:

I email teachers, I email everyone saying “hey we have this thing. If you find anyone needs, it doesn't have to be a refugee or immigrant [it's] for all and if they need anything, let me know.”

Negative Perceptions. Participants indicated the location of the school as a barrier to equity. As mentioned earlier, some students walk up to two miles each way to come to school- as transportation is not provided if students live within that distance from the school. Staff Two described why this walking commute for students impacts student attendance:

Oh, I think our attendance is extremely impacted by that, the kids being late or not coming to school at all. Especially if the weather's bad. So obviously that's because they don't want to walk two or four miles that day. Especially our refugee kids and they've come from countries where that's, you know, where it's like you just didn't go to school when the weather was bad, plus the parents, especially if you had to walk, they just, the culture plays into that as well.

While looking at a photo of a school bus (see Appendix J), Student Five talked about a barrier to education as she is forced to make a difficult decision as to whether she stays home to preserve her health or go to school and possibly get sick from the walking commute:

People who like...like their house is far they get bussed, but if not they have to walk in the cold but it would be better if we get bussed in the cold... because it's cold and if you get sick you're going to miss the whole thing and still didn't learn anything in school and you have to start it over again and will be left behind.

Invest in a Whole Child Approach to Education. The descriptive definition of this principle from the Community School Standards (2018) was used as the indicator for this domain:

Meaningful teaching and learning embraces but goes beyond mastery of core academic subjects to include youth development principles; holding high expectations for children, youth, and adults; and developing their social-emotional, health, critical thinking, and problem solving skills (p. 4).

A total of 148 responses applied to this domain. Out of those responses, 97% ($n = 143$) qualified as positive perceptions and 3% ($n = 5$) qualified as negative perceptions.

Positive Perceptions. Opposing the traditional public-school model, which incorporates an industrial organizational mindset, the Middle School provides the balance of flexibility and support that is necessary to educate the whole child within the educational domain (Murray et al., 2015). Some staff referred to the school’s vision statement, “All students, every day, learning and growing academically, socially, and emotionally” which suggests a focus on youth development principles, social-emotional development, and holding high expectations for students which are key components of the whole child principle. Staff Two stated her perspective of working with students which incorporates the school’s vision statement:

I think it's just recognizing that we're, that we're dealing with a whole child and well-being includes that they are physically, socially, emotionally and academically, successful and growing and learning in those areas.

Staff see the value in students supporting other students in the classroom, to enhance critical thinking and problem-solving skills. While looking at a picture of students working together in class (see Appendix G), Staff Five described “cooperative learning” as a tool that he utilizes in his classroom:

Kids learning from each other, which I think is a valuable thing.

Students also described the value of working together in peer groups for classwork which demonstrates the value of critical thinking and problem solving which aligns with this principle.

Student One explained:

I think it's good how they make students work together. Maybe some students don't understand some work and working in partners, they can ask question [of] the other student [who] don't have to do the work for them. They just help them.

Students mentioned the enjoyment of working on projects that promoted critical thinking and problem solving, while looking at a picture of a teacher and students in class (see Appendix G),

Student Two recalled a positive educational experience in that class from the year before:

She's trying to teach the students something new about history and about the past and uh, the students are probably making a project and started to help them out, like giving, them ideas of how they can work on it... last year on second period I worked on a project making a slide show, talking about what would you do if there was a zombie apocalypse with some of my friends. And it went really well. It was a lot of fun making it. The teacher give us an example of things that we would need...so they gave us a paper and said, what would you need? Why would you use it, why do you think you need it? And we just started looking up some stuff that we might need for the project.

Another essential part of building on community strengths at the Middle School is celebrating the diverse cultures of the families and students of the school. Last year the school hosted its first "International Night" at which students, their families, and community members were welcome to share their gifts and share their culture through food, music, and dance which created a meaningful learning experience beyond core academics that aligns with this domain.

Student Eight described the night:

That's like fun because everybody got to taste like all these different foods and the dancing, I think it was these two girls dancing and it was really cool.

Staff One explained why having this night for students and their families is so important:

That was great, that is a very nice time. I was actually there and it's actually a very nice time for them to express all of the cultures because we have so many cultures in this building and they get a chance to be them and, you know, bring out what, how they live,

where they came [from], bring a piece of themselves, just, you know, it. It's really nice. That's really nice.

Supporting yet another part of this domain, participants spoke to the importance of teaching students the skills they need to develop social-emotional health, critical thinking, and problem solving skills. Both staff and students talked about the use of restorative practices as an effective strategy to use with students. Staff Two explained the purpose of this practice in working with students:

It is about recognizing that behaviors, um, cause harm, harm to individuals, harm to the school community. And when we recognize those behaviors, those poor choices and poor behaviors as causing harm, then the process of restorative practices is helping a student recognize how their behavior has affected others who have been harmed by it, how they've been harmed and how do they make that right.

She went on to explain exactly how staff execute this practice at the Middle School:

There's a set of restorative questions: tell me what happened, tell me who was affected by what you did, how were they affected by what you did and how do you make that right to return to the class and restore those relationships. So we also do restorative circles, there's levels of that. So the other one we talked about, there's an affective statement which is everybody learning how to use positive language. There's circles where we, you know, we use proactive and sometimes you're active circles where we sit down, we really learned how to build relationship and then there's the informal conferencing and then sometimes the formal conversation which might come from a kid returning from a suspension.

Student Seven explained the impact this learning and skill building has had on him which aligns with developing social-emotional, health, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills:

You just gotta realize it's like accountability, you've got to realize what you did wrong and like, uh, it is hard to do that. It's hard to, uh, realize accountability and starting to realize what's your fault and what isn't, because I remember like when I was even up to like 10 or 11, I was still talking like nothing is really my fault...you got to realize what you did and didn't do. If I did something wrong, now I know I did something wrong... I will take accountability for that and it's something that, um, that um, some kids can't do.

Negative Perceptions.

Though there were many positive perceptions within the whole-child approach to education domain, one student talked about how he thinks the teaching could be better at the Middle School. Although he does take some accountability for his academics, he thinks that some teachers could improve in their approach to teaching. When Student Four was presented with a photo of the front of the school which includes a flag that states “[school name] = Success” (see Appendix C), he stated he did not agree with what the flag says. He explained:

Because a lot of people in the school are failing...they give too much work...not all teachers, but half the teachers that I have bad grades in, well not bad but not good, they give too much work... Uh, the teachers could do a better job at teaching. I mean students could too [but] the teachers could teach better.

Student Six expressed frustration with programming that focuses on spreading kindness for one week out of the school year, he said things like this are “irritating” because it feels “forced”.

Another barrier to programming is staff buy-in. Staff Five explained his view on restorative practices and how this practice may not be the best way to prepare students for life outside of school:

I'm not a fan of suspension, but I'm not the biggest fan of [Restorative Practices], I have issues. There still needs to be sense of onus. There still needs to be a sense of consequence. Kid has a hard life, I get it. They're not doing well in school, I get it. I know it sucks, but excusing them from assignments and like, okay, well they just had a rough time. That's great, but once they get older, the world doesn't care...because the world doesn't work that way.

Build on Community Strengths to Ensure Conditions. The descriptive definition of this principle from the Community School Standards (2018) was used as the indicator for this domain:

Community schools utilize the assets of the entire community—including the gifts of people who live and work there, parents, families, residents and community partners to create the optimal learning conditions for each student (p. 4).

A total of 57 responses applied to this domain. Out of those responses, 96% ($n = 55$) qualified as positive perceptions and 4% ($n = 2$) qualified as negative perceptions.

Positive Perceptions. Resilience emerges from dynamic interactions between systems, as systems theory explains. The resilience of a student develops through interacting systems including relationships and resources (Masten, 2018). An important part of supporting families is getting the information to them about the resources that are available through the school. Staff Three explained how they get this message out to the families through back to school night and PTO (Parent-Teacher Organization) meetings:

We present, you know, what services we offer in the building... we do have a display and we'll have all the extended day programs, you know, our registration form, power packs and some other things that we do like workshops and we present it. We explain those things to the parents.

In addition, staff spoke of the large amount of donations and volunteer work that it takes to support the community school and its programming. Staff Three talked about how they manage these donations:

Students and volunteers, donors, they come in, they walk in with a little bit of things. They ask us, "Hey, do you want to take this? Do you have someone in your mind that you can provide this?" You know, things like socks, bags, jacket, coat. So we would take them actually when we accept those and we store them if they're in good condition...when there is a need in the building... we kept some of these items with the school nurse office.

Establishing and maintaining a community of parents that can connect with each other as mutually beneficial sources of information, support, and response to needs is an important part of building on community strengths (Galindo et al., 2017). Staff three continued to talk about what an essential resource the PTO is to the school:

PTO, you know, what did they do? They bring in parents as volunteers... just today I sent an email to [PTO president] asking, “hey, are there any parents who want to volunteer to package and the gifts that we have, secret angel gifts”. Yeah. So yeah, that's one of the example, you know, what they do, they bring in parents and talk about, you know, how important it is to be involved/engage. We had ten PTO meetings also giving out information about what we do, and what are the services that are available at [the] Middle School.

Participants mentioned other partnerships during interviews that students and families can access through the refugee center and extended-day program. Volunteers for these programs consist of college students from a local university, parents, staff, church groups, and other community members. This is an example of how the Middle School utilizes the assets of the entire community—including the gifts of people who live and work there. Staff three explained that parents are reaching out for these available program resources:

We have seen many parents stepping up and you know, coming and stopping at our table asking different questions and they even fill out forms there for an Extended-Day Program, for power packs and things like that.

One of the partners that staff and students discussed was the health clinic. Staff had a better understanding of this resource than students did and seemed to find it more valuable than the students did. Staff One explained the partnership supports optimal learning conditions for students as they do not need to miss school in order to access health care:

I think is a good resource because if they happened to get sick and they have parent's permission, they can come down and see the doctors here without leaving the building.

Negative Perceptions. One of the barriers to providing these resources and opportunities to students and families is their receptiveness to the help and their ability to participate in the

programming. Some parents are unable to attend special opportunities and functions due to their work schedule or family demands. Some students may not be willing to accept supports and donations from the school for various reasons. Student Nine explained why he and his family do not attend back to school night:

Because you know my mom always worked. So she never like, I never liked going to like back to school thing and I'm not into that.

When I showed a picture of the school's health center to participants (see Appendix N), eight out of ten students stated they: (1) did not know the health center exists; (2) knew it was there but did not know about its services; or (3) knew it exists but never accessed the services.

Student Seven stated:

I mean I remember seeing it. I didn't know why it was there because like we have nurses. Why do we need a health center? It didn't make sense to me. I still don't know why it's there and the lights seem off.

While looking at a photo of the outside of the district offices (See Appendix G), Staff Five explained that he thinks the closed office doors should be open in order to create the optimal learning conditions for each student:

I think the door should be open, [meaning] we're always open, you could always come for help. That's what the school is, it's not just. I always tell the kids, I'm not here just to make you smarter [academically] I'm here to make you a better person in general... Yeah, so like you look at [the School's] vision, all students everyday learning, growing academically, socially and emotionally. You have to have an open door to meet all those.

Use data and Community Wisdom to Guide Partnerships, Programs, and Progress.

The descriptive definition of this principle from the Community School Standards (2018) was used as the indicator for this domain:

Reliable and community-specific data, coupled with the wisdom of youth, families and residents, guides how educators and community partners work together to achieve measurable results (p. 4).

A total of 87 responses connected to this domain. Out of those responses, 97% ($n = 84$) qualified as positive perceptions and 3% ($n = 3$) qualified as negative perceptions.

Positive Perceptions. Participant responses sometimes aligned with Children’s Aid Society’s four community school capacities: comprehensiveness, collaboration, coherence, and commitment. Within this wellness domain, coherence is evidenced by community schools, community partner organizations, policies, and programming, and working together to achieve a shared vision and goal (Fehrer & Leos-Urbel, 2016). Community schools are defined by some as the hub of the neighborhood (Jacobson, Jamal, Jacobson, & Blank, 2013; Min et al., 2017). Staff Four described his understanding of what this means for the Middle School by explaining how the school and community partners working together:

When you think of a community school, you think of a one stop shop. I’ll give you the example of Walmart. So we have all these things at school to support families. Um, it, it helps with the education as well because they can get all these services in school at school and the kids can remain in school.

When I presented Staff Three with a picture of the leadership team, he explained why these leadership team meetings are so important to the decisions made at the Middle School. He explains that although it is just the leadership team that meets, they receive input by working collaboratively with teachers, students, and families to voice all concerns at this table:

We discuss their problems. Everyone is like attached to different teachers, students and families... we’re already aware of those situations to bring that out of those situation at this table and we have the conversation... Everyone is so good that they come with, you know, beautiful ideas and good, good things to talk at this table

As noted by Staff Five, the leadership team drives the decision-making for what programming and practices the school puts into place through the evaluation of student needs and data:

They're the ones that make the decisions for our building. They're the ones that decide what is going to drive, what area, what direction we're going to focus on and where we're going to go as a team. Data [informs] decisions. They decide how to figure everything out.

Staff Two talked about the improvements made to the partnership and services offered through the health clinic due to feedback from the school community:

The clinic's awesome...I mean initially when it first got started it wasn't working well but I feel like the nurse and the administration and the community school really worked well and trying to get the hours that would work well to support [the School]. We now have a form [to sign] where kids can go, like if their parents sign off. So I feel like it's working much, much better than it was initially.

Another valued stakeholder in the Middle School partnerships is the PTO. The PTO is involved in strategic planning meetings as a way to bring a collaborative approach to planning for efforts to support students and families both inside and outside of the school. Within these meetings, stakeholders discuss challenges and ways to improve. Staff two explained how the partnership with PTO has been improving due to teaming and leadership:

This is one of the fundraising opportunities our PTO put together. Um, it was a successful day, had many people, many walkways from life come out and kind of support our cause. So they did that through food...it was successful a day, um, that our PTO put onto raise money for, for [the] Middle School...so that's been, it's definitely improving and I feel like they, like they're trying new stuff like this kind of thing (pointing to picture, see Appendix K). That's definitely helping you to build a better community parent base here at school.

The Middle School promotes Restorative Practices to resolve conflict and promote healing and skill-building. Efforts to promote trauma-informed care are largely informed by narratives, which entails, changing the language which in-turn changes the mindset on the problem (Ford et al., 2016). Because suspension and expulsion disciplinary practices have been found to exacerbate problem behaviors instead of minimizing them (Ford et al., 2016), the Middle School takes a different approach when appropriate. Staff Four explained how

programming is informed through data collection on disciplinary actions and best practices after looking at a photo of the district administration offices (see Appendix I):

[This is] where a lot of the major decisions are being made about what needs to happen within our school district... a lot of the lot of the dirty work happens in that building... I'm thinking about alternative plans to curb suspension rates... Because we know the suspensions not always the answer. So we try to find alternate means to suspend and keeping kids in school.

Negative Perceptions. Student Eight expressed that a barrier to parent engagement is the timing of PTO meetings:

The PTO meetings. My parents never go because they always have work at that time.

Commit to Interdependence and Shared Accountability. The descriptive definition of the principle from the Community School Standards (2018) as the indicator for this domain:

Student success requires explicit investment in collaborative planning and implementation between educators and community partners and across program areas and disciplines. Mutually agreed upon results and related indicators, as well as written agreements enable educators and community partners to hold each other accountable (p. 4).

A total of 107 responses were coded within this domain. Out of those responses, 96% ($n = 101$) qualify as positive perceptions and 4% ($n = 6$) qualify as negative perceptions.

Positive Perceptions. During interviews, participants mentioned another example of the Children's Aid Society's four community school capacities, collaboration. This capacity is exemplified through the Middle School's strategic involvement of all stakeholders through community outreach and relationship building (Fehrer & Leos-Urbel, 2016). Interaction with community groups contributes to social wellness, positive interdependence, positive community welfare, and healthy relationships (Colistra et al., 2017). Staff mentioned the refugee center and community school as important elements of interdependence and shared accountability. The district maintains a partnership with the local intermediate unit (IU) to employ staff for the

refugee center and community school. Staff Three explained the strong interdependent relationship between the IU, the health center, and the Middle School. While looking at a photo of the health center door (see Appendix N), Staff Three described this relationship. This statement reflects the collaborative planning and implementation between the school, the intermediate unit, and the health center as well as the results mutually agreed upon by all:

That's so many good things to talk about. The health center is a good partner of IU [#]. Yeah, good partner with the school district...which is really nice. The second good thing is that students and parents don't have to travel. I mean, if there is an appointment, students, usually they used to go out of the building and from the school for like the rest of the day, if it was in the afternoon or in the morning, so they would miss those morning classes, morning activities. If it is in the afternoon, they would totally miss it, but now they don't have to do it. [It only takes] like five minutes [at the health center] and boom, they have their shots, they have everything checked off.

Staff Four explained the importance of the interdependent relationship between the school and the refugee center. The refugee center picks up where the resettlement agencies leave off in supporting newcomer families in necessary areas like navigating the school system and other necessary ways of supporting student success in the education:

The refugee center and community school is the only one in the world...we had an influx of refugees coming into the school district and they primarily settled on this side of town. So by having this center, it kind of helps them to kind of navigate and find their way, whether it be in the school systems or whether it be in the city in which they live in, after the resettlement agency kind-of moves them along because I think the deal is something about three months and then we kind-of continue, continue on, try to support them in any way we can to make sure that their stay here is a positive one.

Staff conveyed the importance of collaboration with each other, parents, and the PTO in supporting students. Staff Three talked about this collaboration amongst the leadership team:

We all as leader[s] in the building plan and discuss several different aspects of, you know, how we work together, collaborate to help students succeed and you know, help parents feel welcome in school and those kinds of strategies and planning.

Staff Four explained why the PTO is such an important part of shared accountability:

So they're very important to what we do, they're a stakeholder, so their voices are important and their voices are heard and again, we come together to, to plan on how we can continue making sure that [R] stays afloat and that we get some of the things that we need [for students].

Negative Perceptions. Engaging and supporting parents is an important part of supporting students and an important part of the community school model (Fehrer & Leos-Urbel, 2016; Min et al., 2017). Staff Five expressed some concerns with missing engagement and collaborative opportunities with parents:

I think we do a lot with the kids, but I think we miss a lot sometimes the parents.

Staff Five continued to express concerns with lack of involvement of staff in the PTO meetings admitting that he has difficulty getting to the meetings as well due to other obligations:

It's disheartening when you go there. You don't see a lot of teachers there. You see you're lucky if maybe you get a representative from every grade level. I'm guilty of it myself. I haven't been to one this year.

Invest in Building Trusting Relationships. The descriptive definition of this principle from the Community School Standards (2018) was used as the indicator for this domain:

Deep collaboration takes dedicated effort and time and becomes evident in the daily formal and informal social exchanges within a school community and between the school and the broader community. Trusting relationships fuel school transformation by helping to create a nurturing, safe, respectful climate where caring adults, families and students come to rely on each other as part of a shared approach to student success (p. 4).

A total of 91 responses qualified within this domain. Out of those responses, 88% ($n = 80$) were positive perceptions of building trusting relationships and 12% ($n = 11$) were negative perceptions of building trusting relationships.

Positive Perceptions. Traumatic experiences prevent children from developing positive adaptive capabilities; however, measures can be taken to promote the development of these skills within the youth's environment. The most important facet necessary to promote resilience comes

from the development of a trusting relationship; a strong parent-child relationship or when that relationship is not available, a surrogate or mentor that serves in that role (Masten, 2014).

Building trusting relationships is a foundational part of the community school model and is essential to building resilience and obtaining interpersonal wellness (Breda, 2018; Duff et al., 2016; Min et al., 2017). Both students and staff discussed the importance of trusting relationships within the school setting. After looking at a photo of a teacher instructing students, (see Appendix G), Staff Four explained that building these relationships is a focus of the Middle School and can be evidenced by:

Relationships and healing. So that's what we try to instill in our staff that it's about relationships. Building those relationships are very key. It's kind-of more important than the actual content you're teaching because if we don't have those formidable relationships, minimal learning doesn't happen because kids are not going to respect you. They're not going to buy what you're trying to sell them. So you've gotta be able to connect with them, learn about them. Once you do that, then I think everything else falls in place.

Staff Five described why he likes to volunteer at school activities outside of his normal work hours:

Almost like, if you're letting your guard down because you're letting them see you in a different light. And so maybe that might help them let their guards down.

He went on to explain his open-door policy and how important these relationships are to him:

My door is always open. I tell all my kids, even if I don't teach you, you're still my kids. That door is always open.

When shown a picture of the field hockey team (see Appendix J), Staff One simply stated

“unity”. When I asked why, she explained:

Because [teacher] is the coach who is a life skills teacher here and his girls just love him. He's a good coach and field hockey. Yes. And they love to play for him and they always have a very good record... because they are so engaged and because he does such a good job with it and he really cares.

Staff to student relationships were not the only relationships discussed in the interviews. Staff spoke to the importance of the support from fellow staff members and parents. When shown a picture of the leadership team at the school (see Appendix E), Staff One stated:

[This is] my supports here at [the] Middle School, a group of very caring, compassionate individuals who work together.

She went on to state one of her reasons for working at the Middle School:

I love working with the people who are very passionate about their work and I feel like most teachers, even in our frustrations with renovations and the things we go through from time to time, most people are really passionate about kids and helping kids and working with the students. We have a great group of teachers here.

Staff Four echoed that sentiment while looking at the same photo (see Appendix E), stating:

This is family, this is collaboration this is teamwork.

Both student and staff participants discussed establishing trust and communication between parents and teachers. Back to school night along with other opportunities for parents to come to the school to meet the staff were mentioned as imperative foundational opportunities to establish that relationship. In talking about why it is important for parents to come to functions like back to school night, Student Eight explained the importance of building a trusting relationship between parents and staff:

Because [then] they feel like they can trust [staff]. Because sometimes if you're just sending your kids off to school and you don't even know that person, you don't really know how they're going to treat your kids, so just want to make sure that they're like, ok.

Staff Four described his point of view on back to school night:

So basically you start back to school night, coming together, getting to know our new family members, getting to know the staff, starting the new year. It's the beginning of a new relationship...the beginning of the connective tissues if you will... so the night kind-of defines the relationship we wish to have.

Staff mentioned the importance of the refugee center and community school staff in supporting the student-staff and parent-staff relationship. Staff One described:

I think one of the things that's been helpful is making connections with our refugee families and finding supports when a student's not doing well in school, being able to make that family connection. Especially, not only just the language barrier but also the cultural. Helping us understand the cultural pieces that go with that student. We rely on them, not only in their translation skills, but their ability to connect with students.

Negative Perceptions.

As highlighted in this principle, collaboration takes dedicated effort and time and becomes evident in the daily formal and informal social exchanges within a school community. One staff expressed her perceptions of the connection between district administration and the Middle School while looking at a picture of district administration offices:

It does seem sometimes like they're a little disconnected to what we do here but I think most of us are feeling that this year because of renovations and not really understanding, you know, they verbalize that they're understanding what we're going through, but really understanding what the real impact that it's having. I've worked in other districts where I just felt like there was a presence with a little bit more district level personnel and school board.

Foster a Learning Organization. The descriptive definition of this principle from the Community School Standards (2018) was used as the indicator for this domain:

Improved student learning depends on a school community where educators and community partners work together towards continuous improvement. Time and support are available for individual and collective reflection and adjustment as well as shared learning and professional development, to facilitate responsiveness to student needs (p.4).

A total of 91 responses were coded within this domain. Out of those responses, 88% ($n = 80$) qualify as positive perceptions and 12% ($n=11$) qualify as negative perceptions.

Positive Perceptions. Participants mentioned the importance of continuous education and collaboration to ensure the community school capacity, commitment in which community schools are committed to the sustainability of the work (Fehrer & Leos-Urbel, 2016). The ecological theory explains that people as well as the environments they are associated with are constantly changing and shaping each other (Robbins et al., 2012). The Middle School

administrators choose to continue to push forward, to learn and grow as needed to meet the needs of students. Both staff and students expressed the value of continuing education and training for teachers, counselors, and administration. Staff Four explained that this is an essential part of responding to student needs:

We're growing, we're evolving, we're changing. We're doing what's necessary to, to educate everyone that we have in front of us.

When Staff One looked at a picture of the leadership team (See Appendix E), she complimented their ability as a team and as individuals:

I think they're a great bunch of people. They're very well educated and they know everything that's going on in this building.

Student One described her feelings toward staff collaboration and education:

I like when the teachers have a meeting because then they taught us new stuff that they've planned for the school.

Negative Perceptions. Technology is a significant part of education at the Middle School. As of this school year, the school provided each student with their own tablet. In many classes, students are expected to use these tablets as a tool for learning. According to one interviewed student, some teachers utilize this tool well and some could learn to better utilize and teach with technology. Student Two explained:

With technology, it's been kind of a little difficult since I'm not used to using technology and [I'm used to] writing down stuff in classes, but [in] my class they're using technology so it's kinda difficult. Knowing what the class is and APP we're supposed to use, sometimes you feel like that could be more clear.

To determine if these supports would buffer the impact of toxic stress to build resilience, I employed the three indicators of student resilience proposed by Lessard et al. (2009) to analyze the data: (1) significant positive relationship(s); (2) positive inner discourse; and resourcefulness (see Tables 4.3, 4.4, and 4.5). I further analyzed participant responses from each domain to determine the connection between school programs and practices and their impact on student

well-being and resilience. The following information details the connection between student responses, well-being indicators, and resilience indicators.

Significant Relationships and Feeling Supported, Heard, Valued, and Accepted.

Positive interpersonal relationships are indicated as a crucial part of the community school principles, the wellness domains, and the resilience indicators. Staff and students discussed relationships as a core dimension of their positive experience at the Middle School. Student responses related to the importance of connecting with staff and feeling supported by staff (see Table 4.3). In addition, students spoke to the importance of being heard and valued and expressed that they felt they were accepted and supported by staff. One staff talked about how he lets his students know that his door is always open for them and they know they always have somewhere they can go when they need someone to talk to. Staff talked about the importance of the cultural navigators from the refugee center in connecting with families and building a positive relationship between the school and parents. The consistent theme that emerged between participant responses and positive relationships is a powerful example of how this school is supporting students to build resilience to end the inter-generational transmission of toxic stress.

Table 4.3.

Indicators of Resilience: Significant Positive Relationships and Well-Being

Participant Responses	Significant Positive Relationship Indicators	Wellness Indicators
They were willing to take the time and stopped the class period and be like, yo, what's wrong with you? How you feel... how are you today.	Having support of teacher/staff	Feeling heard, valued, supported
They try to at least make you feel better throughout the day. If you ever have a problem, like you ever feel really down about it, they try to help uplift you. They're really helpful during school when you have a problem or just they usually help you get through it and just get it over	Having support of teacher/staff	Feeling heard, supported
So like they just accept you for who you are, and I think that's amazing because you don't really find that in many schools	Having Support of teacher/staff	Feeling accepted, respected
My door is always open. I tell all my kids, even if I don't teach you, you're still my kids. That door is always open	Having Support of teacher/staff	Feeling valued, accepted
I think one of the things that's been helpful is making connections with our refugee families...being able to make that family connection...Helping us understand the cultural pieces that go with that student. We rely on them [for their] ability to connect with students	Having Support of teacher/staff	Feeling supported, heard, valued, respected

Positive Inner Discourse and Perceived Self-Efficacy, Mastery, and Deriving

Meaning. Overall, participant responses showed consistent themes of self-efficacy, good problem-solving skills, and self-esteem. Programming such as restorative practices may help students to learn problem-solving skills and promote self-esteem and self-efficacy as participants noted that working through their problems with staff have helped them to learn these skills and take accountability for their actions (see table 4.4). The majority of participants indicated a desire to do well in school by completing assigned work and following school rules. However, one participant noted that he thinks that students are tired of following the rules and he “do[es]n’t blame them”. This response was unusual in comparison to other student responses. Most students concluded that they want to focus in class and have positive interactions with peers and staff, however sometimes other students can get in the way of that with their overt behavior in class such as talking out or not following directions.

Table 4.4

Indicators of Resilience: Positive Inner Discourse and Well-Being

Participant Responses	Positive Inner Discourse Indicators	Wellness Indicators
Like that you learn how to push through even when things are feeling really tough and like you got nothing left to give.	Belief in self and abilities	Self-efficacy, sense of control, growth
Last year on second period I worked on a project making a slide show, talking about what would you do if there was a zombie apocalypse with some of my friends and it went really well...so they gave us a paper and said, what would you need? Why would you use it, why do you think you need it? And we just started looking up some stuff that we might need for to put it on the project.	Good problem-solving skills, self-esteem	Mastery, resources to do the job
If I did something wrong, now I know I did something wrong... I will take accountability for that	Good problem-solving skills, demonstrate self-efficacy and self-esteem	Self-esteem, mastery, sense of control
We've all been here too long. People don't even listen no more. I don't blame them. People know how to do stuff, like, they know we're not supposed to be like smart about stuff, like get into websites that's blocked, they tell you to put the iPad away, I put it away but then I take it right back out.	* Negative: poor problem solving-skills	* Lack of: growth, deriving meaning from what you do,

Knowing Where and How to Get Help, Clear Channels of Communication. Overall, the significant amount of resources and energy appropriated for the purpose of breaking down barriers to student education is evidenced by participant responses as an effective response to family needs in removing barriers to education. Participants mentioned supports such as the refugee center, the extended-day program, and access to support staff such as counselors and social workers during time of interpersonal and psychological needs as helpful and resources that promote student growth (see Table 4.5). An important part of supporting families is getting the information to them about the resources that are available through the school. Platforms such as back to school night, the PTO, and the refugee center, provide opportunities to inform and support students and families to access the programming and resources that are available to them through the Middle School. I discuss in more detail areas of need such as increased accessibility to and knowledge of supports in the implications for practice section.

Table 4.5

Indicators of Resilience: Resourcefulness and well-being

Participant Responses	Resourcefulness Indicators	Wellness Indicators
I was like, Ms., I can't get this done in four days, it's going to take a little bit longer. Because I reached out, I reached out to understand it more, she's like, I'll give you whatever time you need to turn it in.	Knowing how to get help	Clear channels of communication, resources to do the job, sense of control
You know, if you have really have problem with insurance or anything, had a problem with your stomach, they can help you...for the flu shot	Knowing where and how to get help	Self-esteem, sense of control
They don't understand, you know, how absenteeism works and how they are put in problem, how they jeopardize themselves, you know, those kinds of things. So what we do is we get those [absentee/truancy] lists and go out and see and teach refugee and immigrant, ELL students and parents.	Knowing how to get help (after prompt from refugee center staff)	Clear job description, channels for communication, deriving meaning from what you do
It's been really helpful because since all of this stuff is kind of new to me...stuff like the social studies class. I haven't, I never took it before. This is my first time and tutoring helps me understand it better and helps me out when I need.	Knowing where and how to get help	Self-esteem, deriving meaning from what you do, resources to do the job
When you think of a community school, it's supposed to be the hub of the community, but where we're located, and being that we have many of our families are walkers, it's far from where we're located.	*Negative- Even if families know where and how to get help, they cannot access it due to location	*Lack of sense of community due to location

Positive Self-Evaluations of Health and Food, Shelter, and Medical Security. To support positive self-evaluations of health and basic needs security, it is imperative to involve diverse stakeholders to meet these distinct needs. At this Middle School, the refugee center, PTO, partnering organizations such as the health center, and varied staff members are the pivotal stakeholders collaborating to meet these needs. These partnerships with community groups contribute to social wellness, positive interdependence, positive community welfare, and healthy relationships (Colistra et al., 2017).

This result section first reviewed the connection of participant responses to the community school principles and wellness domains to determine how this school model including resources, programming, and practices impacts the well-being of students. Student responses were then aligned with resilience indicators and wellness indicators within each of the three resilience domains to present the connection and perceptions of the impact of community school model on student well-being and resilience. Given data collected across all interviews, participant responses suggest that overall, the Middle School is implementing policy, programs, and practices that: (1) align with the principles of the community school model (Institute for Educational Leadership & Coalition for Community Schools, 2017); (2) satisfy each domain of well-being (Duff et al., 2016); (3) may support students to build resilience to buffer the impact of toxic stress (Lessard et al., 2009). The following chapter will synthesize the findings of this research.

Chapter Five: Summary of Findings, Research Limitations

This final chapter reviews the connection between the themes that emerged from research: (1) the importance of relationships in the school setting; (2) collaboration with key stakeholders and community partners to meet student needs in each domain of well-being; and (3) what these themes indicate for future practice and research to support building resilience in students to stop the intergenerational transmission of toxic stress.

Relationships

Participant responses overwhelmingly captured the importance of establishing significant relationships between students and staff which is the key ingredient in building resilience (Masten, 2014; Read et al., 2015; A. J. Walker & Walsh, 2015). Relationships between school staff and students are evidence of how the school is supporting students to build resilience to end the inter-generational transmission of toxic stress. The most important facet necessary to promote resilience comes from the development of a trusting relationship; a strong parent-child relationship or when that relationship is not available, a surrogate or mentor that serves in that role (Masten, 2014). The Community School Standards (2018) outline the importance of building trusting relationships in the educational setting. According to the standards, building trusting relationships “fuel school transformation by helping to create a nurturing, safe, respectful climate where caring adults, families and students come to rely on each other as part of a shared approach to student success” (Institute for Educational Leadership & Coalition for Community Schools, 2017, p. 4). Resilience is not something that people are born with but rather it is something that can be taught, learned and practiced (Masten, 2018). Everyone has the ability to become resilient, but it takes the right environment and people to introduce and enhance this skill (Sanders et al., 2017). Programming such as restorative practices may help

students to learn problem-solving skills and promote self-esteem and self-efficacy. A barrier to this programming is staff buy-in as one staff noted this practice may not be the best way to prepare students for real life outside of school. It is imperative that staff understand the relationship between ACEs and student behavior to effectively work with students who have experienced trauma (Carello & Butler, 2014; Plumb et al., 2016).

Collaboration

Resilience is not a singular trait, it emerges from dynamic interactions between systems including diverse relationships and resources (Masten, 2018). Community schools develop collaborative partnerships with community-based organizations, parents and families, the private sector, and the government in order to create and enhance the delivery of supports within the school setting (Anderson-Butcher et al., 2018). Research participants indicated that supports such as the refugee center and the extended-day program are crucial stakeholders collaborating with the school to meet student needs. Staff responses backed the value of the health clinic in school to meet the physical wellness needs of students and families, however, the majority of students did not know about health clinic or did not see the value in accessing it. Participants indicated resources offered by the school to support students and families including health services, the extended day program, and resources to meet basic needs, however participant responses marked the need for strategic planning to address accessibility of resources due to the location of the school.

Community schools recognize the importance of providing resources and a supportive environment for parents to establish a connection to the educational experience (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). Collaboration between families and school teams cultivates the support that some families require in order to build positive relationships with their children and reinforce

positive skill-building at home (Plumb et al., 2016). An important part of supporting families is getting information to them about the resources that are available through the school. Prior research supports the need for a community of parents that can connect with each other as mutually beneficial sources of information, support, and response to needs (Galindo et al., 2017). Platforms such as back to school night, the PTO, and refugee center supports provide opportunities to inform families of how to access the programming and resources that are available to them through the Middle School; however some participants reported that these efforts are not enough to reach some parents/guardians. Overall, participant responses demonstrate that efforts on behalf of the school to meet the well-being needs of students may support students in building resilience to buffer the impact and stop the intergenerational transmission of toxic stress (Blitz et al., 2016; Pachter et al., 2017; Walkley & Cox, n.d.).

Limitations and Strengths

There are limitations to this study's design that readers should consider when reviewing the findings. When I first initiated the study, I intended to include parents/guardians in the interviews as parent perspective would provide valuable insight to this study. After many failed attempts to contact and interview parents, I decided to focus my energy on gaining only student and staff perspective through interviews. Out of the entire population of 500 students and 89 full and part-time staff, the sample size comprised 10 eighth graders (6%) and 5 staff (6%). I did not interview students from other Middle School grade levels of sixth and seventh grades. In addition, I was unable to interview staff from every job title/category; however the five staff interviewed were from five different job titles/categories. The conclusions of this study highlight only the experiences of those interviewed and are not representative of every student's and every staff's experience and perception. These detailed limitations could contribute to sampling bias

and limit the generalizability of the research to the entire population of those attending this community school. The incorporation of student voice into this research is a strength as described in constructivist theory (Castle, 2015; Fischer & Mawr, 2015). When implementing and evaluating student interventions, it is imperative to obtain student voice to provide valuable stakeholder perspective (Castle, 2015).

Case study methods are utilized in research to collect data from multiple perspectives to investigate a phenomenon that exists in one place and one time and are useful when the aim of the research is to collect data from multiple perspectives on one subject (Gerring, 2007).

Although the findings of this study may be limited in generalizability due to the unique nature of each community school and the employment of case-study approach, the findings provide insight into the strengths and needs at this school. The research framework implemented in this study can be replicated and utilized in future studies. To enhance the trustworthiness of qualitative research, White et al. (2012) recommend adhering to a “scientifically sound” method of data collection to ensure that research is unbiased, dependable, and can be replicated by future researchers (White, Oelke, & Friesen, 2012, p.246). A peer debriefing with a social worker from the community school was employed after I gathered and coded all data. This expert reviewed the coded data and found a high level of agreement in the majority of areas. The coders discussed divergence to coded data points and then resolved each point by referring to the indicators in the frameworks.

Implications

For schools to effectively address the unique needs of students, a strategic organizational approach and mindset must match the diverse, individual needs of its school community (Conrad, 1987). The research findings provide insight for the Middle School staff to understand

how their programming and practices support the well-being and resilience of some students by valuing the importance of interpersonal wellness and significant positive relationships. Another finding from this study reveals the positive impact of strategic efforts and financial resources that enhance collaboration with key stakeholders and breakdown barriers to education.

Practice considerations. The results from this study point to a need to address certain issues perceived by participants as barriers to supporting student and family needs.

1. **Find effective means of communication to inform students and families about available resources such as health center.** Students who experience ACEs are at a greater risk of difficulty in school as a result of the impact of the toxic stress in their life (Hunt et al., 2017). There is a strong linkage between ACEs and physical and mental health problems. Children who have experienced abuse, neglect, and other ACEs are more likely to engage in health risk behaviors which are risk factors for some of the diseases and outcomes found in the original ACEs study. Factors such as lack of education, unemployment, and poverty increase the cyclical effects of adversities. Without a break to this cycle, these traditions will continue to span generations producing similar results. Equipping schools with the knowledge, environment, and tools to address these needs within the educational environment is essential to address the increasing physical, mental and behavioral health issues that schools are managing today (Cooper et al., 2017).

Staff responses support the value of the health clinic in school to meet the physical wellness needs of students and families. However, the majority of students reported they (1) did not know the health center exists; (2) knew it was there but did not know about its services; or (3) knew it exists but never accessed the services. If

families are unaware of this service, they may be unaware of other resources available to them. It may be helpful to collect information from students and families on their perceptions of the best way to communicate with them about these resources.

Perhaps, in collaborating with registration, families could be informed of this resource when they enroll their children in school. If families need additional help in accessing resources such as a translator or medical insurance, that information could be passed to someone in the community school and/or refugee center who can help link these families to resources as soon as possible.

2. **Establish practical ways to bring resources to students and families.** Participants noted the location of school as a barrier to families' ability to access resources.

Community schools are intended to be the "hub of the neighborhood" (Galindo et al., 2017; Jacobson et al., 2013; U.S. Department of Education, 2015), however, responses from participants overwhelmingly indicate that the Middle School lacks proximity to its consumers, therefore indicating it is not the hub of the neighborhood. Resilience emerges from dynamic interactions between systems including diverse relationships, resources, and unique interventions to satisfy needs (Masten, 2018).

Community schools recognize the importance of providing resources and a supportive environment for parents to establish connection to the educational experience (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). If families are unable to access the resources at the school, it may be necessary to bring the resources to them or provide transportation for students, their families, and community members to better access the school.

Providing resources in unique ways to meet individual needs of the community is a core component of community schools and also supports families to meet well-being

needs and build resilience to buffer the impact of toxic stress (Masten, 2014, 2018; Murray et al., 2015; Pachter et al., 2017).

- 3. Take measures to ensure staff understand meaning and utility of student support programming** such as restorative practices. Everyone has the ability to become resilient, but it takes the right environment and people to introduce and enhance this skill (Sanders et al., 2017). Suspension and expulsion disciplinary practices have been found to exacerbate problem behaviors instead of minimizing them (Ford et al., 2016). These discipline measures can cause students to have feelings of inadequacy, frustration, and confusion when they return to the classroom or school (Ford et al., 2016). Common language in trauma informed care is “do no harm”, which links staff and students with the understanding that the school environment should be one of safety and support and should not be harmful (Carello & Butler, 2014; Plumb et al., 2016). Districts that train staff to be trauma informed can then consider alternatives to traditional disciplines such as restorative practices (Anderson et al., 2014) which seek to resolve problems and restore relationships as opposed to utilizing punitive measures. This support may help students to learn problem-solving skills and promote self-esteem and self-efficacy which are positive indicators associated with both ecological and resilience theories. It is important to ensure that all staff understand the reasoning behind restorative practices as a tool in working with students. It may be beneficial to the implementation of this programming to train all staff in the basic understanding of this program so they have a better idea of its purpose. If staff still do not understand and therefore do not implement this approach, it may be helpful to speak with them to gain a better

understanding of their perspective, hear what they have to say, and work to resolve the problem which is the intention of restorative practices (Anderson et al., 2014).

Research Considerations. Social Workers are required to protect, enhance, and improve the integrity of the profession through appropriate study and research, active discussion, and responsible criticism of the profession (National Association of Social Workers, 2016). The following are considerations for future research to advance understanding and practice in this focus area.

- 1. Incorporate parent/guardian voice in research.** As noted previously, it was my intention to gain parent perspective in this study. Parents and guardians have a valuable perspective for this research focus and their voices should be heard (Masten, 2018). In future studies, it may be beneficial for someone within the school to solicit parents/guardians for research by building a relationship with them over time and utilizing resources like the refugee center staff to better access parents through staff/parent relationships and translation support.
- 2. Increase sample size.** An opportunity to increase the sample size will allow for better representation of perceptions of students and staff to determine if supports offered at the Middle School are supporting well-being and helping students to build resilience. Further research could be conducted utilizing the same methods used in this research to broaden the scope of participation to allow more voices to be heard.
- 3. Replication of study in other community schools.** The research framework implemented in this study can be replicated and utilized in future studies in other community schools. Research in additional schools will help to determine if findings are similar across each community school or if this school is unique due to their

individual implementation of resources and programming to meet the needs of their community.

4. **Quantitative studies.** Further studies at this Middle School to assess the impact of trauma/ACEs and toxic stress on student behavior and academic outcomes. In addition, quantitative studies can assess student and family well-being in each domain to determine if lack of satisfaction in domains connects to academic achievement and mental and behavioral health outcomes.

Conclusion

The findings provide insight into the perceptions of staff and students including what the school is doing to make a meaningful impact on students, as well as perceptions of what could be improved. The additional questions generated by this study provide a springboard for the Middle School to further their efforts to break down barriers and improve the supports and services provided to students and families. The research results validate the importance of (1) positive relationships between staff and students to build resilience and support well-being and (2) diverse stakeholder collaboration to support the unique needs of each family to break down barriers to student education.

This study could not have been completed without the generosity of the fifteen participants who shared their perceptions of the Middle School through photo elicitation interviews. Their insight provided an understanding of the impact of this school's efforts to support student needs within and beyond the educational setting. The interviews allowed me to grow in my understanding of the community school model's impact on student well-being and resilience and connected me to this school on a personal level. I empathize with Student Two's response when looking at the photo of the front doors of the Middle School (see Appendix C),

“Looking at that picture just reminds me of the first day when I came and walked through those doors and first came to Middle School, just... wow, this is actually my school and will be my school. Even [when] I move on”.

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Appendix A

Informed Assent Form

How a Community School Supports the Well-Being of Students A Case Study through Photo Elicitation.

You are invited to participate in an interview conducted by:
Micah Beaston, MSW, LSW,
Candidate in the Doctor of Social Work program
Millersville University, Millersville, PA

This project has been approved by the Millersville University of Pennsylvania Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects. The purpose of the interview is to gather information on student, family, and staff perceptions of how the community school meets the well-being needs of students. The information gained from the interviews will be used in the researcher's doctoral research dissertation.

Participation in this interview is voluntary and you can choose to stop participating at any time. Participants will be asked to look at photos of different aspects of their school and showing one picture at a time, the researcher will ask the participant guardians to: (1) describe the photo and (2) explain what the photo means to them. Examples of photos could include a photo of the outside of the school building, students dropped off at school in the morning, or the cafeteria at lunch time. Further interviewing may occur because of natural conversation with participants to elicit further details of their perception of the photograph and/or to seek clarification of their responses.

The interview will be audio recorded and participant names will be kept confidential. Because the interview is recorded, according to IRB levels of risk, this research poses a "minimal risk" to participants. Using study codes on data documents, the researcher will maintain the confidentiality of each participant. The researcher will keep a separate document that links the study code to the participants' identifying information locked in a separate location. For more information on participation in this research, please contact:

- Micah Beaston, Researcher: 717-512-0165 mlbeasto@millersville.edu
- Dr. Karen Rice, faculty mentor: 717-871-5297 karen.rice@millersville.edu
- Dr. René Muñoz, director of research administration 717-871-4457 rene.munoz@millersville.edu

I understand this information and agree to participate fully under the conditions stated above:

Participant name: _____

Participant signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix B

Informed Consent Form

How a Community School Supports the Well-Being of Students A Case Study through Photo Elicitation.

Your child/dependent is invited to participate in an interview conducted by:
Micah Beaston, MSW, LSW,
Candidate in the Doctor of Social Work program
Millersville University, Millersville, PA

This project has been approved by the Millersville University of Pennsylvania Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects. The purpose of the interview is to gather information on student, family, and staff perceptions of how the community school meets the well-being needs of students. The information gained from the interviews will be used in the researcher's doctoral research dissertation.

Participation in this interview is voluntary, it is your choice to allow your child/ dependent to participate in the interview and you or your child/dependent can choose to stop participation at any time. Participants will be asked to look at photos of different aspects of their school and showing one picture at a time, the researcher will ask the participant guardians to: (1) describe the photo and (2) explain what the photo means to them. Examples of photos could include a photo of the outside of the school building, students dropped off at school in the morning, or the cafeteria at lunch time. Further interviewing may occur because of natural conversation with participants to elicit further details of their perception of the photograph and/or to seek clarification of their responses.

The interview will be audio recorded and participant names will be kept confidential. Because the interview is recorded, according to IRB levels of risk, this research poses a "minimal risk" to participants. Using study codes on data documents, the researcher will maintain the confidentiality of each participant. The researcher will keep a separate document that links the study code to the participants' identifying information locked in a separate location. For more information on participation in this research, please contact:

- Micah Beaston, Researcher: 717-512-0165 mlbeasto@millersville.edu
- Dr. Karen Rice, faculty mentor: 717-871-5297 karen.rice@millersville.edu
- Dr. René Muñoz, director of research administration 717-871-4457 rene.munoz@millersville.edu

I understand this information and agree to allow my child/dependent to participate fully under the conditions stated above:

Participant name: _____

Parent/guardian signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix C



Appendix D



Appendix E



Appendix F



Appendix G



Appendix H



Appendix I



Appendix J



Appendix K



Appendix L



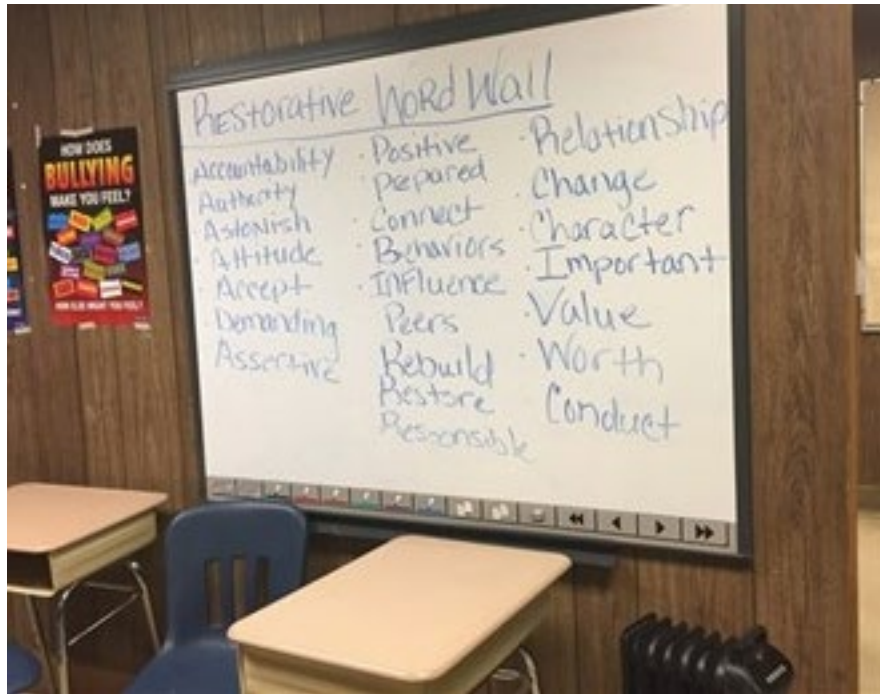
Appendix M



Appendix N



Appendix O



Appendix P

