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How Parental Beliefs About School Can Potentially Influence Student Engagement

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Abstract

Decades of research have demonstrated that beliefs matter, driving people's emotional responses and, in turn, their behaviors. The recent work of Clifton and colleagues (2019) has significantly advanced the understanding of world beliefs through the development of the primal world belief's (primals) scale. Primals are highly correlated with personality and well-being variables. Evidence suggests they serve as a schematic lens influencing how people view their experiences of the world. Building on this research, this capstone examines the hidden biases influencing judgment when it comes to the messages parents share with their children about school. Taking a metacognitive approach, the potential for a parent's beliefs about school to influence their children's beliefs and, in turn, their children's mastery are examined, and are considered in the context of mattering. It is possible that parent beliefs could create positive and negative spirals, influencing both student and community outcomes. For this reason, the primals scale was modified to measure (1) student beliefs about school (2) student perceptions of their parent's beliefs about school and (3) student engagement. Data will be gathered and analyzed over this next year. A positive psychology intervention (PPI) was also created using the modified primals scale to gain a better understanding of the possible underlying mechanisms associated with beliefs and to potentially identify elements of causation. It was also developed to guide parents—alongside their children—to regularly savor the *Good* in schools. Intended to alter hidden biases and framing beliefs, it is expected to help parents and their children develop a broader base of resources and strategies for support. The intervention is targeted to improve beliefs about school, increase PERMA, and increase mattering, agency, and hope. This analysis suggests there may be opportunities for expanding the role of positive psychology in schools.

Keywords

How Parental Beliefs About School Can Potentially Influence Student Engagement

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Abstract

Decades of research have demonstrated that beliefs matter, driving people's emotional responses and, in turn, their behaviors. The recent work of Clifton and colleagues (2019) has significantly advanced the understanding of world beliefs through the development of the primal world belief's (primals) scale. Primals are highly correlated with personality and well-being variables. Evidence suggests they serve as a schematic lens influencing how people view their experiences of the world. Building on this research, this capstone examines the hidden biases influencing judgment when it comes to the messages parents share with their children about school. Taking a metacognitive approach, the potential for a parent's beliefs about school to influence their children's beliefs and, in turn, their children's mastery are examined, and are considered in the context of mattering. It is possible that parent beliefs could create positive and negative spirals, influencing both student and community outcomes. For this reason, the primals scale was modified to measure (1) student beliefs about school (2) student perceptions of their parent's beliefs about school and (3) student engagement. Data will be gathered and analyzed over this next year. A positive psychology intervention (PPI) was also created using the modified primals scale to gain a better understanding of the possible underlying mechanisms associated with beliefs and to potentially identify elements of causation. It was also developed to guide parents—alongside their children—to regularly savor the *Good* in schools. Intended to alter hidden biases and framing beliefs, it is expected to help parents and their children develop a broader base of resources and strategies for support. The intervention is targeted to improve beliefs about school, increase PERMA, and increase mattering, agency, and hope. This analysis suggests there may be opportunities for expanding the role of positive psychology in schools.

Keywords: primals, beliefs, parent beliefs, student engagement, biases, savoring, positive psychology, well-being, positive intervention, well-being, hope

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Part I: Primal World Beliefs

Decades of research suggest that "Beliefs matter" (Clifton, 2013, p. 4). Beliefs can drive

our emotional responses and how those feelings translate into actions (Beck, 1979; Clifton, 2013,

2020; Clifton et al., 2019; Reivich and Shatté, 2002). Beck's (1979) work on cognitive

behavioral therapy is foundational to this research. It is based on what he referred to as the

Cognitive Triad: beliefs about the self, the individual's world, and the individual's future. Often

involuntary, thought patterns regarding the cognitive triad can form out of habit. Consequently,

underlying beliefs can be difficult to recognize and challenging to control without the exertion of

conscious effort (Beck, 1991). While a considerable amount of empirical evidence exists to

support the development of the self, very little research had been done with respect to individual

beliefs about the world, that is until recently. Clifton and colleagues (2019) examined the types

of descriptive beliefs people typically have about the world, how they are distributed, and how

they change over time. Current research is being done to further examine how they are formed,

and what patterns of action they influence.

What are Primal World Beliefs

Clifton and colleagues (2019) conducted the first broad- and evidence-based mapping of

world beliefs. Referred to as primal world beliefs ('primals'), they are distinct from

"metaphysical, incidental, or historical beliefs (e.g., 'the world is composed of 118 chemical

elements')" (Clifton, 2020, July 7, p. 6). Primals are not binary functions in that a person either

has a belief or doesn't. Instead, each belief is conceived to be part of a continuum anchored by

two opposite dimensions (e.g., *Interesting* and *boring*; *Pleasurable* and *miserable,* Clifton et al.,

2019).

There are 26 primal world beliefs presently identified. Out of this total, 17 primals—referred to as tertiary beliefs—cluster into three secondary groupings (informally referred to as the "Big 3" beliefs): *Safe* (versus *dangerous*), *Enticing* (versus *dull*), *Alive* (versus *mechanistic*) (Clifton et al., 2019). These secondary beliefs, in turn, further amalgamate into one supercluster or primary overarching primal: overall *Good* (vs *bad)* world belief (Clifton et al., 2019). Figure 1 outlines this structure. Not all primals are hierarchical in nature. Five of the tertiary primals are highly independent and are referred to as unrelated tertiary primals (Clifton and Kim, 2020, p. 2). All primals are normally distributed, continuous, latent variables that appear to be stable over time based on measurements taken across 2-week, 9-month, and 19-month intervals (Clifton et al., 2019).

Figure 1

Primal World Beliefs: Definitions and Structure (Clifton & Yaden, 2021, p. 1268)
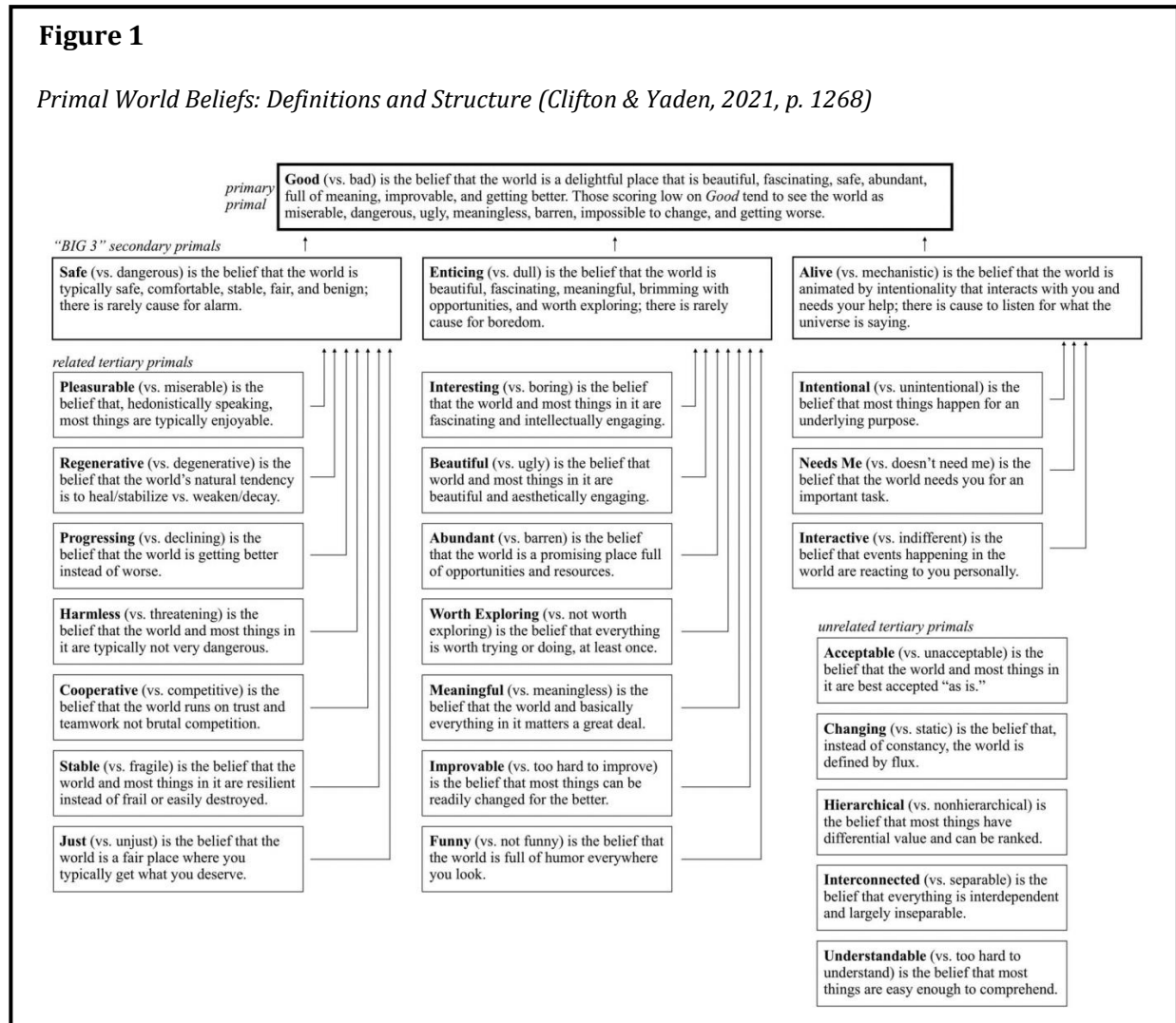
Schemas

Schema typically refers to pre-existing mental representations about objects that people use to interpret their experiences. Research suggests people use these models to develop expectations about the future which, in turn, guide them in how to interact (Clifton, 2020). When people encounter schema-inconsistent information, their tendency is to adopt rejection-seeking behaviors (e.g., ignore or reject the information, reinterpret the information) (Clilfton, 2020). In other words, they prefer to verify their existing schema using new information as "evidence" to justify their beliefs or to unconsciously rewrite past memories to achieve further congruence of thought (Clifton, 2020). This can result in self-fulfilling feedback cycles which contribute to what is called confirmation bias (Clifton, 2020, June 24). For example, if Student A views the world as *Just* and they perform poorly on a test, they may explain the outcome using specific and temporary reasoning: *I should have studied more for the test.* Conversely, Student B who views the world as *unjust* may conclude, my teacher is mean and doesn't care, and has unreasonable expectations. This "evidence" confirms the world is *unjust*—it continues to be unfair.

Research findings suggest primals likely function as schemas (Clifton, 2020, June 24), partly because they are orthogonal to demographics (Clifton, 2020, July 7). For example, a survey of 524 Americans—50% women, 50% college graduates—between the ages of 18-75 (M = 37) revealed that family income doesn't correlate with either *Abundant* or *Pleasurable* primal beliefs. More specifically, being from a low-income family didn't mean people were more likely to view the world as *barren* ($r = -0.07$, $p > 0.05$), and being from a high-income family didn't predispose people to view the world as more *Abundant* ($r = 0.05$ $p > 0.05$). Similarly, people from high-income families did not have higher probabilities of having a more *Pleasurable* ($r = 0.03$ $p > 0.05$) world view and being from low-income families was not related to having a more

miserable ($r = -0.06$ $p > 0.05$) perspective (Clifton, 2020, July 7). These data suggest pre-established conditions do not predict individual primal beliefs—meaning past experiences do not necessarily define the ways people think. Instead, these results suggest primals likely serve as schematic lenses that people use to interpret the world.

Fundamental Attribution Error

The role of primals can be demonstrated through the fundamental attribution error. This error occurs when an individual attributes another person's actions to their personality or character whereas they attribute their own behavior to situational factors that are beyond their control (Kelley, 1967). Consider the previous example. Student B blamed the teacher and didn't take responsibility for any of their contributions to the outcome (e.g., didn't complete the homework or misunderstood a concept). And when viewed from the teacher's perspective, the rationale might be, "The child is lazy and doesn't care. I have done everything I can," not realizing the child may have a low *Just* primal belief and needs help to reframe their perceptions of the world. In comparison, the student with the high *Just* primal will, instead, find out what it is they need to work on, expanding their skills and abilities in the process—not to mention, they will probably feel more connected with their teacher. Student A is working towards seeing school as *Good*.

Consequently, when a parent also blames the teacher based on a personal characteristic (e.g., the teacher is incompetent) and doesn't take action to improve the situation (e.g., it is "out of their control"), it is possible they are also committing the fundamental attribution error and, as a result, a compounding effect may occur. Now that Student B is no longer putting in effort, what eventually becomes a performance issue further supports the initial low *Just* primal belief. When this happens repeatedly, and over time, the general expectancy belief of individuals could then

become, en masse, *when children don't try, they are lazy; don't expect much*. In other words, what is a natural "context-specific reaction to underlying (and malleable) perceptions" (Clifton, 2020, July 7, p. 691) is mistakenly understood to be an innate trait-like personality characteristic (e.g., lazy) which is then used to predict future expectations and behaviors. Or as Clifton notes, the actions of others are interpreted as expressions of "*who* they are [e.g., lazy] rather than as the reasonable reaction to *where* they happen to think they are [e.g., in a classroom with an unfair or incompetent teacher]" (Clifton et al., 2019, p. 84). What people think about school may influence how they interact.

Consistent with this line of thinking, primals are highly correlated to several personality (e.g., gratitude, curiosity, hope, interpersonal trust, self-efficacy) and well-being variables (e.g., positive emotions, engagement, meaning, life satisfaction, overall wellbeing). For example, the following empirical correlations to primals have been measured, all with significance levels of less than .0001 (Clifton, 2020, July 7):

- curiosity correlates with the *Interesting* ($r = .59$) and *Worth Exploring* ($r = .42$, $p < .0001$)

- lower engagement correlates with *dull* and *not worth exploring* ($r = .58$)

- life satisfaction correlates with *Pleasurable* ($r = .53$) and *Abundant* ($r = .66$)

While these data show promise in the predictive capability of primals, assessing the role of primals is still in its infancy, with more work needing to be done across psychological subdisciplines (Clifton, 2020, July 7). In sum, these data suggest there could be value in exposing parents to alternative ways of thinking about school—a major part of a young person's world—so they can consider the messages they share with their children.

Primal World Beliefs and Parenting

Most recently, Clifton and Meindl (2021) expanded their research to explore primal beliefs, as they relate to parents. Reported findings show that 53 percent, out of a sample size of 185 parents, prefer *dangerous* world beliefs for their kids. Some base their choices on their own past experiences and others believe it is the best way to help children navigate into the future. However, contrary to the way that many parents in this survey think, this research also demonstrates that *negative primals* in adults correlate with "less success, less job and life satisfaction, worse health, dramatically less flourishing, more negative emotion, more depression, and increased suicide attempts" (Clifton & Meindl, 2021, p. 1) based on a sample size of 4,535 participants (Clifton & Meindl, 2021). This incongruence and the significance of these findings suggests the framing of beliefs by parents could matter when it comes to their children.

Beliefs and, more specifically, beliefs about school, may also have a leveraging effect. For example, a negative *school* belief would likely have minimal impact on a parent in the context of their world, which may include work, family (e.g., partner and children), homeowner responsibilities, community involvement, and recreational activities. And while an adult may continue to experience indirect impacts from their negative experiences at school, such as low self-efficacy beliefs with respect to learning, those hidden consequences wouldn't be actively thought about in their day-to-day lives. In comparison, students spend a considerable number of waking hours in school. Consequently, a negative comment made about school—that is perceived to be trivial by the parent—could conceivably be impactful to their child and, more specifically, their child's beliefs about school. One primal study awaiting duplication before being published indicates that students are more likely to view the world as dangerous compared

to the general public. Clifton (2020, June 24) notes, "Is this because the student context is a particularly dangerous one—the retrospective explanation? Likely not. Instead, perhaps the task itself or particular subcultures implicitly encourage—teach—this primal through a variety of formal and informal incentives and social mechanisms" (Clifton, 2020, June 24, p. 8). At a metacognitive level, the messages students hear may influence the way they interpret the world.

A sharp rise in loneliness in adolescent populations from 36 out of 37 countries starting in the year 2012 has also been demonstrated in a study based on the results of The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) (Twenge et al., 2021). The trend of what is referred to as the mean school loneliness score is shown in Figure 2, based on a sample size of 1,049,784 students, worldwide, of which 51% were female). In effect, there is a two-fold increase in the number of adolescents experiencing elevated states of loneliness in 2018 compared to 2012 (Twenge et al., 2021), and "the school loneliness measure as a continuous variable correlated between $r = 0.18$ and $r = 0.46$ with negative affect, between $r = -0.29$ and $r = -0.47$ with positive affect, and between $r = -0.20$ and $r = -0.45$ with life satisfaction" (Twenge et al., 2021, p. 264). Notably, increases in loneliness vary by region: Orthodox countries (Bulgaria and Russia) d = 0.53; Baltic countries (Latvia) d = 0.50; English-speaking countries (Australia, Canada, Ireland, New Zealand, United Kingdom, United States) d = 0.45; Latin American countries (Brazil, Chile, Mexico, and Peru) d = 0.40 (Twenge et al., 2021). The lowest increases in loneliness were reported in Confucian countries (d = 0.13, Hong Kong, Japan, and South Korea), mostly due to the decline associated with South Korea—the only country to measure a reduction in loneliness (Twenge et al., 2021, p. 265). Add to this, the recently reported findings relating to the mental health of high school students: 37% "experienced poor mental health during the pandemic," 44% "experienced persistent feelings of sadness or hopelessness," and 20% "had seriously considered

attempting suicide" (Jones et al., 2022, p. 16). It may be possible that in countries where kids'

worlds are getting smaller due to rising levels of isolation and mental health challenges, parent

beliefs about school could play an even bigger role.

Figure 2

School Loneliness Mean, Worldwide, by Sex. Error bars are plus or minus one SE. (Twenge et al., 2021)
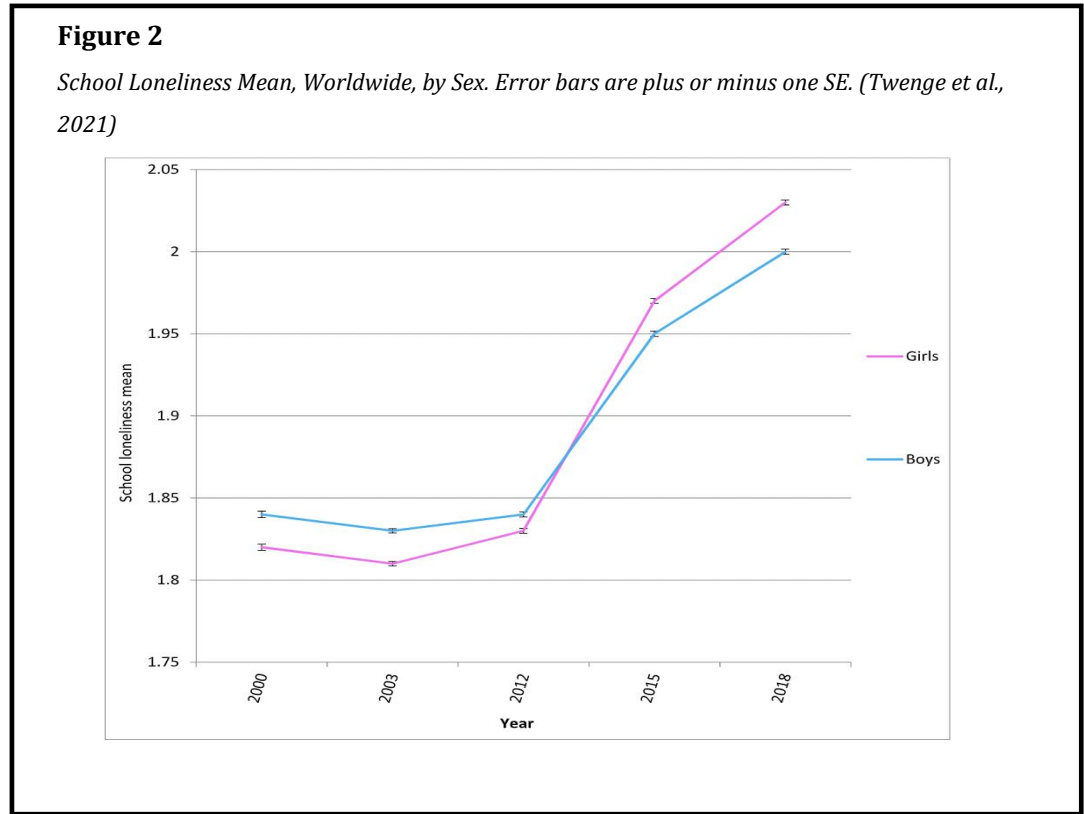
Basic School Beliefs

The goal of this paper is first, to introduce the possibility of universal or basic *school*

beliefs (much like primal *world* beliefs), second, to consider how a parent's beliefs about school

could influence children, with respect to their child's beliefs and their engagement, and the

greater community as a whole, third, to propose a study to measure student beliefs about school

and their perceptions of their parent's beliefs about school, and fourth, in support of exploring

causation, to propose a potential positive psychology intervention (PPI) targeting specific primal

beliefs that aims to improve the well-being for students, their parents, and school communities.

In other words, this paper is designed to answer the question, what would happen if the ambiguity students faced when they are learning could be interpreted based on a hyper-globalized schema that *school is good*?

This paper addresses several gaps in the literature: it is the first study of its kind to use the standardized primal *world* scale as a tool to measure student beliefs about school and students' perceptions of their parents' beliefs about school in relation to student engagement; there is a dearth of research measuring parents' general beliefs about school and how those beliefs impact students; there are very few positive psychology studies that systemically analyze the dynamic relationship between the child-family microsystem and the child-school microsystem as defined by Bronfenbrenner (1986); the majority of positive psychology interventions (PPIs) relating to schools are group-based, do not address individual needs (Owens & Waters, 2020), and do not include parents; very few PPIs for children and adolescents involve the construct of hope (Owens & Waters, 2020).

Part II: Hidden Parental Biases

As researchers have come to understand the underlying mechanisms of our cognitions, a dual-process theory has emerged, suggesting the existence of two independent but separable reasoning systems, commonly referred to as "System 1" and "System 2" (Ceschi et al., 2019; Kahneman, 2011). System 1, which functions both automatically and quickly, tends to be less accurate. It processes information by evoking images that are often emotionally laden and uses stereotypes and mental shortcuts. Judgments are made with a limited amount of cognitive resources (Ceschi et al., 2019). The automatic reasoning processes associated with System 1 look, first, for patterns and, second, to fill in any blanks so coherent stories are created in our minds—ones that *seem* logical. Reality is not an essential part of this framework, meaning the

goal is to reduce ambiguity as fast as possible. As Kahneman aptly notes, System 1 "will produce

a representation of reality that makes too much sense" (2011, p.114). System 2, on the other

hand, deliberately and with effort processes complex, multi-dimensional thoughts. Its processing

is "abstract, slow and computationally expensive" (Ceschi et al., 2019, p. 190). Interestingly,

while each system is prone to error, it has been recognized that System 1 and System 2 can work

together to reinforce erroneous patterns of thought, based on limited sets of information

(Kahneman, 2013a). There are a multitude of heuristics and biases that, when applied

indiscriminately, can impact normative rationality and result in suboptimal judgments and

outcomes at both individual and community levels (Ceschi et al., 2019). The following biases are

considered in the context of how they influence parent and student beliefs about school and, in

turn, how those beliefs influence student engagement: the proliferation of information and

misinformation; anchor points; and framing.

The Proliferation of Misinformation and Negative Messaging

While traditional forms of publishing have always been influential, the growing use of

online media has created a pipeline for the rapid dissemination of both true and false

information—simply because anyone can share. It is difficult to know how much of the sharing

of information confirms the social norms that exist and how much of it reflects how people are

trying to influence them. With the rise of misinformation, it appears there is also an increase in

negative messaging about schools.

The propensity to share false information has recently been evaluated in a study

conducted using data from Twitter. An analysis of 126,000 stories tweeted by 3 million people

over 4.5 million times between 2006 to 2017 (Vosoughi et al., 2018) suggests that false

information spreads deeper (i.e., the number of hops from the original person tweeting the story

to a new, unique individual), quicker, and more broadly than the truth. These stories tend to be

more novel, and people tend to respond with feelings of fear and disgust, as well as surprise. In

comparison, true stories "inspire anticipation sadness, joy, and trust" (Vosoughi et al., 2018, p.

1). The valence of these emotions, combined with the distribution of messaging, is consistent

with the human negativity bias. Research supports that negative information attracts people's

attention more so than what is positive (Norris, 2021). Evidence of this bias has been reported to

exist in children as young as three months old (Norris, 2021). In the Twitter analysis, robots were

found to spread true and false stories in equal proportions. That means people make up the

difference in spread. This suggests human behavior is the driving force behind the sharing of

false—and largely negative—information (Vosoughi et al., 2018).

Now consider this as it applies to schools. The video, *Every Parent, Student and Teacher

Needs to Hear This,* (Shetty, 2018), has received more than 56 million views on Facebook. Set

with vivid imagery suggesting that schools are impersonal, the narrative drives home all that is

wrong: "We teach and test everyone as if they were exactly the same," "We end up statistics;

wasted potential like unrecorded lyrics," "University it makes me unhappy, anxious, feel like a

failure. It's no surprise that depression is on the rise," "Today at college we spend a lot of time in

bars and then learn how to code. It's ironic, we end up a barcode." And despite stating that

emotional intelligence, empathy, growth mindset, and mental health are not being taught in

schools, a google scholar search reveals a different perspective (e.g., 1,430,000 responses to the

prompt, *teaching emotional intelligence in schools*; 4,820,000 responses to the prompt, *mental

health support in schools*). The entire dialogue (included in Appendix A) is built around a

pessimistic explanatory style, based on ideas that are permanent, pervasive, and do not allow for

behavioral adaptations by students. This form of messaging is correlated with "passivity,

depression, poor problem solving, low self-esteem, poor immune function, and higher

morbidity" (Peterson et al., 1988). The viral spreading of this video suggests a significant

number of people either endorse or want to influence the sharing of negative beliefs about

school.

Figure 3

Google Ngrams Relating to School
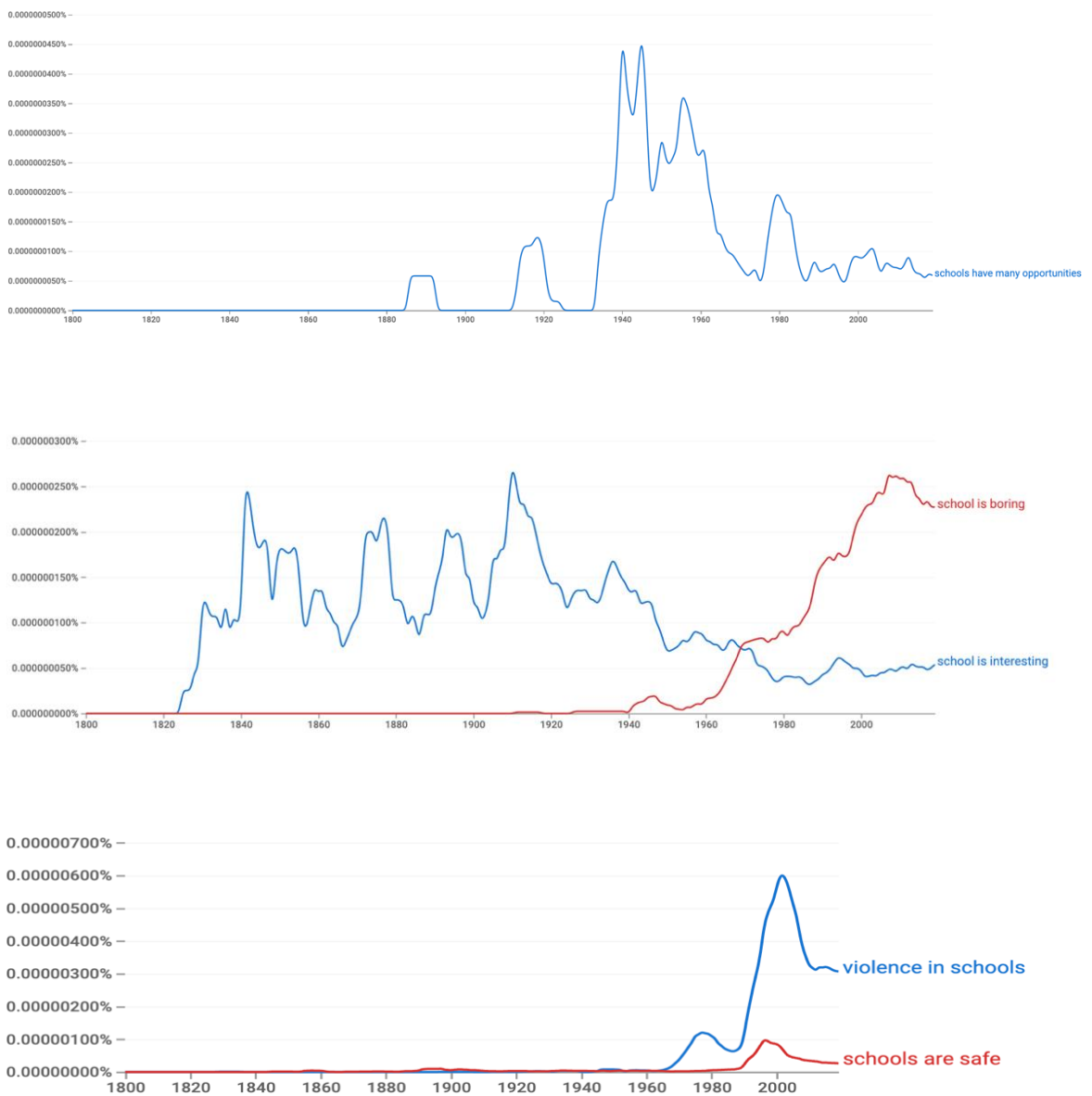
Similarly, messages are distributed in printed publications. Google Ngrams Viewer, a search engine designed to track word frequencies from a large corpus of approximately 8 million books, depicts what is trending over time. There are a rising number of trends, as shown in Figure 3 (with additional Ngrams included in Appendix B) supporting negative beliefs about school starting around the mid-1950s.

Anchor Points

Anchoring is a well-researched cognitive bias that influences how people think and the decisions they make (Kahneman, 2011). People make projections based on an initial value—referred to as the anchor—and from that reference point, they adjust either up or down (Tversky & Kahneman, 1974). Anchoring points are problematic when people fail to retrieve or appropriately weigh *all* relevant information needed to make rational choices (Lyden et al., 2002, p. 100). Anchoring effects have been found to be pervasive and robust in both experimental and real-world contexts (Yasseri & Reher, 2022). It is possible that hidden anchor points influence the beliefs parents hold about school. Those beliefs, in turn, can affect how parents respond to challenges, influencing the experiences of their children.

The intergenerational effects of anchoring were demonstrated in a study of 438 first and second-grade students linking higher math anxiety levels in parents to lower math achievement scores and higher math anxiety levels in their kids (Maloney et al., 2015). Importantly, this effect was *only* realized when parents reported they frequently helped their children, and these findings remained consistent even when controlling for the math competency of parents and school-related factors including the teachers' knowledge and levels of math anxiety, and school-measured SES levels. These effects were math specific and—notably—not evident when examining reading achievement (Maloney et al., 2015). Several reasons were cited to explain

these results (Maloney et al., 2015): anxious math parents tend to express poor attitudes

regarding math (e.g., it is not practical); they tend to have a lower sense of self-efficacy and

motivation when challenges occur; their fear of failure may encourage avoidance behaviors in

their kids (Maloney et al., 2015). These negative perceptions of parents seemed to influence how

their children interacted with and their beliefs about school.

Anchor points have also been shown to influence evaluations of teachers. A study

involving 219 university students asked to rate their teachers found that participants in the two

high anchor groups gave significantly higher average performance ratings compared to the

participants in the control group ($p = .001$, $d = 0.71$, and $p < .001$, $d = 0.80$) (Thorsteinson et al.,

2008). These finding were surprising given these students had considerable exposure to the

instructors they were evaluating. Data collection took place during the second last week of a 15-

week semester. This suggests, when parents evaluate their children's teachers, they consider

what anchor points (e.g., the complaints of their children) could be influencing their thinking and

how they interact. Research indicates there are rising levels of violence being experienced by

teachers. The perpetrators are, in many cases, students and their parents (Longobardi et al., 2019;

May et al., 2010; McMahon et al., 2014; Moon & McCluskey, 2020; Wilson et al., 2011). These

behaviors further contribute to negative beliefs about school.

Parents also have anchor points based on their own experiences in school—and

adolescence, in particular, is a period in life that is known to be fraught with challenges.

Lowenthal, Thurnher, and Chiriboga conducted a survey of 216 participants in 1975 and reported

that approximately 40 percent of the respondents considered the adolescent years to be, by far,

the worst in which antisocial behaviors, reductions in educational performance and school

involvement, and decreases in self-esteem prevailed (Blackwell et al., 2007). Later, in 1998, a

study by Kathryn R. Wentzel (1998) describes adolescence as a time of transition, often framed

by perceptions of uncaring teachers and fewer meaningful relationships with peers. More

recently, a National Research Council study conducted in 2004, reported that 40 percent of

adolescents were inattentive, disengaged, and bored—students admitted to exerting little effort

on their academic performance (Center of Education Policy, 2012). Given this history, it is worth

reflecting on this researcher's point of view, based on an analysis of 500 parent-teacher

interviews conducted between 1948 and 1950, "I was impressed by the extent to which well-

meaning parents and teachers permitted their emotional reactions to interfere with good

judgment and tolerance of one another's points of view" (Kaplan, 1950, p. 190). She also found

that parents tended to evaluate the "modern" school in the context of their own school

experiences from decades before or they had their own ideas about when certain educational

milestones in learning should be achieved. When parents define the world for their children

based on their anchor point experiences from the past, they risk passing their own erroneous—

and, potentially negative—beliefs onto their children in an educational system where their dated

logic no longer applies.

Finally, the anchor points of parents could potentially influence the messages they share

and those messages could impact societal normative beliefs. Take, for example, the Ted Talk

(Robinson, 2006), *Do Schools Kill Creativity*, which has received over 71 million views. Not

surprisingly, as shown in Figure 4, there has been an exponential rise in the use of the term

"Schools kill creativity" in literature since 2006 (Google Ngram). Yet, ironically, schools have

never offered more opportunities for individual creativity: access to worldwide resources is often

a click away on a keyboard, the internet and play are considered valuable forms of learning,

teachers are expected to listen to their students and adapt the education system to focus on the

needs of each child, ranges of programs and courses exist to develop individual interests and

optimally challenge students (e.g., IB, Challenge Programs, Apprenticeship Programs, Learning

Centers), pedagogical practices have never been more developed. Anchor points are not only

influential, but they can also be pervasive when it comes to influencing parent and student beliefs

about school.

Figure 4

Google Ngram: Schools Kill Creativity
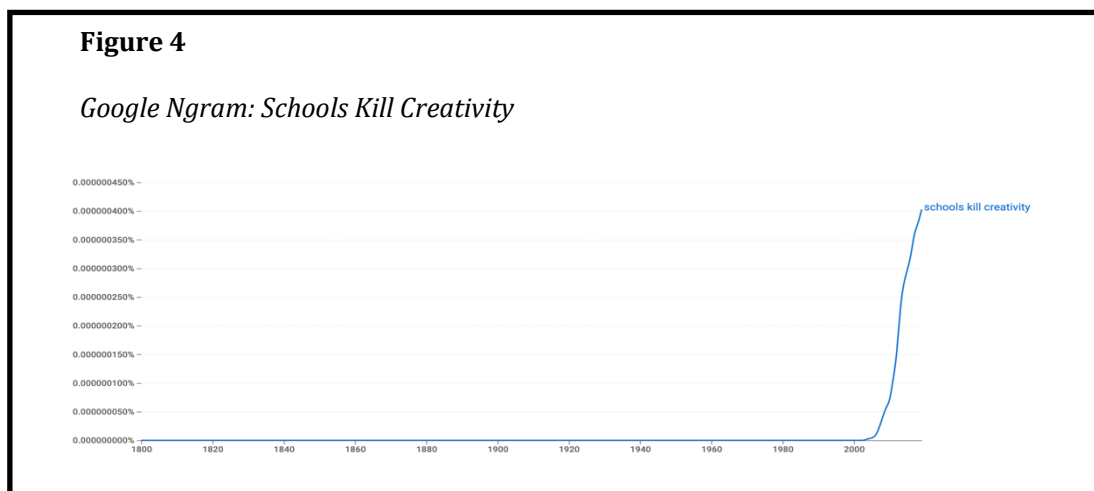
Framing

Similar to anchor points, framing can also influence judgment. Framing is considered to

be a bias of presentation. The way a person responds to a situation is a function of the way they

perceive the information and the way they process it (Ceschi et al., 2017). Multiple underlying

processes—which are often emotionally driven—can be occurring at one time (Ceschi et al.,

2017). What is particularly challenging for parents when framing their interactions with schools,

is that they only see part of the picture. For example, does the parent really know if the teacher

was being unkind when making a certain comment—or even if the comment was made—or was

the child behaving inappropriately for the tenth time in class that day? The feedback loop is

incomplete. Furthermore, parents have little perspective on how their messages are implemented

by their children. For example, did their child apologize as suggested, or did they grunt, or did

they say nothing at all? Not only does a parent have limited control, but once again, feedback is

compromised.

For this capstone, framing is considered in three ways: the parent-teacher relationship;

the interpretation of difficulty; teaming practices. Research has shown that healthy parent-teacher

relationships, interpreting difficulty as important, and valuing teaming practices all result in

better outcomes for students. Important threads to all of these categories are the connections

between people (parents-teachers-students) and their beliefs about school. Logic suggests the

more a parent believes school is *Good* the easier it will be to develop good relationships in ways

that support all of these categories. And the more parents and their children can positively

engage with these categories (e.g., a parent feels supported in their relationship with the teacher,

the parent and child are able to behave in ways that support the difficulty-as-important mindset,

the parent is able to support teaming practices), the more likely parents and their children will

see school as *Good*. Figure 5 depicts the hidden parental biases being considered in this analysis.

The following section details how the framing of schools can influence students and their

outcomes.

Figure 5

Hidden Parental Biases
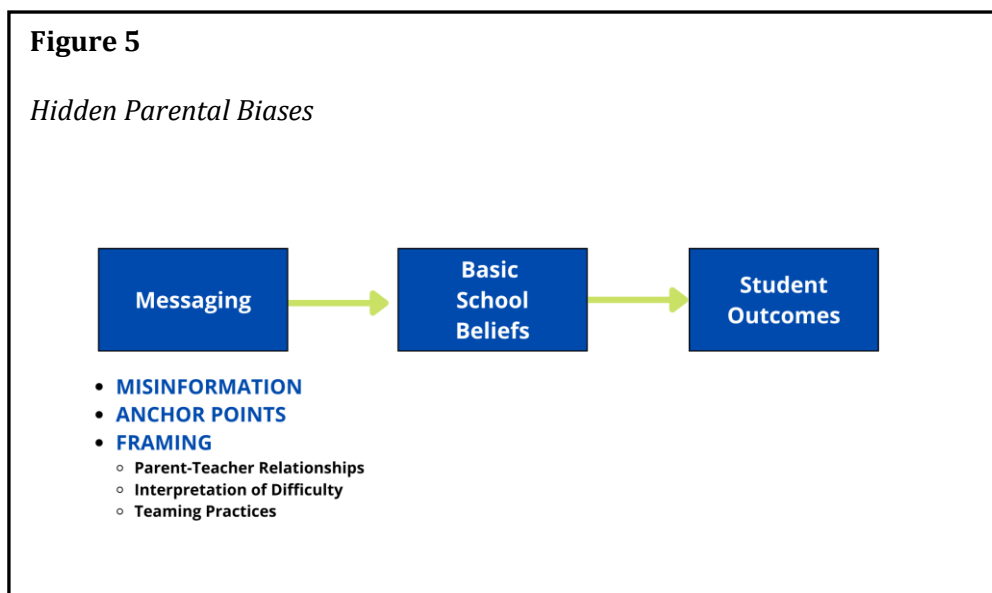
The Parent-Teacher Relationship

The potential for parent-teacher relationships to be vexing problems or effective sources

of support has long been recognized (Kaplan, 1950; Bronfenbrenner, 1986). Back in 1986,

Bronfenbrenner noted that research within the family-school sphere was heavily one-sided.

Investigations tended to focus on techniques for parent involvement rather than considering the

associated processes that developed within the family-school sphere and the joint impact on the

child. These processes were found to be more significant than socioeconomic status or race, and

family processes seemed to have more impact than classroom procedures (Bronfenbrenner,

1986).

Now, decades later, the impact of family-school interactions and more notably, parent-

teacher relationships, is still not fully understood. There does, however, tend to be a growing

appreciation for the importance of this dynamic—and at all grade levels (e.g., Minke et al., 2014;

Paulson et al., 1998; Vickers & Minke, 1995). The connection between parents and teachers,

especially during the adolescent years, is unique. It is relatively short-term, is involuntary,

involves very few face-to-face interactions, and can be fraught with emotion. Problems

concerning students are often what precipitate connections (Minke et al., 2014), and in high

school, teachers can be responsible for up to 120 students a day, meaning there are upwards of

more than 200 parents involved. Role construction is also vague. Parents and teachers can have

different interpretations of their responsibilities, plus they have varying levels of resources

available for support (Anderson & Minke, 2007). Adams and Christenson (2000) have this to say

about how the family-school relationship has evolved over time.

According to Gareau and Sawatzky (1995), a sense of common culture between families

and educators existed prior to the 1940s because schools were viewed as "natural

extensions of the community" (p. 464). The close relationship between families and

schools has been "lost" and/or replaced by an adversarial tone in the past 40 years.

Technology and cultural changes paired with the professionalization of teaching after

World War II resulted in less agreement between home and school (Berger, 1991). The

idea that children live in two different worlds, represented by cultural discontinuity,

began to develop. (Adams and Christenson, 2000, p. 477)

Consistent with their views, the mid-1950s is a pivotal point of change in many of the Ngram

trends included in Figure 3 and Appendix B.

The family-school relationship has been defined by Clarke, Sheridan, and Woods (2009)

to be "a child-centered connection between individuals in the home and school settings who

share responsibility for supporting the growth and development of children" (as cited in Minke et

al. 2014, p. 529). While these relationships have always existed and will continue to exist, the

significance of these connections is not always readily apparent and, consequently, people do not

always take an intentional approach. For example, some parents are quick to take on an

adversarial role believing it is their job to "defend their child." Others, ignore the relationship,

believing education is best left up to the teacher or they don't have the efficacy to feel that they

can contribute. Research does, however, support its importance, with the quality of the

connection counting more than the actual frequency of contact (Minke et al., 2014). Empirical

evidence even links the visible involvement of parents to positive outcomes for their children

(Marcon, 1999). "Relational trust between families and schools, including respect and personal

regard, accountability, consideration, sensitivity and understanding, and equality and reciprocity,

are all elements of healthy family-school relationships (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Clarke et al.,

2009; Minke, 2006)" (Minke et al., 2014, p. 529).

The effectiveness of this relationship partly hinges on being able to bring together different perspectives in meaningful ways. While parents are more likely to understand subtle nuances about their children, their interests, their challenges, and the types of people they are drawn to, teachers can offer professional feedback concerning a student's learning style and abilities, behavior, and social-emotional well-being. They have expertise on the curriculum and an insider perspective on the prerequisite skills and misconceptions hindering learning, and what resources are available for support. A teacher can advocate for a student on behalf of a parent, whether directly in the classroom (e.g., support their needs) or within the greater school community (e.g., guide them in ways to become involved). And when parents and teachers work together to provide consistent messages of autonomous support, student academic outcomes (Grolnick & Seal, 2008; Minke et al., 2014), emotional well-being, and social functioning benefit (Grolnick & Seal, 2008; Kim et al., 2013; Minke et al., 2014; Vickers & Minke 1995). There is also evidence to suggest that healthy parent-teacher relationships can influence the efforts put forth by parents to engage in discussions with their children about academic success which, in turn, improve achievement (Minke et al., 2014). Homework also tends to be completed with more accuracy, student efficacy is healthier (Kim et al., 2013), attendance levels are higher, and dropout rates are lower (Kim et al., 2013; Vickers & Minke, 1995). The mechanisms underlying this relationship, however, are different depending on who you are—the teacher, the parent, or the child.

The Teacher Perspective. Healthy parent-teacher relationships seem to influence teachers' perceptions of students. One study designed to evaluate the relationship congruence in family-school dyads found that it was the teacher—and not the parent—ratings of student's social skills and behavior that were higher when there was a *shared* positive view of their

relationship (Minke et al., 2014). This study involved 203 children from kindergarten to grade

three—all previously identified as students with disruptive behavioral difficulties. In another

study, teacher beliefs about this relationship accounted for close to 7% of the variance in student

academic outcomes (Hughes, Gleason, & Zhang, 2005, as cited in Minke et al., 2014). Teacher's

prior expectations of students—without taking into account parent relationships—have been

shown to influence academic achievement (Hinnant, O'Brien, & Ghazarian, 2009, as cited in

Minke et al., 2014; Mistry, White, Benner, & Huynh, 2009, as cited in Minke et al., 2014). These

data suggest positive parent-teacher relationships may influence teachers' perceptions and,

possibly, behavioral, and academic outcomes.

The Parent Perspective. Trust seems to be key, where parents are concerned. A survey

done with 1,234 parents and 209 teachers in a Midwestern metropolitan area found that parent

trust was significantly related to "credits earned per year ($r = .21$, $p = .006$), and attendance ($r =$

$.18$, $p = .01$)" (Adams & Christenson, 2000, p. 490). Another study involving 212 kindergarten

to grade 4 parents found higher levels of parent trust in a child's *teacher* correlated with higher

levels of prosocial behavior exhibited by the child ($r = .18$, $p < .01$), fewer peer-related problems

($r = -.16$, $p < .05$), and fewer child difficulties ($r = -.19$, $p < .01$). Higher levels of *school* trust

reported by parents were associated with decreased emotional symptoms ($r = -.24$, $p < .01$),

fewer peer-related problems ($r = -.20$, $p < .01$), and fewer child difficulties ($r = -.23$, $p <.01$)

(Santiago et al., 2016). Parents reporting higher levels of trust were also more likely to have

positive attitudes and higher levels of involvement in school-related activities (Adams &

Christenson, 1998; Santiago et al., 2016). Research suggests it is the parent and not the teacher

variable that plays a major role in determining the quality of the parent-teacher relationship.

Parents reporting higher levels of self-efficacy for supporting their children and parents engaged

in more home-school conferencing had a higher probability of experiencing positive and congruent relationships with their children's teachers (Minke et al., 2014).

      The Student's Perspective. Relationship congruence when it comes to parenting and teaching styles (e.g., authoritative, authoritarian, permissive as defined by Baumrind, 1966), appears to be what is important for the child. For example, a study of 230 students in grades five and six showed a high degree of congruence amongst students within their different environmental contexts. Of these students, 100 perceived their parents and teachers to have authoritative parenting styles (e.g., moderate demand expectations combined with warm and nurturing support) and they also reported experiencing positive school environments (Paulsen et al., 1998). Similarly, 78 students perceived their home environments to be more moderate, and they perceived their classroom and school environments that way as well (Paulsen et al., 1998). Even though students in the same classes reported wide ranges of perceptions about their teachers, their beliefs tended to be aligned with the perceptions they held about their parents. This suggests students come to school with preconceived ideas about school (Paulson et al., 1998). Academic competence and school achievement were found to be highest in the group of students that viewed the approaches of their parents and teachers to be congruent with an authoritative style (Paulson et al., 1998). Students who reported incongruent perceptions of parenting and teaching style had more negative perceptions of their school environments. (Paulson et al., 1998).

Interpretation of Difficulty

      There is a growing amount of evidence supporting how the framing of *difficulty* can impact "what people do (Oppenheimer, 2008; Schwarz, 2010, 2015), their performance on academic tasks (Oyserman et al., 2018), and their identities (e.g., whether they self-identify with

academics, Smith & Oyserman, 2015)" (O'Donnell et al., 2021, p. 2). Difficulty can be framed in

one of two ways—difficulty-as-impossible; difficulty-as-important (O'Donnell et al., 2021). The

interpretation of difficulty can influence the individual and appears to be related to culture.

Figure 6

Identity-Based Motivation Model: How Identities Influence Self-Regulation (Oyserman et al., 2017)
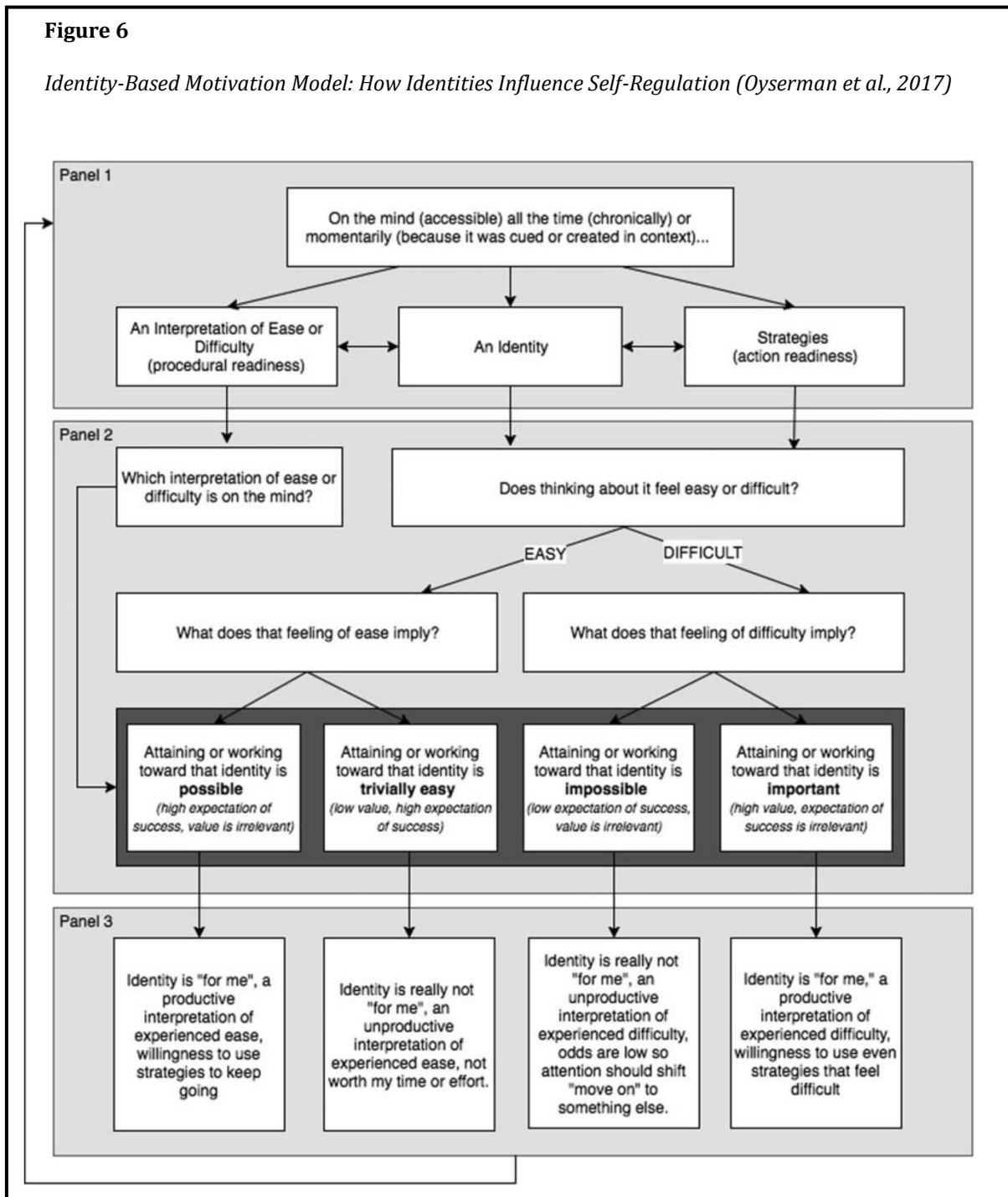
Daphna Oyserman developed the identity-based motivation (IBM) framework (Oyserman & Destin, 2010) which is graphically represented in Figure 6 (Oyserman et al., 2017). The IBM theory posits that individuals value their self-identities such that they will act in ways that are consistent with their expectations of others whom they deem to be similar. In other words, "people prefer to act (action-readiness) and make meaning (procedural-readiness)" (Oyserman et al., 2017, p. 140) in ways that are consistent with their identities. However, people's identities are not fixed. They are dynamically constructed depending on one's immediate circumstances (Oyserman et al., 2017). Consequently, if a student facing an immediate challenge has a low expectation of success (e.g., difficulty means impossible), it is likely they will respond by moving on—they won't persevere. In comparison, if the student, facing the same situation, views the challenge as important, they will focus on effective action, even adopting strategies they would otherwise categorize as difficult to succeed (Oyserman et al., 2017).

Most notable about this research is that just small changes in context can have an unexpectedly large impact—influencing how people view themselves, interpret what they are experiencing, and the behaviors they adopt (Oyserman et al., 2017). In a study of 129 University of Michigan undergraduates, students randomly assigned to the difficulty-as-important condition performed better on the Raven's Advanced Progressive Matrices (used to measure abstract reasoning and fluid intelligence) compared to the students in the difficulty-as-impossible condition ($p = 0.023$, $d = 0.40$). When asked, 89% of the participants in the difficulty-as-impossible condition disagreed that difficulty *means* impossible (Oyserman et al., 2018, p. 783), implying there was no main or interaction effect based on their *stated* beliefs. This suggests these students relied on the interpretation of difficulty that was readily and immediately accessible (Oyserman et al., 2018). Similar findings were reported in a sample of 163 sixth graders from

low-income families, and another sample of 189 undergraduates from the University of Southern

California (Oyserman et al., 2018), with two notable exceptions. The majority of students from

the elementary school, placed in the difficulty-as-impossible condition did not explicitly

disagree, when asked, that difficulty means impossible (Oyserman et al., 2018). It is possible that

as elementary school students, school is less relevant—or *Good*—compared to the beliefs of their

university counterparts and, consequently for them, difficulty could be considered too

challenging. The other exception was in the control group from the University of Southern

California (Oyserman et al., 2018). These students performed exceptionally well. This is

considered to be an elite—or *Good*—school, meaning priming wouldn't necessarily impact the

neutral condition if, generally speaking, these students already embodied a difficulty-as-

important mindset. These findings suggest school beliefs could be a mediating variable in this

analysis.

        Culture-based normative interpretations of what difficulty means are also important.

Cultural norms define people's expectations for behavior given specific circumstances

(O'Donnell et al., 2021) and can impact their perceptions and reasoning (Hamedani & Markus,

2019). As Oyserman's research suggests, culture is an empirically relevant variant. (O'Donnell

et al., 2021):

- Americans have a more culture-rooted sense that difficulty is associated with
  impossibility rather than importance.

- In a sample of 2,031 English-language speaking Americans, volunteers free associated
  the word difficulty more with impossibility than with importance.

- Google Ngrams was used to measure the frequency of word associations with difficult
  and difficulty in the English-language corpus. "The words difficult and difficulty are

7.74 times more commonly associated with impossibility than importance in the corpus, a significant and large difference, paired $t\,(200) = 11.91\ p < .001,\ d = 0.84$)" (O'Donnell et al., 2021, p. 7). Moreover, the phrase *difficult or impossible* occurs 11.90 times more often than *difficult and important*.

- When given a sorting task, samples of American adults, and American middle and high school students responded more frequently to difficulty and impossible word pairings compared to difficulty and importance.

- The three words or phrases participants were most likely to associate with difficult or difficulty were unmanageable, reluctance or unwillingness, and nuisance. In comparison, the words or phrases least likely to be associated with difficult or difficulty were testing, exacting, and great effort.

- Difficulty is not associated more with impossibility than importance in India and China. Instead, these cultures report a "both-and" logic such that difficulty can mean both impossible and important.

Research supports that the interpretation of difficulty varies depending on where people live (O'Donnell et al., 2021).

This is relevant because cultural norms likely inform policies in institutions (e.g., schools), influence parenting and teaching practices, and define the standards by which people (e.g., students) judge themselves (O'Donnell et al, 2021). For example, no-zero grade policies exist in some schools in British Columbia, Canada, meaning that teachers are not permitted to take marks off for late assignments or to give marks of zero. The idea is that students are generally not to be assessed for behavior such as handing in late work, class participation, and attendance. They are only to be assessed on learning outcomes. Behavioral issues are, instead, to

be dealt with by administrators or school counselors—likely resulting in delays in feedback for

students. Also, many school districts in British Columbia are replacing marks with a four-point

proficiency scale, as shown in Figure 7, for kindergarten up to grade 9. This means some

students will be at risk of being told that, at the very least, they "demonstrate an initial

understanding of the concepts and competencies" (B.C. Ministry of Education, (2018, July 31)

even if—in reality—they don't have the prerequisite skills needed to learn at a reasonable pace.

These policies, likely driven by societal normative beliefs, could affect students' interpretations

of difficulty not to mention their ability to perform unless other measures of support are in place.

Figure 7

Four-point Provincial Proficiency Scale in British Columbia, Canada

The **four-point provincial proficiency scale** is used in K-9 to communicate student progress in all areas of learning. The four points on the scale include Emerging, Developing, Proficient, and Extending.

Proficiency Scale	Emerging	Developing	Proficient	Extending
	The student demonstrates an initial understanding of the concepts and competencies relevant to the expected learning.	The student demonstrates a partial understanding of the concepts and competencies relevant to the expected learning.	The student demonstrates a complete understanding of the concepts and competencies relevant to the expected learning.	The student demonstrates a sophisticated understanding of the concepts and competencies relevant to the expected learning.

In comparison, Oyserman developed a *Schools-to-Jobs* after-school program for 208

students from low-income families to help the participants link the importance of school to their

future work identities. Students were taught that failing is a normal part of learning, they were

given opportunities to practice the skills needed to be effectively engaged in school (e.g., effort

and the development of clear and plausible strategies to achieve academic goals), and they were

given experiences to help them anticipate problems and find resources. Parents and other

community leaders were also included in the final weeks of the program and were instructed on

how to provide continuity of support. There were significant findings reported about the

students: a greater sense of connection to school ($p = 0.03$, $d = 0.36$); more interested in

performing well ($p = 0.04$, $d = 0.25$); more plausible strategies identified in alignment with their

possible selves ($p = 0.06$, $d = 0.25$); a lower frequency in delinquent behaviors ($p = 0.08$, $d =$

0.22) combined with higher attendance scores ($p = 0.003$, $d = 0.45$). By learning to see difficulty-

as-important—with high expectations and high support—these students became more engaged.

In many ways, Oyserman's program aligns with the constructs of grit (Duckworth, 2016)

and growth mindset (Dweck & Leggett, 1988). Grit (2016) is defined as the combination of

passion with perseverance for the achievement of long-term, meaningful goals. It is not passion

alone but deliberate practice—which is not always intrinsically and immediately rewarding—

based on expert and timely feedback that has been empirically linked to higher performance

outcomes (Duckworth et al., 2011; Duckworth, 2016). Self-awareness and self-discipline count,

with self-discipline being a better predictor of grades over IQ by a factor of 2 (Duckworth &

Seligman, 2005). In comparison, growth mindset assumes that intelligence is malleable and can

be developed over time (Blackwell et al., 2017). An interesting finding in Dweck's most recent

research indicates parents and teachers need to have more than a growth mindset themselves to

instill this belief in children (Haimovitz & Dweck, 2017). Some parents subscribe to the idea,

"praise the effort, not the outcome" or they praise effort,—regardless of the strategy—possibly to

offer empathy or to boost self-esteem. (Haimovitz & Dweck, 2017). However, what is important

is tying together the process (e.g., strategies or effort) with the outcomes (Haimovitz & Dweck,

2017). In one study by Sirvani, where parents of 52 freshman high school students were given

twice weekly feedback about homework and test scores, students significantly outperformed the

participants in the control group, with the biggest improvement associated with the lower

achieving students (effect size = .80, p = .03)—the kids who needed additional support in

completing their work(Sirvani, 2007). Guiding children in their interpretation of difficulty can

have a significant impact.

Teaming Practices

Amy Edmondson (2012) is responsible for developing the organizational construct

teaming. It focuses on the application of intentional practices to guide organizations operating in

knowledge-based economies to maximize innovation and competitive capacities (Edmondson,

2012). As organizations have become more complex, simple forms of measurement no longer

apply (Edmondson, 2012). Take, for example, an assembly line. Instrumentation set up to

monitor the essential components of production will quickly highlight when problems arise. That

is different compared to complex, knowledge-based work, where progress is made based on a

multitude of interdependent, multidimensional processes. Edmondson (2012) refers to complex

systems as ones made up of several feedback loops, where part A influences part B, which then

impacts part C, and that, in turn, affects part A. Nonlinear, these combined series of events result

in unpredictable dynamics. In many ways, this describes the experiences students, their parents,

and their teachers face in relation to school. That means, predicting outcomes based on

simplified, linear, unidirectional mechanisms can lead to flawed results.

That is why teaming is associated with learning rather than outcomes (Edmondson,

2012). It means leaders create psychologically safe environments, where learning from failure is

an accepted norm, and where people intentionally span interdisciplinary boundaries to learn

more (Edmondson, 2012). Psychological safety is a *shared* belief. It develops when people feel

respected and supported for taking interpersonal risks for the benefit of a collective outcome.

When it exists, individuals from cross-disciplinary boundaries (e.g., teacher-student-parent) feel

safe enough to speak up and share different ideas, people experience more clarity of thought,

healthy conflict can be thoughtfully managed, failures can be mitigated, innovation can be

elevated, obstacles impeding goal achievement can be removed, and accountability can be

increased. "Productively engaging the conflict that teaming creates is done not by avoiding

emotions and personal differences, but rather by developing a willingness to explore different

beliefs and values…Fostering an atmosphere in which trust and respect thrive, and flexibility and

innovation flourish, pays off even in the most deadline-driven work settings (Edmondson, 2012,

p. 79). Take for example, when a child is engaging in disruptive behaviors in class. In a

psychologically safe situation, the parent will listen respectfully to the concerns shared by the

teacher, offer their perspective and then, together, the parent and teacher will generate ideas for

support. The conversation may feel uncomfortable, at times, but both will persist in the interest

of helping the child and they will keep one another apprised of progress over the coming weeks.

If instead, the parent is annoyed and blames the teacher for providing insufficient support, the

child's behavior may get worse and the teacher may become less engaged with both the parent

and the child, especially since there are likely other students needing attention who are willing to

cooperate. The outcomes are different depending on the approach.

Respect is fundamental to the creation of psychologically safe environments. The 2018

Global Teacher Status Index ranks teachers from 35 countries around the world (Dolton & De

Vries, 2018). Teachers in China are ranked on par with doctors (reported as the highest status

profession), whereas in Canada and the U.S. teachers are ranked the equivalent to librarians.

These data were compared to the 2018 PISA survey results and the findings suggest that

improved student performance correlates with higher teacher status (Dolton & De Vries, 2018).

Table 1

A Spectrum of Reasons for Failure (Edmondson, 2012)

Blameworthy	**Deviance** An individual chooses to violate a prescribed process or practice. **Inattention** An individual inadvertently deviates from specifications **Lack of Ability** An individual doesn't have the skills, conditions, or training to execute a job. **Process Inadequacy** A competent individual adheres to a prescribed but faulty or incomplete process **Task Challenge** An individual faces a task too difficult to be executed reliably every time. **Process Complexity** A process composed of many elements breaks down when it encounters novel interactions.
Praiseworthy	**Uncertainty** A lack of clarity about future events causes people to take seemingly reasonable actions that produce undesired results. **Hypothesis Testing** An experiment conducted to prove that an idea or a design will succeed fails. **Exploratory Testing** An experiment conducted to expand knowledge and investigate a possibility leads to an undesired result.

Accountability is also important (Edmondson, 2012). Edmondson has created a spectrum

of reasons for failure that range from blameworthy to praiseworthy, which is included in Table 1

(Edmondson, 2012). Most people agree that deliberate failure warrants blame. It involves the

intentional violation of rules. For example, if a teacher ignores a student's complaint about

bullying because the child generally exhibits disruptive behaviors in class, that would be a

blameable act. However, if the teacher is unable to help the child because a lot of the bullying happens online and outside of the classroom or the child acts in ways that precipitate the bullying, further discussion and collaboration would be a more appropriate way to help the student: the teacher could then advocate on the student's behalf; the child would feel less isolated, the child would learn that difficulty means important, the child would develop problem-solving and resilience skills. Otherwise, blaming leaves the child not only with the problem but also with no means for support—they are at an increased risk of feeling isolated.

Second on this list of failures, is inattention. That could go either way. Condemnation would be warranted if a teacher spent time making summer plans rather than engaging with their class. However, if the reason the teacher didn't help a student was that they were supporting the other 119 individuals in their care for that day, blaming only makes things worse—encouraging the child to adopt self-centered behaviors that may eventually compromise their relationship with their teacher. Edmondson's research suggests all other failures—after inattention—are not blameworthy and, in fact, some failures, such as hypothesis testing (e.g., trying out a new teaching method) are praiseworthy even though that is not how most people respond (Edmondson, 2012). Appendix C provides other examples of perceived failures in school and how this spectrum of failure applies.

Accountability is reflected in school policies. For example, the Province of British Columbia (B.C. Ministry of Education, 2018, July 30) publishes the disciplinary outcomes of teachers—detailing what teachers did wrong while maintaining the confidentiality of students (this is important to protect students)— on a BC government website. Rate my Teacher (Rate my Teacher, n.d.) is another online platform that allows students to share their one-sided uncensored stories anonymously and publicly. Not only can these unbalanced stories and social shaming

practices be reputationally damaging, but they can also increase the vulnerability of teachers, and possibly erode their sense of psychological safety. That has the potential to affect students. In comparison, organizations framed around learning rather than outcomes, in psychologically safe environments, tend to experience elevated levels of engagement, performance, and work satisfaction where creativity and learning not only take root but flourish (Edmondson, 2012).

Part III: Parent Beliefs About School

The construal principle "states that to understand and predict human behavior, we must focus on people's proximate (current) construals of themselves and their environment" (Wilson, 2022, p. 2). In other words, to improve student outcomes, we need to get inside students' heads and understand how they see the world as it relates to their ability to navigate. Martin Fishbein's reasoned action approach (RAA) framework, based on the theory of planned behavior model, illustrates the multidimensionality and interdependence of actual control as it relates to beliefs, attitudes, societal norms, and perceived behavioral control (Ajzen, 2012). A model of the theory of planned behavior is provided in Figure 8 (Ajzen, 2012). It assumes an individual's actions are determined by behavioral, normative, and control beliefs (Ajzen, 2012):

- Behavioral beliefs are based on probable outcomes and evaluations of those outcomes, based on the potential actions being evaluated. Combined these beliefs result in positive or negative *attitudes*.

- Normative beliefs are based on injunctive norms (e.g., what the important people in your life want you to do) and descriptive norms (e.g., "the observed or inferred actions of those important social referents" (Ajzen, 2012, p. 17)). These beliefs combine in an aggregate sum across accessible referents to give a measure of the perceived social pressure, otherwise referred to as *subjective norm*.

- Control beliefs are based on an individual's perceived volitional control over outcomes. These control beliefs then combine with the individual's other beliefs about being able to execute the task, taking into account factors that will facilitate (e.g., resources) or impede (e.g., obstacles) outcomes, to come up with an expectation of *perceived behavioral control*, similar to the construct of self-efficacy.

All three of these measures—attitudes, perceived norms, and perceived control—combine to form a behavioral intention. Intention then combines with a person's actual control (e.g., their actual ability to complete the task) to create the behavior.

Figure 8

Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 2012)
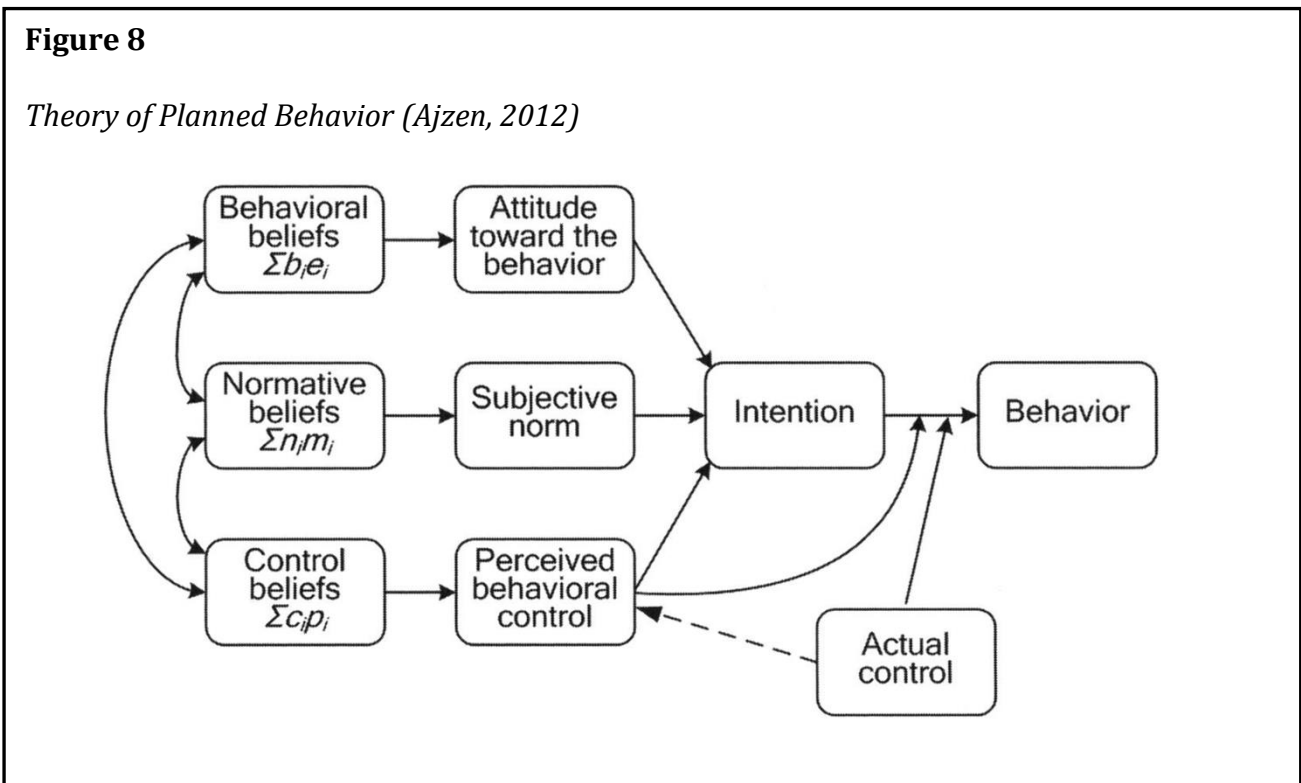
How Parent Beliefs Can Influence the Student

This is where the role of parent school beliefs comes into play. The following are two typical complaints shared by students with their parents (additional examples are included in Appendix D). The *react* response is based on System 1 thinking for the parent. It evokes images, often emotionally laden and based on stereotypes and biases (e.g., misinformation, anchor points, framing), and then quickly fills in the blanks to create a logical pattern. In comparison, the *navigate* response is based on a more rational approach that is informed by asking questions, considering solutions, collaborating, and conscious thought to compensate for errors in judgment. It is also driven by a desire to help build positive beliefs about school that, in these examples, support the following primals: the world is *Good, Just, Enticing, Interesting, Abundant, Worth Exploring, and Meaningful*.

Child Complaint # 1: Math is so boring and useless! I have to complete useless worksheets on like terms!!!

Parent (REACT): I found math boring, too. Schools should be more progressive and should be challenging kids. I know you are smart! (PRIMALS: low *Just, Interesting, Abundant, Worth Exploring, Meaningful*)

Parent (NAVIGATE): Sometimes people are bored because they are missing foundational skills. It's like lifting weights in the gym—if it's too heavy and you don't have the ability, you won't want to try.

Also, sometimes intentional practice is required to develop mastery. If you practice until you become fluid with the skill, then you can do more interesting thinking in the longer term.

Let's think about how like terms can be used in real life. For example, consider how food is stored in the fridge, how items are organized in the grocery store. Think about how you put clothes away in your drawers, how we organize our cutlery, dishes. You put things together that are the same so that you can see what you have, make meaning of them, simplify, find them, optimize, make decisions. Your teacher may be onto something. Now, you can frame your worksheet exercises in a more meaningful way.

———————————————————

Child Complaint # 2: I suck at math!!!

Parent (REACT): I wasn't good at math, either. School is for smart people. (PRIMALS: low *Just, Interesting, Abundant, Worth Exploring, Meaningful*)

Parent (NAVIGATE): Math is a hierarchical subject, meaning if you don't understand a fundamental concept, you could easily be lost. Why don't you arrange to go over your homework with your teacher to see what it is you need to work on? We can then figure out resources to help you should you need extra support. The sooner you can develop your fundamental skills, the more you will enjoy being able to apply them in other more meaningful ways. Why don't we take a minute and think of how math relates to your interests?

In both the *react* and *navigate* responses, the parents are reasonable people and have good intentions.

According to Fishbein's theory (Azjen, 2012), parents—generally speaking—would be referents that matter. That means, they carry some weight in establishing a child's subjective normative beliefs. Even though they think their *react* responses are reasonable (e.g., based on

their previous experiences with school), these parents are contributing to their children's beliefs that school is *bad* (e.g., *unjust, boring, barren, not worth exploring, meaningless*). In other words, while meaning to help (e.g., they are trying to empathize with their child or build their child's self-esteem), there is a chance—based on their own negative beliefs about school—that they are lowering their child's subjective norm, such that their child's intention to perform will be less. This is particularly problematic if it is a task the child already doesn't want to do (e.g., homework). And the reality is, for most students, at some point challenges develop, and learning becomes hard. In comparison, the *navigate* responses are consistent with the self-determination theory of motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000) in meeting the child's innate needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Intrinsic motivation is provided externally by providing the child with guidance to make choices that lead to a better sense of mastery while encouraging collaboration with the child's teacher, and internally by adding a broader perspective to help the child find meaning in the work they need to do. These two approaches will likely result in different outcomes for the child.

As the RAA theory demonstrates, beliefs are important but so is actual control. And, as shown in Figure 8 (Ajzen, 2012) concerning the theory of planned behavior, actual control— meaning mastery—counts twice. It influences perceived behavioral control plus it interacts with intention to create behavior. In other words, even though a person intends to do something, their outcome is limited by their *actual* skills and abilities. Consequently, if a student's complaints are based on a lack of knowledge (e.g., they are bored because they don't understand a concept not because they are too smart and need more challenge) and their intention to perform has been lowered, the amount that they learn or the skills that they develop can become compromised. Consequently, when cycling through the RAA loop again, not only will their attitude toward the

behavior be lower, but their perceived behavioral control will be as well because they are now further behind (e.g., they have less actual control). As the child becomes more disengaged, their beliefs about school are confirmed, school is *unjust, boring, dull, barren, not worth exploring, meaningless, bad*, when in fact, school isn't the problem at all. The child is simply behind. This suggests the interconnectedness of beliefs and actual control could have a compounding effect, potentially creating a negative spiral.

In comparison, consider the effects of a healthy parent-teacher relationship, meaning the parent's belief is that the teacher and school are *Good*. In this case, when challenges occur, the parent would be more likely try and navigate, helping to increase the normative beliefs of their child. This, in turn, could have an upward effect on the child's intentions. The child would then be encouraged to try hard, either developing new strategies, practicing gaining mastery, or working with their teacher. This would likely result in an increase in actual control and, in turn, higher performance behaviors. Not only that, through this process these students are more likely to learn the value of feedback and deliberate practice (Duckworth et al., 2011; Duckworth, 2016), meaning their grit, self-efficacy, and resilience skills are more likely to develop. An upwards spiral occurs. Moreover, their attitudes and perceived behavioral control are more robust and, as a result, may have an inoculating effect if their environment changes and they become surrounded by lower subjective norms. That could be particularly important, especially in adolescence, when children become more psychologically and emotionally independent from their parents and more dependent on their peers, their work is less regulated by their teachers, and they have multiple teachers so that their ability to develop healthy and dependable relationships becomes considerably more challenging. Once again, parent beliefs seem to matter.

Consider the following research on parental expectations. A meta-analysis of 169 studies

of 538,548 parents of children and adolescents found "small to moderate bivariate cross-

sectional ($r = .30$) and longitudinal associations ($r = .28$) between parental expectations and

achievement which persisted after statistically controlling for socioeconomic status" (Pinquart &

Ebeling, 2019, p. 463). These effects were partially mediated by academic engagement (e.g.,

persistence, completing homework) and academic self-concept of the child, as well as by the

child's educational expectations. Interestingly, the achievement-supportive behaviors (e.g.,

encouraging a child to try their best at school) of parents had a lesser effect. Instead, *beliefs* were

significant. "Expectations predicted change in achievement while achievement predicted change

in expectations over time. Thus, we found that parental expectations do not only reflect, to some

degree, the level of past or present achievement but also have a prospective effect on change in

future achievement" (Pinquart & Ebeling, 2019, p. 476). The statistical effects were stronger in

the direction of parental expectations when considering changes in achievement (Pinquart &

Ebeling, 2019). Parental expectations tend to be higher than achievement, suggesting parents are

striving to improve their children's outcomes (Pinquart & Ebeling, 2019).

The potential impact of these spiral effects is especially important given that empirical

research suggests low performers tend to be overconfident compared to high performers (Kruger

& Dunning, 1999). This phenomenon has been called "unskilled and unaware" meaning that

people who perform poorly on tasks tend to lack insight into their errors and this, in turn, inhibits

their ability to realistically monitor their actions. Instead, better outcomes are more likely to be

realized if students are guided in ways to connect (e.g., teaming, grit, growth mindset) seeing

school as a vehicle to overcome their challenges (e.g., by learning that difficulty means

important) in ways that build toward the belief that school is *Good*. When it comes to individual engagement, beliefs *and* mastery count.

How Parent Beliefs Can Influence Cultural Norms

Collective beliefs of parents about school are also represented by RAA theory. They are included in the summative normative beliefs making up the subject norm. That means even though a parent's personal beliefs are that school is *Good,* their beliefs could be more than offset by the normative beliefs of others, and that could affect their child—not to mention the incongruence of these beliefs could create additional challenges (Paulsen et al., 1998). And while mastery has been shown to be influential on an individual level, it may also combine with cultural norms to have an impact on a much larger scale.

Much like primals, normative beliefs about school are likely made up of several elements. Take, for example, how passion influences learning and how its effects change depending on the cultural norms influencing students (Li et al., 2021, p. 1). Cultures that emphasize individualism (e.g., North American and Western Europe) tend to correlate passion— based on interests, enjoyment, and self-efficacy—with higher levels of motivation and performance (Li et al., 2021). In comparison, a more interdependent model of education whereby the idea of doing well in school is, instead, influenced by the significant adults connected to the child, passion is less important. Based on a sense of duty and obligation, students uphold their responsibilities and do what is expected of them as a way of making their adult role models proud (Li et al., 2021. p. 2). Practices that reinforce a more interdependent approach to motivation include focusing less on what is of interest or exciting to the individual and more on what is necessary and expected to excel or achieve high standards, given the context. Children are encouraged to be flexible and to adapt to the tasks at hand, with their personal interests being

secondary. (Li, 2021). In subtle ways, cultural norms influence how parents frame their beliefs

about school.

Figure 9

Culture's Influence on Academic Motivation and Achievement (Li et al.,, 2021)

Cultural context		Achievement-relevant ideas, socialization, educational policies, practices, norms and products emphasize:		Cultural construal of what moves people to action (model of agency)	Student outcome
Individualist	→	Pursuing what is exciting and interesting regardless of social and family expectations; Expressing personal preferences in making academic choices; Belief that students will do well when interested, enjoying, feeling efficacious in what they are doing.	↔	Independent motivation	→ Passion predicts achievement more strongly.
Collectivist	→	Fulfilling expectations and contributing to success and well-being of family and/or important relationships; Comparing oneself to relevant others and excelling in a competitive educational system; Expectation that students will adjust and do well in most situations; academic choice often not available/relevant.	↔	Interdependent motivation	→ Passion predicts achievement but to a lesser extent. Parental support predicts achievement over and above passion.

Using PISA survey data, accumulated over several years, a meta-analysis was performed

to measure the link between passion and academic achievement as a function of individualistic

versus interconnected cultural norms. Societal individualism scores were calculated based on an

average from two large-scale, widely used, international surveys: Hofstede, 2001; Gelfand, et al.,

2004. Data were analyzed based on the years for which passion was measured by subject area:

science was 2015 ($n = 434,948$ students and 56 societies); math was 2012 ($n = 416,513$ students

and 52 societies); reading was 2009 ($n = 402,776$ students and 54 societies) and these were the

findings (Li et al., 2021).

- In individualistic societies: there is a strong correlation between passion and achievement ($r = 0.37$); parental emotional support is not related to achievement

- In collectivistic societies: the correlation is less strong between passion and achievement ($r = 0.26$); parental emotional support matters in predicting performance

A summary of these research findings is provided in Figure 9.

Despite the achievement-related practices associated with collectivistic societies, research suggests these goals for achievement are not necessarily construed as coercive or overbearing to the extent that the relationships between parents and their adolescent children become strained (Nisbett & Norenzayan, 1999, as cited in Li et al., 2021). Instead, a brain imaging study conducted while asking participants to "make judgments about themselves and their mothers" (Ng, Pomerantz & Lam, 2007, as cited in Li et al., 2021, p. 2) revealed two distinct areas of brain activation in North American participants compared to one area in Chinese participants. This suggests an "embodied or close connection with self and mother" (Ng, Pomerantz & Lam, 2007, as cited in Li et al., 2021, p.2). In other words, instead of being a source of restriction, the interdependent cultural lens may serve as "a source of empowerment, persistence, and resilience (Markus, 2016, Markus, 2014, Hamedani & Markus, 2013; Iyengar & Lepper, 1999)" (Li et al., 2021, p. 8). Moreover, when these students are 15 years old, the emotional messages of support from their parents still have value. As Duckworth's research on grit suggests, we take inspiration from the people we know and who know more than us. Timely and accurate feedback, intentional practice, and "gritty" communities (e.g., high expectations, high support) are essential for growth (Duckworth, 2016). Mentors and environments matter. In comparison, adolescents from more individualistic cultures appear to have less of a connection with the key adults in their

world during a period of life that is well documented to be tumultuous and in cultures where

higher levels of loneliness for this age group are reported.

These points are particularly relevant because, again, it comes down to the messages we

share. Consider the video entitled, Dear Teacher (Power of Positivity, 2018) which has received

14 million views on Facebook. While it highlights the important challenges experienced by

individuals diagnosed with "autism, Asperger's, ADHD, learning disabilities, Sensory Processing

Disorder, and Central Auditory Processing Disorder" (Power of Positivity, 2018), it doesn't help

students to see how their actions impact others — not to mention how their actions impact their

own learning and ability to meaningfully connect with others. For example, a student can move

quietly and discretely or can move boldly, in a way that both commands the room and is

destructive to others in the class. Kids can adopt strategies to engage in more challenging

homework, or they can simply focus on what they don't understand and not try at all. The

following is a partial transcript of this video with suggestions (in italics) to help students be more

engaged (the complete transcript is included in Appendix E).

- "I HAVE to move, or I can't really pay attention…Let me get up and MOVE while
  I'm learning."

  *I will try my best to stay focused in class. If I need to move, I will try to do so in a
  way that doesn't affect others. Let's work together to think of movements or
  places where I can move to be the least disruptive.*

- "Even though I am not looking at you, I can still listen to what you are saying…Let
  me look wherever I want when you talk to me."

  *I know it is important to look at the people I am talking to in order to connect with
  them. I will do my best to make eye contact but know there will be times I can't.*

> *Those may be good opportunities to talk about my feelings and to think about strategies I can use to keep everyone engaged.*

- "Sometimes my mom or dad end up doing all of my homework…Give me homework I can do all by myself."

  > *If I find the homework too hard, I will tell you what it was I was able to do all by myself. Together we can then find ways for me to continue to learn. I know it is important to let you know my struggles—and also what I am strong at doing—so that I can overcome my challenges and do my best work.*

- And one more thing, my brain may be different than yours but it's still amazing

  > *My brain is different. Thank you for helping me and the other people in our class realize and appreciate that it is still amazing.*

Ironically, this video has been created to help students who are struggling and need extra support, yet the messaging doesn't link students in positive ways to their teachers or school.

To examine the interconnectedness of various cultural norms based on the biases considered in this capstone, Table 2, PISA (2018) Survey Data Comparison to Cultural Normative Trends, and Figure 10, PISA (2018) Survey Trends in Mathematics Performance, have been created which are a compilation of data taken from various international studies (OECD, 2019; Dolton & De Vries, 2018); Li et al., 2021; O'Donnell et al., 2021; Twenge et al., 2021). Mathematics performance was selected due to its hierarchical structure and the importance of mastery. The analysis is not robust or comprehensive. It is a starting point, to hopefully generate further thought.

Table 2

PISA (2018) Survey Data Comparison to Cultural Normative Trends

	Canada	U.S.	China (B-S-J-Z)	Singapore
PISA SURVEY DATA (OECD, 2019)				
MATH Ranking on PISA Survey	9	35	1	2
Percent of Students Scoring at a Level 5 or Higher in Mathematics	15%	8%	44%	37%
Percent of Students Scoring below a Level 2 in Mathematics	16%	27%	2%	7%
BEHAVIOR (Response is MOST LESSONS or EVERY LESSON)				
Students Don't Listen to What the Teacher Says	31%	26%	11%	27%
There is Noise and Disorder	39%	28%	9%	33%
The Teacher has to Wait a Long Time for Students to Quiet Down	27%	22%	8%	26%
Students Don't Start Working for a Long Time After the Lesson Begins	29%	20%	9%	18%
Students Cannot Work Well	19%	15%	9%	14%
ATTENDANCE (Response is NEVER and is based on the previous TWO-week period)				
I Skipped a Whole Day of School	77%	80%	99%	87%
I Skipped Some Classes	67%	81%	93%	88%
I Arrived Late for School	48%	57%	67%	63%
TEACHER STATUS (Dolton & De Vries, 2018)				
Respect Defined by Comparable Profession	Librarian	Librarian	Doctor	Social Worker
Respect for Teachers as Reported by Students (Agree or Mostly Agree, out of 100)	47%	43%	80%	63%
Teacher Status (out of 100) Reported by General Population	60%	50%	100%	68%
EMOTIONAL AND COGNITIVE PARAMETERS				
PARENT EMOTIONAL SUPPORT linked to academic outcomes (Li et al., 2021)	No	No	Yes	Yes
DIFFICULTY-as-Impossible (IMP) versus DIFFICULTY-as Meaningful (O'Donnell et al., 2021)	IMP	IMP	BOTH	BOTH
LONELINESS: Relative Increases in Adolescent from 2002 to 2018 (Twenge et al., 2021)	High	High	Low	Low

Figure 10

PISA (2018) Survey Trends in Mathematics Performance (OECD, 2019)
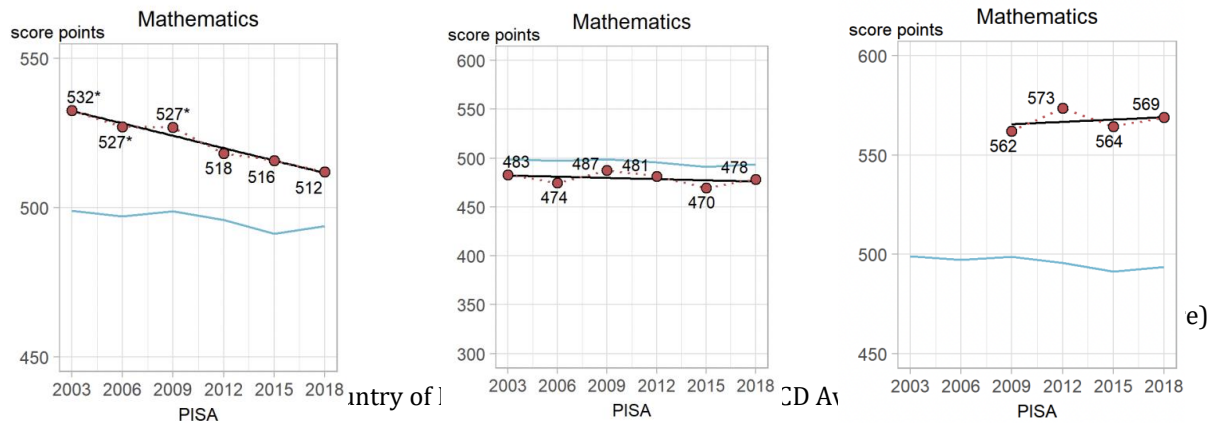
Note: Trending data is not available for the China (B-S-J-Z) region.

Data from the first three countries, Canada, the U.S., and China correlate in an intuitively consistent way. There are fewer behavioral challenges, lower levels of loneliness, higher levels of teacher respect, students have a greater tendency to view difficulty-as-meaningful, and parental emotional support has significance in China compared to Canada and the United States. And, as would be expected, performance levels are more homogeneous (e.g., the gap between the low and high achieving students is less) and consistently higher in China. A total of 44 percent of students perform at or above the highest level in math in China compared to 15 percent in Canada and 8 percent in the United States. In comparison, there is a larger spread between the high and low achieving students in both Canada and the U.S.—2 percent in China,

16 percent in Canada, 27 percent in the United States are below a level 2 rating in math—and

this performance gap is reported to be growing among Canadian students (OECD, 2019).

Less intuitively, however, is the data reflecting the experiences of students from

Singapore. While the higher levels of behavioral challenges and lower teacher rankings correlate

with Singapore having lower academic outcomes compared to China, what is important to notice

is the ranking in math for Singapore is not that much lower: China ranks 1st in math, and

Singapore ranks 2nd. While behavioral challenges are less significant and students do not report

being as lonely in Singapore compared to Canada and the U.S, which correlates with their more

consistent and higher performance outcomes, what stands out in this comparison is that the

overall rankings for math are considerably different (Singapore ranks 2nd, Canada ranks 9th, and

the U.S. ranks 35th). In examining this difference, there are four other things to also consider:

- Parental emotional support is significantly linked to academic outcomes in Singapore
  (Li et al., 2021).

- Respect for teachers is higher in Singapore (Dolton & De Vries, 2018).

- Education is highly valued—by the entire society—in Singapore (Dolton & De Vries,
  2018; Marginson, 2011).

- Students in Singapore are more inclined to view difficulty-as-meaningful (they also
  view difficulty-as-impossible—they view it both ways) (O'Donnell et al., 2021).

It is possible that beliefs about school influence these differences in outcomes.

Amanda Ripley (2013) wrote a book, *The Smartest Kids in the World*, summarizing her

research of the top-performing countries based on the PISA survey results from 2010. She had

this to say about the impact of cultural norms.

I'd been looking around the world for clues as to what other countries were doing right,

but the important distinctions were not about spending or local control or curriculum;

none of that mattered very much. Policies mostly worked in the margins. The

fundamental difference was a psychological one.

The education superpowers believed in rigor. People in these countries agreed on

the purpose of school: School existed to help students master complex academic material.

Other things mattered too, but nothing mattered as much.

The clarity of purpose meant everyone took school more seriously, especially

kids. The most important difference I'd seen so far was the drive of students and their

families. It was viral, and it mattered more than I'd expected…Kids feed off each other.

This feedback loop started back in kindergarten and just grew more powerful each year,

for better and for worse. (Ripley, 2013, p. 117-118)

Given these norms, there may be compounding effects when it comes to culture.

As demonstrated earlier, there is evidence based on RAA theory to indicate that beliefs

and mastery combine to influence outcomes. If that is the case, then the higher and more

consistent levels of mastery plus the marginally rising trends in performance in Singapore could

mean that noisier and more disruptive classrooms are not problematic. That is because students

have developed the skills needed to learn and, as a result, are more self-motivated, have higher

levels of self-efficacy, and are supported emotionally at home (which may also include tutoring

outside of school) while being enveloped in a culture that believes school is *Good*. However, if

mastery levels drop or performance gaps grow, could outcomes change? And this is where the

role of beliefs could be significant. If the normative belief is that school is *bad*, it is possible that

a negative spiral could develop. In cultures where lower levels of teacher respect are realized,

individualism is valued, and the emotional support of parents is no longer relevant, then

difficulty could increasingly *become* impossible for the low-achieving students that, at one point,

simply fell behind. And the students who have stayed connected with their teachers and still have

sufficient mastery along with the resilience, grit, and self-efficacy to sustain those outcomes will

continue to perform well. Cumulatively, that could result in polarizing outcomes for kids in a

world that focuses on making schools better (which, arguably, can help to perpetuate a belief that

school is not *Good*) when, ironically, it is people's beliefs that count.

Beliefs and mastery may also impact the ways schools function. In cultures where school

is believed to be *Good*, and teachers generally feel respected and aligned with parental support,

lower levels of teacher burnout and attrition may exist. That could be of significance given that

burnout is pervasive in the teaching profession on a global scale (Pietarinen et al., 2021).

Burnout leads to serious consequences both for school communities (e.g., high levels of early

retirement and attribution, lower teaching quality) (Dupriez et al., 2016; Goddard & Goddard,

2006; Klusmann et al., 2008) and for their teachers (e.g., health challenges, insomnia,

depression) (Shin et al., 2013). Combined, these mechanisms not only impact all elements of

well-being from the teacher and student's perspectives, but they are potentially critical to

fostering healthy student-teacher relationships which have been shown—throughout this paper—

to be valuable for engagement. Recommendations from this particular study suggest, "that school

leaders should work to build a collective culture at school, characterized by a common set of

goals and values. Values cannot be imposed on teachers but develop through dialogue and

experiences in secure environments" (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017, p. 788). Beliefs can have a

multidimensional impact.

There is also the construct of mattering. Bi-directional in nature, it is about feeling valued *and* adding value, and correlates with personal, relational, and collective well-being (Prilleltensky & Prilleltensky, 2021). It is considered a fundamental psychological need (Prilleltensky, 2020). Feeling valued means that a person feels respected and appreciated and adding value is about "empowerment, autonomy, a sense of control over our lives, mastery, self-efficacy, and self-determination" (Prilleltensky, 2020, p. 17). The idea of "making a difference" was found to be a common motivational thread in hundreds of interviews conducted with volunteers and activists (Pancer, 2015, as cited in Prilleltensky 2020). What is notable about Prilleltensky's work is that mattering is not just about feeling good—it is also about doing good, meaning people need mastery and the ability to develop skills that allow them to contribute to and influence their environments in meaningful ways. Prilleltensky suggests, "without competence, we cannot make a difference. To function productively in the world, we need to know how to perform certain actions that are grounded in knowledge" (Prilleltensky, 2020, p. 19). Then, as people become more skilled and more engaged, they have more opportunities to find meaning (Prilleltensky, 2020). Prilleltensky refers to this as a virtuous cycle: "the benefits of feeling valued will lead to adding value. When others make you feel like you matter, you are more likely to have confidence to play an active role in their lives. The more assets you bring to your community, the more likely you are to receive positive feedback, engendering a positive feedback loop" (Prilleltensky, 2020, p. 22). This suggests when parenting practices and school policies take away responsibilities from children—even with the best of intentions—they could be hindering the ability of their children to matter. Instead, it might be better to work together to help students see where school is *Good*.

Therefore, in terms of supporting schools in the future, it is recommended that researchers examine student and parent beliefs about school. While measurement would be at an individual level, the analysis should factor in cumulative beliefs as well. If it can be shown that beliefs not only matter, but that they influence those around you—and, most notably, your children—people may think twice before sharing negative messages online, they might have more incentive to frame challenges in manageable and meaningful chunks that are less permanent and pervasive while still identifying that problems exist (e.g., they will adopt the difficulty is important mindset), and they might be more inspired to connect, to cross inter-disciplinary boundaries, and to normalize failure as it is one of the only givens in a complex world. In short, parents may realize it is better to navigate along paths where schools are *Good* because striving for that belief might be what ultimately leads their child towards more meaningful engagement.

Part IV: Basic School Beliefs Survey

A research study was developed under the guidance of Jeremy Clifton as a first attempt to measure student beliefs about school and students' perceptions of their parent's beliefs about school to see how they relate to student engagement. A questionnaire was created based on a subset of the primal world beliefs scale (Clifton & Yaden, 2021): *Good, Safe, Just, Enticing, Interesting, Abundant, Worth Exploring, Meaningful*. This survey is currently being distributed at a public post-secondary institution, located in Western Canada, that offers a range of programs from diplomas to master's degrees, with subjects ranging from the applied and natural sciences to business, computing, and trades. This organization was selected for two reasons. First, because of the diversity of its students. Second, many of the students have recently graduated from secondary school. It is expected these students will have a broader perspective on engagement

(e.g., on reflection they may provide a more accurate assessment of their time spent completing homework) compared to high school students, and they should still be young enough to remember their experiences with accuracy. Originally, this study was to be completed as part of this capstone. Unexpected challenges with approvals, however, resulted in a delayed start. Data will, instead, be collected over this coming year.

Part V: Savoring the *Good* in Schools

Schools are complex. Not only that, the potential for parents to make errors in judgment (e.g., based on cognitive heuristics and biases) is not insignificant. As the research findings in this paper suggest, the beliefs of parents can significantly impact their children, meaning parents should consider the messages they share and the ways they respond to challenges (e.g., react versus navigate). But perhaps even more important, evidence suggests there could be value in helping parents and their children see how school is *Good*.

Positive Psychology

Positive Psychology is a field of psychology that focuses on understanding and developing the emotions, behaviors, and cognitions that help individuals thrive over their lifespans. It is about building on strengths that include "the capacity for love and work, courage, compassion, resilience, creativity, curiosity, integrity, self-knowledge, moderation, self-control, and wisdom" (Positive Psychology Center: Our Mission, n.d), taking into account people's unique characteristics as they interact with their environments. Positive psychology also applies to organizations and factors in "strengths that foster better communities, such as justice, responsibility, civility, parenting, nurturance, work ethic, leadership, teamwork, purpose, and tolerance" (Positive Psychology Center: Our Mission, n.d.). As a science, it is not prescriptive,

leading in ways that tell people how to live or what they should value, but instead, it guides

people with strategies to make more informed decisions that are driven by their own priorities—

such as values, virtues, and interests (Positive Psychology Center: Our Mission, n.d.).

For this intervention, Martin Seligman's PERMA model of well-being has been used:

Positive Emotion (P), Engagement (E), Relationships (R), Meaning (M), and Accomplishment

(A) (Seligman, 2011). PERMA not only provides a psychometric measurement of an individual's

level of well-being, but it also provides five elements that can serve as building blocks for

improvement (Seligman, 2018). In other words, positive psychology is not simply about saying,

"Don't worry; be happy" but rather it provides a basis for developing and validating

interventions to help people achieve those ends (e.g., experiencing more positive emotions, being

more engaged, developing better relationships, finding greater meaning, increasing

accomplishments). This distinction is important because otherwise there are risks of mistaking

the ends for the means itself (e.g., no-zero grade policies in schools, the self-esteem movement).

To quote Sir John Templeton, "positive psychology is the study and understanding of the power

of the human spirit to benefit from life's challenges" (Maddux, 2020, p. xxii). Positive

psychology is not about avoiding what is difficult or hard.

Also used to develop this intervention is the primal *world* beliefs scale, which gives

people insight into how they view the world. Like PERMA, telling a person with a low score to

start seeing the world—or, possibly, school—as *Good* is not likely to improve outcomes.

However, this scale does provide an inventory of items that could also—potentially—be used as

building blocks to support well-being. Both the PERMA and primals constructs serve as building

blocks for this PPI that is structured around the construct of savoring.

Savoring

Savoring is defined as "the capacity to notice and appreciate positive experience" (Smith et al., 2014, p. 42). The term *savor* is not synonymous with pleasure (an *outcome*). Instead, it is a self-regulatory *process* that people use to activate their positive feelings. They can do it by (a) reminiscing about positive experiences from the past (b) savoring ongoing experiences in the present or (c) anticipating positive experiences in the future (Smith et al., 2014). It is a form of emotional capitalization that happens when people attend to the positive events in their life and then act in ways to enhance or prolong those feelings (Pitts, 2019). It is how people *respond* that creates value (Bryant, 2021). And while there are trait tendencies that are more naturally suited to savoring, the process of savoring is a skill and is one that can be learned (Bryant, 2021).

A Positive Psychology Intervention: Savoring the *Good* in Schools

This particular intervention provides parents with a structure for engaging with their children in ways that will help them collectively and intentionally learn to savor what is *Good* in school. It is comprised of two parts. Part I is to be completed daily, every weekday, with a parent asking guided questions of their child. Part II is to be completed on Sunday and is a summary, framing the prior week's discussion around the idea of hope. The following is a summary of the questions for parents to share with their children.

> WEEKDAYS
> Each day ask your child to think about times they felt good at school. Then, ask them to draw on those memories and discuss the following three questions. Write down a brief summary of their responses (1 to 2 sentences). Within each of these main questions are three secondary questions.
>
> 1. How did you help someone at school today?
>   Discuss their answer further using one of the three following questions.
>   a. Why was this meaningful to the other person?
>   b. Why was this meaningful to you?

          c. How can you create more of these experiences?

    2. How did someone at school help someone else today?
       Discuss their answer further using one of the three following questions.
          a. Why was this meaningful to the other person?
          b. Why was this meaningful to you?
          c. How can you create more of these experiences?

    3. What happened at school today to help you become a better person?
       Discuss their answer further using one of the three following questions.
          a. Why was this meaningful to you?
          b. In what way does this help you to learn about navigating into the future rather than simply responding to the past?
          c. How can you create more of these experiences?

A. SUNDAYS
    Use the summaries from the prior week to highlight relevant themes going forward. Use these themes to respond to the following prompt, "I am hopeful you are going to have a good week at school because…" and share this with your child.

This PPI is modeled based on the following interventions that have demonstrated empirical significance: thinking about positive events (e.g., the child reflects on times in the day they felt good) (Lyubomirsky, Sousa, and Dickerhoof, 2006, as cited in Smith et al., 2014), recalling three positive daily events (e.g., the child reflects on three positive events) (Seligman, Steen, Park & Peterson, 2005, as cited in Smith et al., 2014; McCabe-Fitch, 2009, as cited in Smith et al., 2014)), basking in achievement (e.g., the reflection includes ways the child has become a better person) (Keeney, 2009 as cited in Smith et al., 2014), reflecting on recent personal acts of kindness (e.g., the reflection includes ways the child has helped others) (Otake, Shimai, Tanaka-Matsumi, Otsui, and Frederickson, 2006, as cited in Smith et al., 2014); adopting a positive focus (e.g., each question has a positive orientation) (Bryant & Veroff, 2007, as cited in Smith et al., 2014), and engaging in daily savoring exercises (e.g., the intervention takes place every weekday plus Sundays) (Schueller, 2010, as cited in Smith et al., 2014); the power of positive imagination (e.g., the parent formulates a hopeful image for each upcoming week) (Quoidbach Wood, &

Hansenne, 2009, as cited in Smith et al., 2014; Lyubomirsky, Dickerhoof, Boehm, & Sheldon, 2011, as cited in Smith et al., 2014).

It is expected that as parents and their children engage in this exercise, they will learn to notice more of what is *Good* in schools. Generally speaking, savoring has no limits and, in fact, a longitudinal research study correlates greater momentary savoring with regular positive events, and this savoring, in turn, correlates with higher, daily levels of happiness (Jose, Lim & Bryant, 2012). By enhancing positive emotions, savoring supports the benefits of Fredrickson's (2009) broaden and build theory whereby positive affect broadens a person's sense of awareness while concurrently building their physical and psychological resources, resulting in a positive spiral over time. When people feel good and are interested in what is around them, they can respond to their curiosity and are more likely to explore in unexpected ways, learning more each time (Fredrickson, 2009; Frijda & Sundararajan, 2007). A more expansive mindset can become habitual, supporting people in the development of valuable skills and meaningful resources. This, in turn, leads to greater resilience (Pitts, 2019; Tugade & Fredrickson, 2007), the formation and development of social interconnections (Bryant & Veroff, 2007, as cited in Smith et al., 2014), and higher levels of meaning (Smith & Bryant, 2017). Said more simply, and as demonstrated in Appendix B, by learning more about what is *Good* in school, parents will be better informed and, in turn, better prepared to help their children navigate in ways that help them to become more connected with school (e.g., it is *Good, Just, Enticing, Interesting, Abundant, Worth Exploring, Meaningful*).

It is important to note that savoring does not suggest in any way that real problems should be ignored (e.g., physical plant, unfair teacher, lack of course offerings). Instead, savoring allows people to be aware of the interdependence between positive and negative experiences and gives

people tools for taking an intentional approach to overcome challenges (Bryant & Smith, 2015, as cited in Smith et al., 2014). By having a better appreciation for what is good in schools, parents can help their children alter their pessimistic explanatory styles based on permanent and pervasive language to more optimistic explanatory styles based on temporary, specific language. This, in turn, can create space for behavioral modifications leading to success (Reivich and Shatté, 2002). For example, the "bad" teacher could become:

- …the impatient teacher when the class is unruly. Through savoring the parent has become aware of many times the teacher has been good. The parent could then support their child in appreciating the importance of behaving appropriately in class to support a healthier classroom environment (e.g., be on time for class, don't sit near friends if tempted to chat and engage in distracting behaviors). If the problem continues to persist, there could be merit in respectfully sharing the child's perspective with the teacher. Perhaps more support is needed to achieve better classroom management (e.g., there are challenging students in the class and the teacher is exhausted, the teacher is burned out or is overwhelmed with personal challenges, or the teacher would benefit from learning better classroom management techniques).

- …the teacher who really cared. As the student learns to work more collaboratively with their teacher, they begin to overcome their learning challenges. They then started to reframe the teacher's high expectations from being negative messages (e.g., the teacher makes the student feel they are not good enough) to being messages of hope (e.g., the teacher believes the student is very capable and is setting the bar high so that they can do more).

- …the unsafe teacher. The teacher needs to be removed from the classroom right away.

In general, savoring has been shown to have positive consequences across people's lifespans (Pitts, 2019).

Table 3

Savoring the Good in Schools: Intervention Variations

Main Question Variations (based on *just* primal)		
Q. 1 How did you *help* someone at school today?	• How did you *show generosity to* someone at school today? • How did you *demonstrate kindness to* someone at school today?	
Q. 2 How did someone at school *help* someone else today.	• How did someone at school *show generosity to* someone else today. • How did someone at school *demonstrate kindness* someone else today.	
Secondary Question Variations (based on *Enticing interesting, abundant, worth exploring, meaningful* primals)		
a. Why was this *meaningful* to the other person?	*Enticing:* *Interesting:* *Abundant:* *Abundant:* *Abundant:* *Worth Exploring:* *Meaningful:*	Why was this *fascinating* to the other person? Why was this *interesting* to the other person? Why was this *an opportunity for* the other person? Why was this *an opportunity to learn for* the other person? Why was this *an opportunity to become more engaged for* the other person? Why was this *worth exploring for* the other person? Why was this meaningful to the other person?
b. Why was this *meaningful* to you?	*Enticing:* *Interesting:* *Abundant:* *Abundant:* *Abundant:* *Worth Exploring:* *Meaningful:*	Why was this *fascinating* to you? Why was this *interesting* to you? Why was this *an opportunity for* you? Why was this *an opportunity to learn for* you? Why was this *an opportunity to become more engaged for* you? Why was this *worth exploring* to you? Why was this *meaningful* to you?

As with any positive intervention, people who adopt a diverse range and number of savoring strategies tend to experience higher levels of happiness (Bao & Lyubomirsky, 2014; Quoidbach et al., 2010, as cited in Smith et al., 2014). That is why this intervention offers variations—as noted in Table 3—to the structured question format. These variations also allow for personalization as a function of the primal beliefs being targeted for change. As Martin

Seligman aptly noted, "Human imaginative prospection is like the staging of a play using appearances to simulate the actors and event; but it must be more, for one must be in the drama, and the script must feel real" (Seligman et al., 2013).This intervention also builds on the idea of *relational* savoring, a form of savoring that engages people in narrowing their attention to attachment-based experiences—"moments when an individual felt they served as an attachment figure for others (as in caring for them or supporting them) or when someone else filled that role for them (by taking care of them or supporting them)" (Borelli et al., 2020, p. 333). Engaging the attachment system has been found to activate feelings of emotional security (Borelli et al., 2020) and it also reduces people's anticipation of threats. This is consistent with Edmondson's work on teaming, and the importance of psychological safety to learn (Edmondson, 2012). Savoring has been shown to promote healthy attachments between the mother-child dyad (Gentzler, Ramsey, & Black, 2015, as cited in Bryant, 2021) and to enhance the quality of life for the parents of young children (Burkhart, Borelli, Rasmussen, and Sbarra, 2015, as cited in Bryant, 2021).

Goals of This Intervention

This intervention is designed around the achievement of six broad-based goals, as shown in Figure 11, Savoring the *Good* in Schools: to improve student and parent beliefs about school, to improve the well-being (PERMA) of both the parent and the child, to increase the child's sense of mattering, to improve flourishing in schools, to increase agency for both the individual (e.g., students and parents) as well as the collective (e.g., school) and to find hope. By measuring student, parent, and teacher PERMA and primals levels before and after completing the intervention (e.g., after 1-month, 3-month, and 6-month intervals of continual use) it may be possible to gain insight into the causation of primal beliefs and how those beliefs relate to well-being.

Figure 11

Savoring the Good in Schools
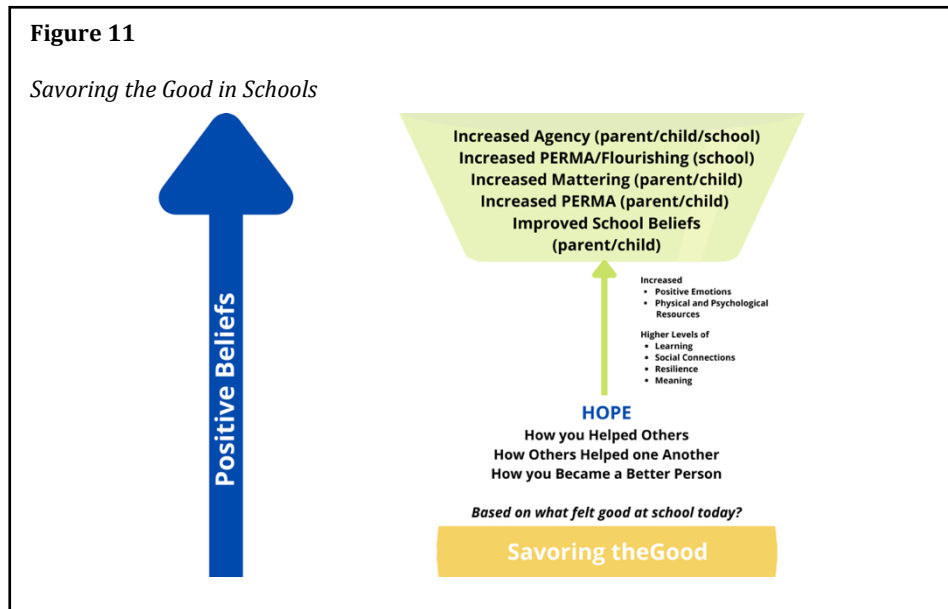
Student and Parent Beliefs. This intervention has been designed to incorporate six primals (and could be expanded to include more)—*Just, Enticing, Interesting, Abundant, Worth Exploring, Meaningful*. The three main questions are structured around the *Just* primal belief, which is based on the idea that the world is fair. This triad of questions provides opportunities for reflection based on how a child contributed (e.g., helped someone), how they benefited (e.g., how they became better), and how their surrounding community offers support (e.g., how they witnessed helping behaviors around them). The other primals are addressed in the secondary questions (e.g., why was this Meaningful).

Well-Being of the Parent and Child. A growing amount of literature links savoring practices to well-being outcomes. The process of focusing on experiences that feel good at school is intended to increase the positive affect (P) of the parent and the child. An individual's tendency to savor is associated with greater levels of happiness, more life satisfaction, and higher perceived control (Bryant & Veroff, 2007, as cited in Smith et al., 2014; Lyubomirsky, Sousa, &. Dickerhoof, 2006, as cited in Smith et al., 2014; Otake, Shimai, Tanaka-Matsumi, Otsui, and

Frederickson, 2006, as cited in Smith et al., 2014). Similarly, savoring strategies that amplify

enjoyment are associated with higher positive affect and increased life satisfaction (Smith et al.,

2014). In comparison, the identification of helping behaviors is meant to increase the awareness

of the child's personal engagement (E), feelings of relatedness (R), and sense of meaning (M)

and, combined with the act of reflecting on improvement experiences, is expected to increase a

child's sense of achievement (A).

Figure 12A

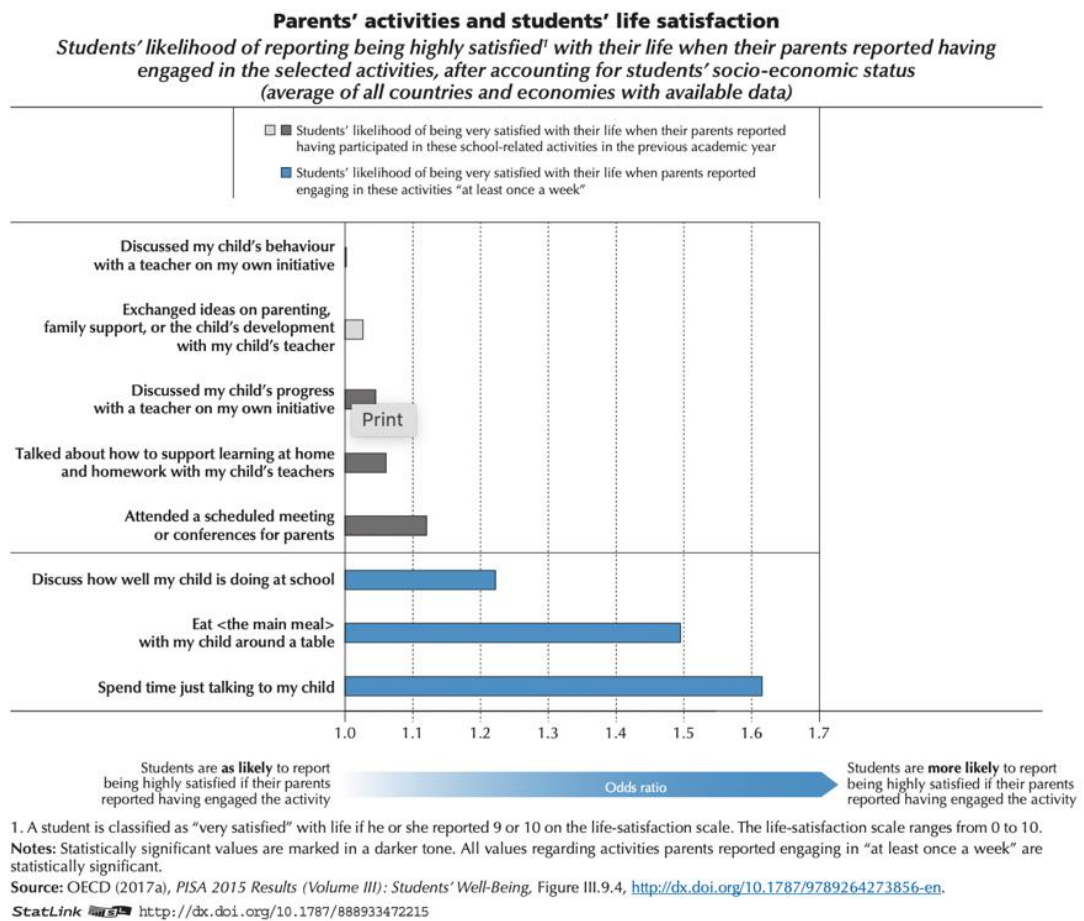*Parent Activities and Students' Perceptions of Their Parents' Interest in School (Schleicher, A., 2018)*

Parents' activities and students' life satisfaction

Students' likelihood of reporting being highly satisfied[1] with their life when their parents reported having engaged in the selected activities, after accounting for students' socio-economic status (average of all countries and economies with available data)

☐ ■ Students' likelihood of being very satisfied with their life when their parents reported having participated in these school-related activities in the previous academic year

■ Students' likelihood of being very satisfied with their life when parents reported engaging in these activities "at least once a week"

Discussed my child's behaviour with a teacher on my own initiative

Exchanged ideas on parenting, family support, or the child's development with my child's teacher

Discussed my child's progress with a teacher on my own initiative

Print

Talked about how to support learning at home and homework with my child's teachers

Attended a scheduled meeting or conferences for parents

Discuss how well my child is doing at school

Eat <the main meal> with my child around a table

Spend time just talking to my child

1.0 1.1 1.2 1.3 1.4 1.5 1.6 1.7

Students are **as likely** to report being highly satisfied if their parents reported having engaged the activity

Odds ratio

Students are **more likely** to report being highly satisfied if their parents reported having engaged the activity

1. A student is classified as "very satisfied" with life if he or she reported 9 or 10 on the life-satisfaction scale. The life-satisfaction scale ranges from 0 to 10.
Notes: Statistically significant values are marked in a darker tone. All values regarding activities parents reported engaging in "at least once a week" are statistically significant.
Source: OECD (2017a), *PISA 2015 Results (Volume III): Students' Well-Being*, Figure III.9.4, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264273856-en.
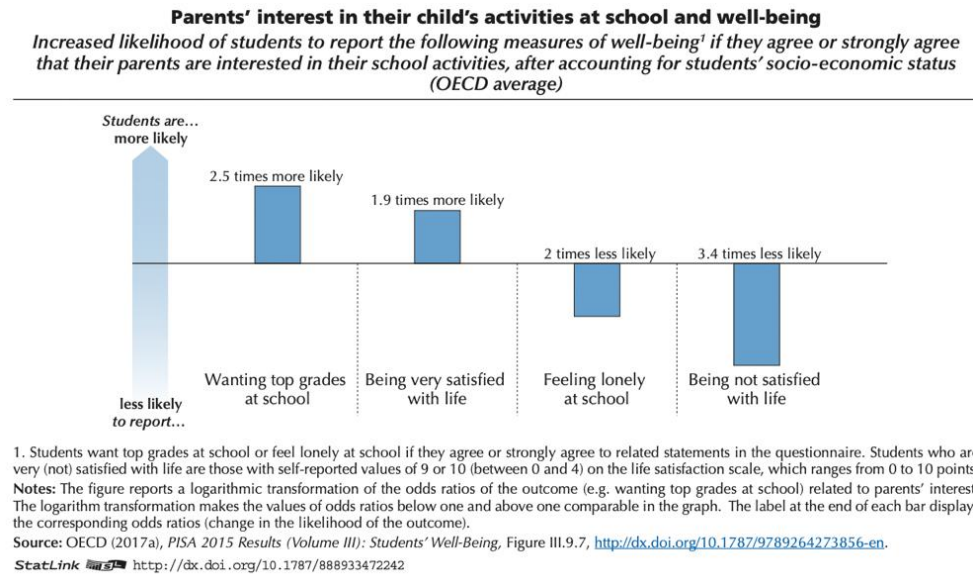StatLink ⬛📊 http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933472215

Figure 12B

Parent Activities and Students' Perceptions of Their Parents' Interest in School (Schleicher, A., 2018)

Parents' interest in their child's activities at school and well-being
Increased likelihood of students to report the following measures of well-being[1] if they agree or strongly agree that their parents are interested in their school activities, after accounting for students' socio-economic status (OECD average)

1. Students want top grades at school or feel lonely at school if they agree or strongly agree to related statements in the questionnaire. Students who are very (not) satisfied with life are those with self-reported values of 9 or 10 (between 0 and 4) on the life satisfaction scale, which ranges from 0 to 10 points
Notes: The figure reports a logarithmic transformation of the odds ratios of the outcome (e.g. wanting top grades at school) related to parents' interest The logarithm transformation makes the values of odds ratios below one and above one comparable in the graph. The label at the end of each bar displays the corresponding odds ratios (change in the likelihood of the outcome).
Source: OECD (2017a), *PISA 2015 Results (Volume III): Students' Well-Being,* Figure III.9.7, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264273856-en.
StatLink http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933472242

Results from the 2018 PISA survey support the importance of parents engaging in positive dialogue with their children about school (Schleicher, A., 2018). The children of parents reporting they had spent time talking with them, eating the main meal around a table with them, or talking about how well they were doing in school at least one time per week had a 22% to 62% likelihood of reporting high levels of life satisfaction, as shown in Figures 12A. Similarly, as shown in Figure 12B, when children perceive their parents are interested in their well-being and activities in school, they are 2.5 times more likely to want to strive for high grades, almost 2 times as likely to report they are very satisfied with life, and 2 times less likely to report feeling lonely.

Mattering. As noted previously, mattering is considered to be a fundamental psychological need (Prilleltensky, 2020). The triangulation questions are consistent with the two elements of mattering (Prilleltensky & Prilleltensky, 2020)—the child feels valued (by becoming

a better person), the child adds value (by helping others). Mattering can work as a protective

mechanism that lasts throughout peoples' lifespans: "When people in a community feel that they

matter and that they are valued, they are likely to experience self-compassion, autonomy,

mastery, positive relations, overall and physical well-being, self-acceptance, and many other

important positive benefits (Flett, 2018)" (Prilleltensky, 2020 p. 24).

Flourishing in Schools. The underlying structure of this intervention has a duality of

mechanisms designed to concurrently support the well-being of the student and family in

combination with their child's school. First, the intervention leverages a parent's intimate

knowledge about their child which is expected to moderate outcomes. Owens and Waters (2020)

note that the majority of school-based PPIs implemented thus far are group-based interventions

and suggest that benefits could be realized by examining interventions for children and

adolescents at an individual level, with one-on-one administration (Owens & Waters, 2020). By

understanding their children's interests, skills, and abilities as they relate to the resources and

barriers in their environments, parents can use the questions in this intervention to guide their

discussions in meaningful ways—based on their child's personal experiences of what feels good

each day.

Second, through the process of engaging in guided, productive dialogues, it is expected

that parents will also become more aware of what is *Good* in their children's schools (e.g., how

their child matters, other ways of providing support, additional resources to consider). This, in

turn, would increase the propensity for parents and students to take on more of a teaming

perspective and intentionally work more collaboratively with their teachers. As research on

teaming (Edmondson, 2012), mattering (Prilleltensky & Prilleltensky, 2021), high-quality

connections (Dutton, 2003), and hiving (Haidt, 2012) all demonstrate, organizations built on

mutually trusting and respectful relationships flourish. It is possible that by boosting the well-being of teachers, the challenges associated with burnout will subside. Consequently, the higher levels of engagement associated with parents and students—combined—are expected to moderate the flourishing outcomes for schools. It is possible that savoring benefits could count twice.

      Agency. This intervention is created with agency in mind. Seligman's life's work on agency suggests it is made up of "efficacy, future-minded optimism, and imagination" (Seligman, 2021). It is not an all-or-nothing prospect; there are gradations in between. Most important, however, is that Seligman (2021) suggests agency is related to human progress and there are two types: individual agency and collective agency (Zhao et al., 2021). By drawing a family's attention to how a child is both engaging in helping behaviors and is improving, this intervention is designed to intentionally develop the efficacy of both the parent and child—relating to individual agency. By developing their pathways towards greater resilience, based on Fredrickson's broaden and build model, this intervention may precipitate an increase in more future-minded optimism (Pitts, 2019; Tugade & Fredrickson, 2007) and imagination as well. The potential for collective agency also exists, given that the savoring intervention can employ parents, en masse, guiding them in ways to support their children in believing that school is *Good*.

      Hope. Hope is about positive expectations. Hopeful people expect good things about the future and strive to achieve them. It is comprised of the following dimensions: optimism, future mindedness, future orientation (Niemiec, 2017). It is one of the five-character strengths that are most related to happiness and life satisfaction and involves agentic thinking (e.g., believing you can stay motivated to get there) and pathways thinking (e.g., thinking you can develop multiple

goals for getting there) (Niemiec, 2017). Research suggests it can predict both present and future

happiness, it can act as a buffer against stress and trauma, and it is correlated with better

attendance and higher levels of perseverance and academic achievement (FitzSimons, 2015).

Each Sunday, parents can use the knowledge of their child and their circumstances and

intertwine the stories that have been previously shared to frame the upcoming week around

hope—each child will start their week at school a little more hopeful.

Support Material

As a form of additional support, it might also be beneficial to consider preparing training

materials for parents that cover the following positive psychological constructs as they relate to

schools.

1. Positive Psychology (including savoring benefits)
2. Self-determination theory
3. Optimism (including explanatory style)
4. Resilience
5. Beliefs (Biases, Framing, Primals)
6. Grit
7. Growth Mindset
8. Teaming/Hive Communities

Savoring the *Good* in Schools: A Systems Informed Approach to Education

Kern (2019) and colleagues note that "a system is a 'set of things … interconnected in

such a way that they produce their own pattern of behavior over time" (Meadows, 2008. p. 2, as

cited in Kern et al., 2019. P. 706). Systems are made up of elements that dynamically interact to

produce a whole that is different from the sum of the individual parts (Sevaldson, 2014, as cited

in Kern et al., 2019). Consequently, by failing to understand how different elements are

interrelated, solutions can cause further problems (Kern et al., 2019). This entire paper

demonstrates how, with the best of intentions, parents and the community at large can share

messages, create policies, and engage in behaviors that end up being potentially harmful to children. Consequently, people need to consider the bigger picture when it comes to schools and the behaviors they support. The common thread throughout this paper is that parent beliefs are influential. Beliefs could be considered the "simplicity" within the complexity or *simplexity*—as defined by Kern and colleagues (2020)—of schools, meaning parent beliefs are "leverage points that [may] have a big impact with the least amount of effort (Meadow, 1999)" (Kern et al, 2020).

Wise psychology interventions are PPIs specifically designed to target levers in ways that create widespread benefits over time. They are made up of several elements (Walton, 2014).

1. Alter Critical Recursive Processes

   By giving parents a tool to gain a better understanding of what is working well for their child, the proposed intervention is targeted to change beliefs about school. In doing so, parents may be less likely to share negative social media (e.g., based on a pessimistic explanatory style that identifies problems as permanent and pervasive), they may improve their anchor beliefs from their own poor experiences, they may come to appreciate the value of parent-teacher relationships, and they may see how difficulty means important. These changes in biases and framing could have recursive downstream benefits for students and teachers (individually) and students, teachers, and parents (collectively).

2. Target the Setting at Hand

   By creating an intervention that is specific to school—that considers how the child is engaged, what is working around them, and how they benefit each day— parents may be better informed to counter their own negative biases as well as the challenges experienced by their children in school. For example, they might be

less likely to catastrophize, blame the teacher, or feel helpless because they have a

better appreciation for the resources and strategies available for support.

3. Change the Targeted Psychological Process

Because this intervention is based on the children's personal experiences in

school each day, it will be contextually relevant and meaningful to both the parent

and the child. As well, the intervention can be personalized depending on which

primal belief is being targeted for change.

In addition to the above, this intervention is designed to add to the literature regarding strengths,

hope, and gratitude in schools. To date, there are relatively few interventions that focus on these

positive psychological constructs for children and adolescents (Owens & Waters, 2020).

In sum, this intervention suggests a practical application for using positive psychology to

motivate change in parents such that they can co-create well-being in schools (Kern et al., 2020).

It is hoped that it will provide a framework for the development of further multi-dimensional

"wise" interventions. Moreover, this research suggests there may be further opportunities for

expanding the role of positive psychology in schools:

- Define and measure school beliefs and, in turn, better understand the underlying

  mechanisms driving engagement (e.g., possibly include beliefs in the PISA

  survey)

- Expand the roles of savoring (Smith & Bryant, 2007), high-quality connections

  (Dutton, 2003), mattering (Prilleltensky & Prilleltensky, 2021), and hiving

  (Haidt, 2012) in schools (e.g., expand the hive to include parents so they can

  have a better understanding of their ability to influence their children's

  engagement), to further understand how they are related to mastery.

- Define the structures needed to support well-being through the use of teaming
  (Edmondson, 2012) principles (e.g., assist in developing policies, provide
  learning resources and guidelines for parents, identify levels of mastery as they
  relate to grade promotion, establish codes of conduct for students, teachers, and
  parents).

- Expand positive education programs to include beliefs (Clifton et al., 2019),
  savoring (Smith & Bryant, 2007), high-quality connections (Dutton, 2003),
  mattering (Prilleltensky & Prilleltensky, 2021), hiving (Haidt, 2012), and
  teaming (Edmondson, 2012)

Overall, the Savoring the *Good* in Schools intervention is meant to influence individual and

collective well-being to better inform and transcend what could potentially be one of the biggest

constraints in educating students (Kern et al., 2020)—something that feels permanent and is

pervasive—parent beliefs about school.

Summary and Conclusions

A growing amount of evidence demonstrates that "Beliefs matter" (Clifton, 2013, p.4)

They drive people's emotional responses and, in turn, their behaviors. Beck's work on the

cognitive triad delineates the difference between individual beliefs, beliefs about the world, and

beliefs about the future. The recent work of Clifton and colleagues (2019) has significantly

advanced the understanding of world beliefs through the development of the primal world

belief's scale and the identification of primals' dimensionality empirically (Clifton, 2019).

Research findings suggest these beliefs serve as schematic lenses that people use to interpret the

world. The goal of this capstone has been to introduce the idea of basic school beliefs and, in

particular, parent beliefs about school. The analysis considers how these beliefs could potentially

influence children and their greater community. A research study has been initiated, under the

guidance of Jeremy Clifton, based on the primal world beliefs scale (*Good, Just, Enticing,*

Interesting, Abundant, Worth Exploring, Meaningful). It is the first attempt to measure similarly

basic students' beliefs about school and their perceptions of their parent's beliefs about school as

they relate to student engagement. Targeting these primals, a PPI was developed around the

construct of savoring to help parents and their children build on what is *Good* about school.

A multitude of biases and heuristics have been identified that, when applied

indiscriminately, can affect normative rationality and result in suboptimal judgments. Hidden

parental biases considered in this analysis include the proliferation of misinformation and

negative messaging, anchoring points, and framing responses around parent-teacher

relationships, interpretations of difficulty, and teaming practices. Simply put, beliefs are not

accurate representations of reality, but interpretations.

Martin Fishbein's reasoned action approach (RAA) theory provides a useful framework

for examining how these beliefs, in turn, produce attitudes, subjective norms, and perceptions of

behavioral control in ways that create intentions regulating behavior. What isn't immediately

obvious is the impact of the messages parents share with their children about school. Parents

only see part of the picture, meaning their feedback loop is incomplete. Consequently, their

ability to accurately assess the implications of what they say as it relates to how their children

behave is limited. Mastery also plays a role. While a child may have an intention to complete a

task, their actual ability will influence their execution of outcomes. It is important to remember

that learning can be hard and the process of educating children in schools is complex.

This is where school beliefs become important. Parents who believe school is *Good* (e.g.,

Just, Enticing, Interesting, Abundant, Worth Exploring, Meaningful) are probably more inclined

to rely on navigational strategies that encourage connections with teachers and the development

of mastery in ways that potentially result in positive spirals. These children are then more likely

to learn the value of feedback and deliberate practice, developing resilience, grit, and self-

efficacy—experiences that could have an inoculating effect against declining social norms in

other communities. Parents, on the other hand, who embrace negative beliefs about school may

be more inclined to react, giving their children reasons not to try. The resulting lack of mastery

reinforces that school isn't *Good* and a negative spiral develops. This lack of mastery could also

impact a child's ability to feel like they matter in school.

Parent beliefs about school could also have a broader impact. It is possible parental

beliefs contribute to widening performance gaps on a much larger scale—especially when

including other factors such as the homogeneity of mastery within the student population, student

behavior and attendance, teacher status as well as emotional and cognitive parameters (e.g., the

significance of parental emotional support to influence students, levels of loneliness, and the

interpretation of difficulty). Additionally, these factors may contribute to the burnout of teachers.

That will impact students as well (Shin et al., 2013).

Consequently, in terms of making education better, it is recommended that researchers

evaluate student and parent beliefs about school. A study was developed by modifying the

primals beliefs scale to measure these beliefs as they relate to student engagement. Data will be

collected over this coming year. If it can be demonstrated that beliefs about school matter and

influence children, people might be more intentional about the messages they share, they might

have more incentive to frame challenges in ways that encourage a difficulty-as-important

mindset, and they might be more inclined to see the value in connecting across inter-disciplinary

boundaries by adopting teaming practices and normalizing failure. Parents may realize the value

in helping their children navigate along paths where schools are *Good* to help them find more meaningful engagement so that their children have a greater sense of mattering.

Finally, a positive psychology intervention was developed, using the primal scales inventory, to gain a better understanding of possible underlying mechanisms associated with beliefs and to potentially shed light on causation. It was also developed to guide parents— alongside their children—to regularly savor what is *Good* in schools. A systems-based approach was used to develop a structure that would help to alter hidden biases and framing, in a context that would help both the parent and child develop a broader base of the resources and strategies available for support while providing sufficient flexibility for the activity to be personalized and meaningful. It also has a duality of purpose to concurrently support the well-being of students and parents in combination with their schools. The intervention is targeted to improve beliefs about school, increase PERMA (individually and collectively), and increase mattering, agency, and hope.

This analysis suggests opportunities may exist to expand the role of positive psychology in schools: define and measure school beliefs (Clifton et al., 2019); expand the roles of savoring (Smith & Bryant, 2017), high-quality connections (Dutton, 2003) and mattering (Prilleltensky & Prilleltensky, 2021); define structures needed to support well-being using teaming principles (Edmondson, 2012); expand positive education programs to include beliefs (Clifton et al., 2019), savoring (Smith & Bryant, 2017), high-quality connections Dutton, 2003), mattering (Prilleltensky & Prilleltensky, 2021), and teaming (Edmondson, 2012).

Figure 13 is a compilation of the different mechanisms making up this capstone. Not only do beliefs matter about the world, but it is possible they also matter for students and their engagement in school. If that is the case, then parents need to consider how their biases and

heuristics influence their thinking when it comes how they interact with school and the messages they share with their children and their communities. Research supports there are significant benefits to developing healthy parent-teacher relationships, interpreting difficulty-as-meaningful, and teaming practices. In a world that is focused on making schools better, it might also be time to help parents and students learn how to intentionally savor what is *Good*—as a vehicle to connect with others, to overcome challenges, to develop agency, to flourish, to matter, and to find hope.

Figure 13

Beliefs About School Framework
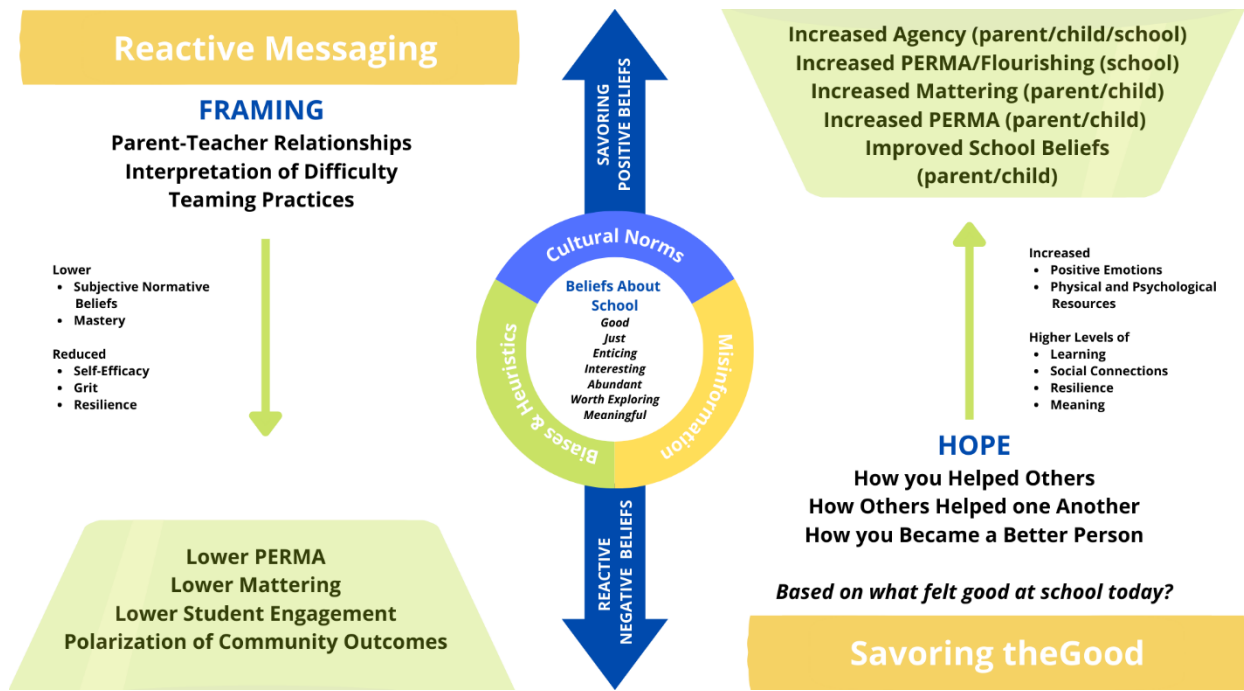
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Appendix A

Jay Shetty: Every Parent, Student and Teacher Needs to Hear This
[Video]

(Shetty, 2018)

Link: https://fb.watch/ea4ewt0xjX/

Everyone learns differently
Yet we teach and test everyone as if they were exactly the same
Life is the most difficult exam
Most people fail because they try to copy others, not realizing that everyone has a different question paper
All it takes is a simple Google search
University it makes me unhappy, anxious, feel like a failure
It's no surprise that depression is on the rise
As mental health hits the skies, and I'm hoping that's the limit, probably for the first time
And don't get it twisted we want to change the system not just be critics
But the truth is we spend a lot of time on the theoretical and tactical
Not enough time on the creative and practical
Today at college we spend a lot of time in bars and then learn how to code
It's ironic we end up a barcode
Is a barcode even memorable?
No, it's just a series of digits
We end up statistics; wasted potential like unrecorded lyrics
Every day we turn up to the conveyor belt
We're on the assembly line
We've become a product of our environment and then get shipped off
Life is the most difficult exam
The history we learn at school doesn't help us define our future
Most of us know how to add and subtract but not how to multiply our investments
We know how to do multiple choice, but we struggled to make decisions
We know how to analyze a poet's voice, but we can't express ourselves with precision
We learned about the human body but not how to find ourselves
We learned about the brain but not about mental health
Geography taught us where things were but not where countries wanted to go
We learned about modes of transport but not why travel makes us grow
We learned about new languages but not about old cultures
We learn about only one perspective and not opposing versions
We learned how to draw but not to appreciate art
We were always pushed to get to the end but never knew how to start
We were always told to get over stuff and not how to walk through
We learned about the cells in plants and not about the source of our food
We learned how to measure distance but not the journey within
We were told that X was the only place there was something missing
So, listen what have we really learned
The real test we will face
A rejection dealing with failure having to start from scratch and things not going our way
But tell me when you were taught perseverance determination or persistence even for one day
The real challenges we will face are being empathetic
Understanding people's challenges and the ability to press pause

Now put your hand up if you think that would have been more beneficial than comparing your test scores
Because that's school you get the lesson first and the test after
But in life you get the test first and the lesson after
We need character, but we focus on caliber
We need values, but we're forced to focus on algebra
What if we study more about Pythagoras and not just his theorem
What if we learned about Einstein and not just his work
What have we learned about empathy and not just economics
What have we learned about compassion and not just the conference
What if we learn about emotional intelligence as well as the spelling quiz
What if we focused on attitude as much as we did on our aptitude
What if we didn't just learn how to read but how to apply it
Life is disguised as an exam but it's more like a practice test
When you make mistakes learn from them
And any mistakes can be taken again
You can change the script
At any time make a costume change and then get back out onto that stage
Don't be limited by society your path is unique Don't trade it for less
Life is the most difficult exam
Because most people are looking at someone else's test
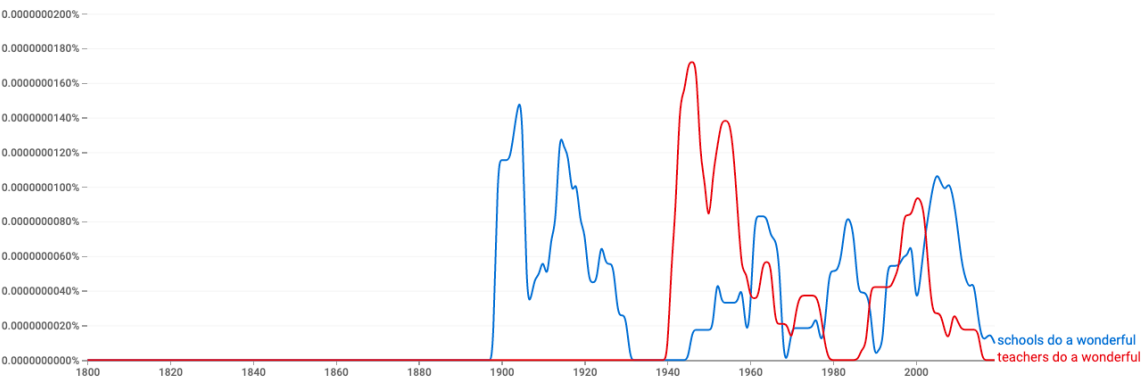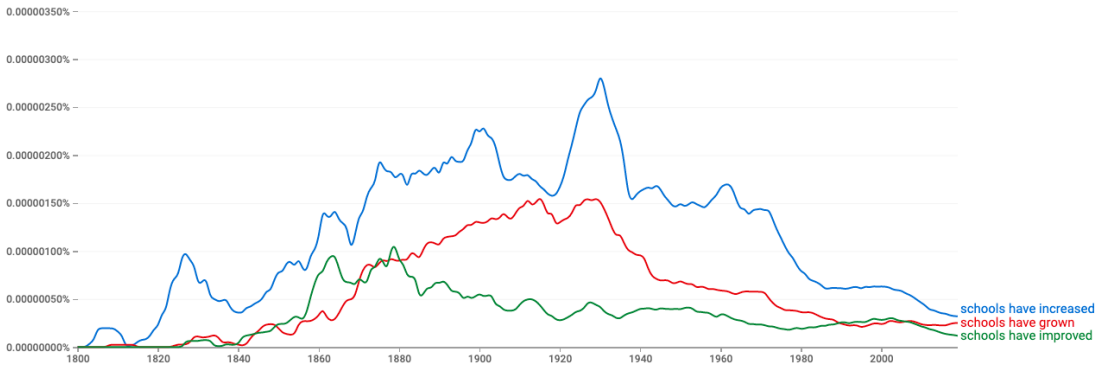
Appendix B

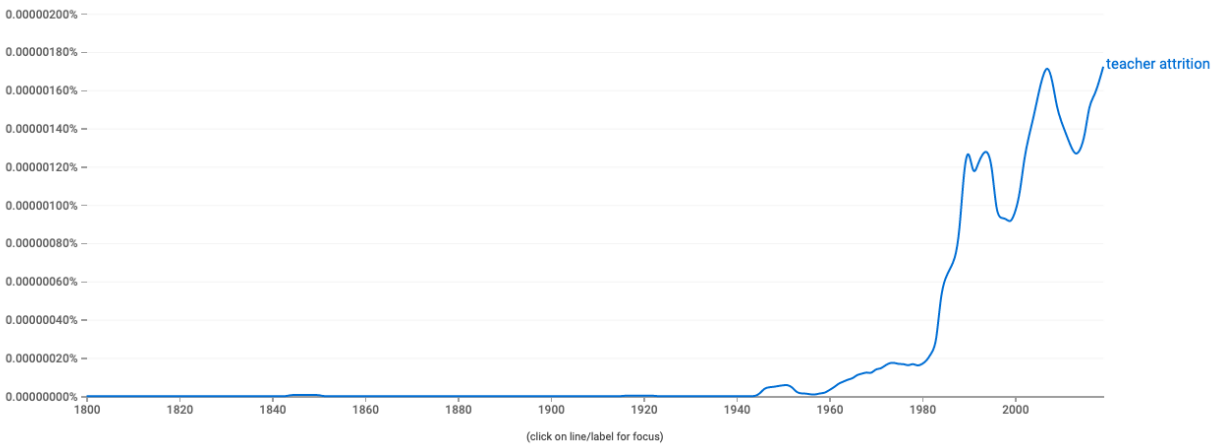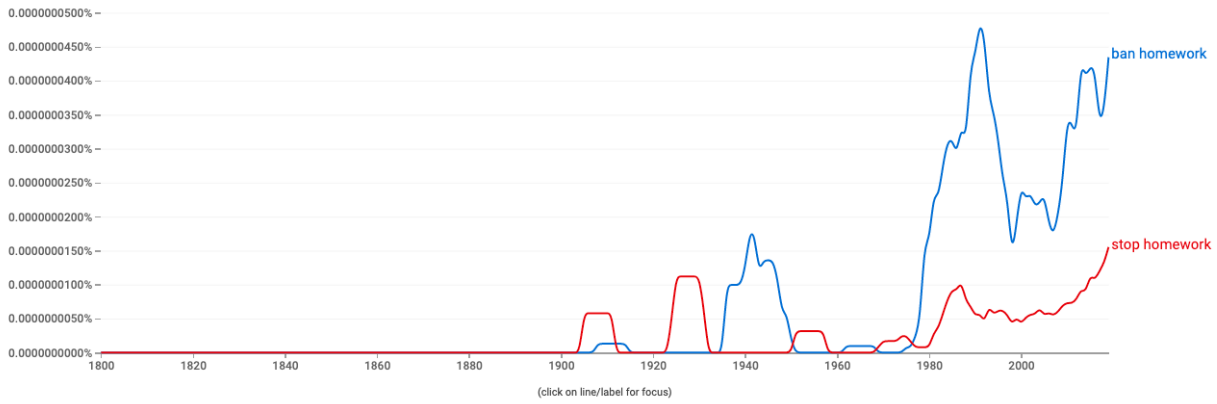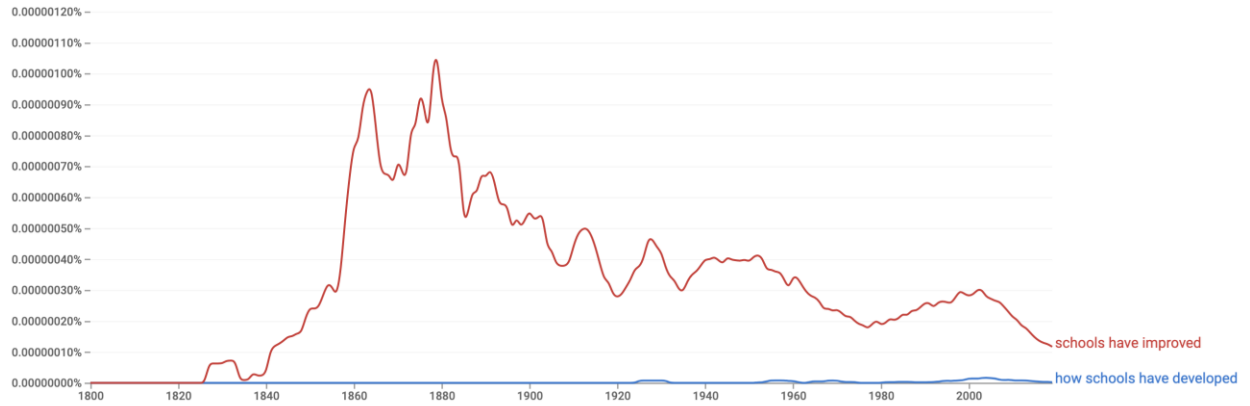Google Ngrams of Schools

What Schools Need To Do

("need to", "to change', "to improve", "change")
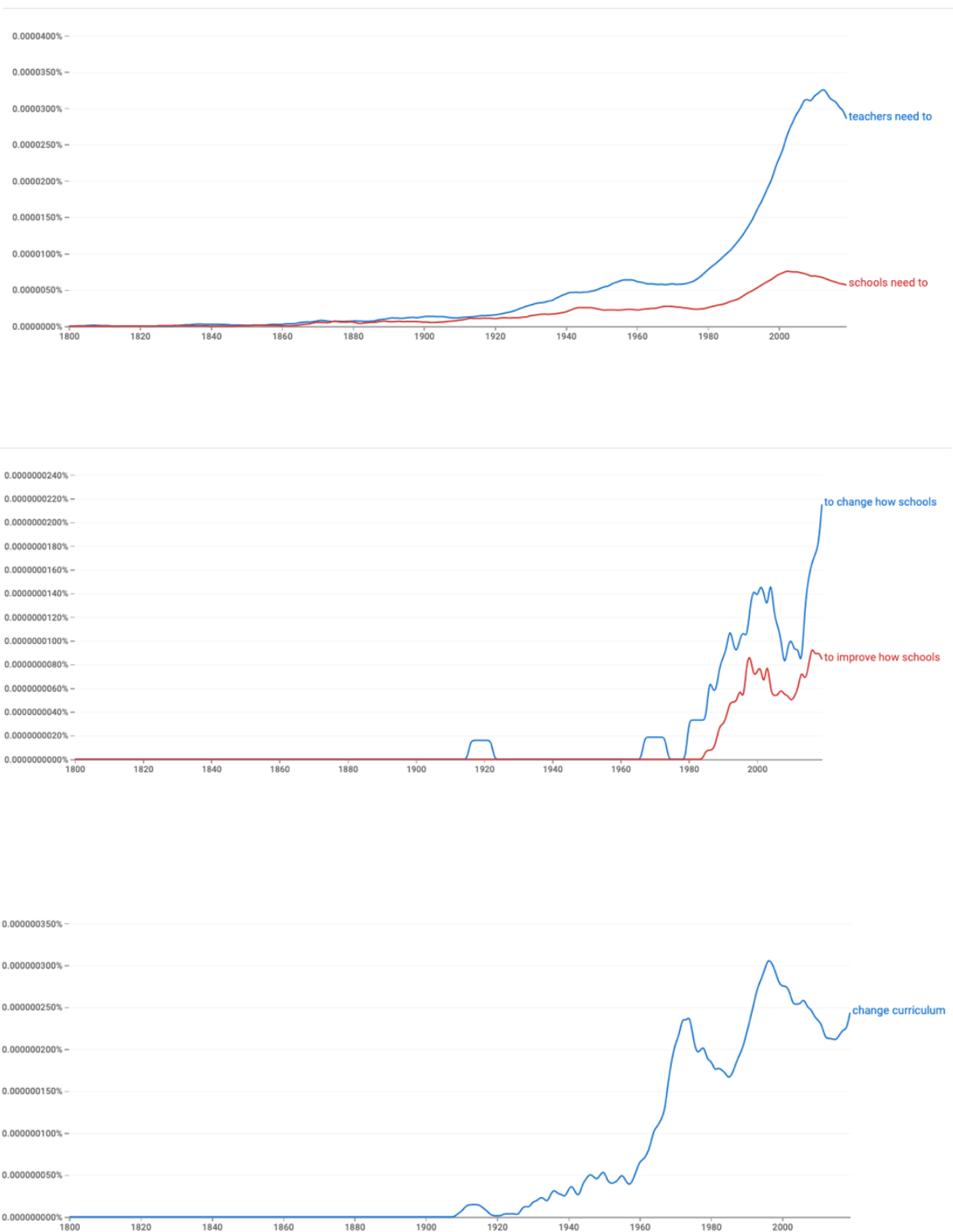
What Schools Do

("are needed", "schools have", "schools do")

Appendix C

Spectrum of Failure

Redefining Failure in Schools (Edmondson, 2012)

A Spectrum of Reasons for Failure: Redefining "Failure" in Schools (Edmondson, 2012)

Blameworthy	**Deviance** An individual chooses to violate a prescribed process or practice. **Inattention** An individual inadvertently deviates from specifications *High school teachers can be responsible for as many as 120 students/day. It is impossible to meet every child's needs on a daily basis.* **Lack of Ability** An individual doesn't have the skills, conditions, or training to execute a job. *Good teachers need to understand course content, which includes understanding how to scaffold learning, common misconceptions, assessment, real-world application; understand good pedagogical practices; have good listening, communication, organizational, collaborative skills; understand different learning styles and learning challenges, motivational science; have good classroom management—in environments full of diverse abilities and expectations. It is challenging to find people who have mastery in all of these skills—yet they can still be good teachers if given adequate support.* **Process Inadequacy** A competent individual adheres to a prescribed but faulty or incomplete process *A lack of role definition exists between parents and teachers; students can be promoted to higher levels without having the fundamental skills to succeed.* **Task Challenge** An individual faces a task too difficult to be executed reliably every time. *Issues relating to bullying, inappropriate social media use, addiction, behavior challenges, learning challenges, home challenges are often multidimensional and complex.* **Process Complexity** A process composed of many elements breaks down when it encounters novel interactions. *See Task Challenge*
Praiseworthy	**Uncertainty** A lack of clarity about future events causes people to take seemingly reasonable actions that produce undesired results. *Learning in general involves uncertainty. Working with young people lacking in maturity and life experience but given great latitude in decision making is full of uncertainty.* **Hypothesis Testing** An experiment conducted to prove that an idea or a design will succeed fails. *Experimentation is fundamental to learning, not to mention innovation and creativity* **Exploratory Testing** An experiment conducted to expand knowledge and investigate a possibility leads to an undesired result. *See Hypothesis Testing*

Note: The comments in italics have been added to Edmondson's (2012) Spectrum of Reasons for Failure to give examples of how different "failures" could be categorized in the context of school.

Appendix D

Parent Responses to Student Challenges

To Navigate or Respond

Student Perspective	Message Shared by Parent	Primal Reinforcement
My teacher's tests are really hard!!! I always understand the material that is being taught in class—it's just that his tests are unfair!!	**REACT:** I understand how you feel. I never did well on tests either!	• *bad* • *unjust* • *barren* • *not worth exploring* • *meaningless*
	NAVIGATE: It's one thing to understand what is being taught in class and it is another to apply the material to your own learning. I agree. It can be very discouraging to get a poor mark. However, what if instead you used your low mark to see what it is you need to work on. Compare it travelling on the wrong road when you are riding your bike. The sooner you find the correct route, the quicker you will get to your destination. The sooner you identify misconceptions, the less likely they are to snowball into bigger challenges. Learning can be hard, but it generally leads to more meaningful and interesting opportunities later on. I suspect that your teacher can help you to see what it is you need to work on—so that you can make good use of your time and learn more.	• *Good* • *Just* • *Enticing* • *Interesting* • *Abundant* • *Worth Exploring* • *Meaningful*
My teacher has only one way of doing things!! Plus, I lose marks for not showing my work, even though I get the right answers!	REACT: I don't know why teacher's do that. Why don't they encourage you when you get the right answers? Some teachers don't get it! I know you are smart!	• *bad* • *unjust* • *barren* • *not worth exploring* • *meaningless*
	NAVIGATE: I can think of a few reasons to show your work. 1. Students can use what is called a "guess and check" strategy and not realize it is a problem. For example, you see 5y=10 and because you know 5x2=10, you automatically make the connection, y=2. Wow! You are smart! Right? Or is that good? Because what is more important is to understand the logic—you need to divide both sides by 5 (e.g., what you do to one side of the equation, you do to the other). Having mastery of the *logic* is what is going to allow you to eventually answer harder questions like 5x – 2 = 3x + 8 2. If you have an idea worth $5 million and you can't sell it to anyone, what is it worth? (Nothing) Showing your work helps you to develop your ability to sell your ideas. 3. If you are working on a big project—maybe a marketing plan to sell the new iPhone 20—and it is going to take a year to roll out, it is important to document your work. Something may go wrong—and probably will. So, you need to be able to go back and take a look at your assumptions. Creating good habits when it comes to documenting your work is a life skill. 4. Showing your work helps you to track your logic and the errors in your thinking. It helps you learn so that you can eventually do more!	• *Good* • *Just* • *Enticing* • *Interesting* • *Abundant* • *Worth Exploring* • *Meaningful*

Student Perspective	Message Shared by Parent	Primal Reinforcement
I have to work on a group project and the other kids in my group are useless!! I don't know why the teacher doesn't let us pick our own groups!	REACT: I know group work is important. However, you should be put on a team with other people you can relate to. Didn't your teacher explain how to set up a group project – how to divide up the work, how to work through conflict?	• *bad* • *unjust* • *barren* • *not worth exploring* • *meaningless*
	NAVIGATE: Group work can be very frustrating. That being said, as our world becomes more complex, group work is what will be important so that you can manage people's skills from a variety of different backgrounds. Think of it like your soccer team—you have the goalkeeper, the midfielder, the striker, the defender—and everyone plays a special role and has a certain level of expertise. Fortunately, you are just in grade 7 and so this is a perfect time to learn. It's great that your teacher is giving you this chance. While getting good marks is important feedback to see what it is you need to work on, a low mark on this assignment will not impact your future. So, let's make a list of the challenges your group is facing and then we can brainstorm strategies for making things work—without you feeling under pressure to perform perfectly. I can share my experiences from work, and you can share your learning from other projects and from your experiences playing soccer. And then we can come up with a plan so that you can learn.	• *Good* • *Just* • *Enticing* • *Interesting* • *Abundant* • *Worth Exploring* • *Meaningful*
My teacher told me I have to mark my homework! What a waste of time because I understand what we are doing in class. Plus, the answers are all the way in the back of the book!	REACT: Your teacher needs to get a life! I don't know why you have to do homework anyway. They should only assign you what you can get done in class!!	• *bad* • *unjust* • *barren* • *not worth exploring* • *meaningless*
	NAVIGATE: It makes sense that you need to mark your homework. Otherwise, you are just practicing your mistakes and that becomes problematic if you miss out on learning a fundamental skill or you are incorporating the wrong logic into your answers. It's a bit like going to the gym. You end up hurting yourself if you lift weights using a bad technique. By the way, here is a trick. Take a picture of the answer key with your phone and then you don't need to flip the pages in order to check your work.	• *Good* • *Just* • *Enticing* • *Interesting* • *Abundant* • *Worth Exploring* • *Meaningful*

Appendix E

Dear Teacher
(Power of Positivity, 2018)

The following is a transcript for the video found at the following link,
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lTMLzXzgB_s.

Dear Teacher

I know it doesn't always seem like it, but I really do want to listen and learn

It's just my brain is kinda different

- So, this is what I'd like you to know about me.
- I HAVE to move or I really can't pay attention.
- Even though I am not looking at you, I can still listen to what you are saying.
- If you tell me, "Sit up straight," now I have to use all of my brain to do just that.
- It makes me feel sad when you tell me to try harder, even though I have already tried as hard as I can.
- I actually listen better when I am rocking in my chair
- When you give me a bunch of directions, I start to think I will never remember all of this.
- Sometimes my mom or dad end up doing all of my homework.

- So, here's how you can maybe help.
- Let me get up and MOVE while I'm learning.
- Let me look wherever I want when you talk to me.
- Let me rock or slouch in my chair.
- No matter what, please don't take away my recess.
- Give me homework I can do all by myself.
- Make your directions very short.
- Just ask me, "What does your brain need right now."
- And one more thing, my brain may be different than your but it's still amazing

- Sincerely,
- Your student

The following are suggestions (in italics) to help students use a more collaborative and empowering approach (the responses would need to be adjusted depending on the age and ability of the child).

- "I HAVE to move or I can't really pay attention...Let me get up and MOVE while I'm learning."
  I will try my best to stay focused in class. If I need to move, I will try to do so in a way that doesn't affect others. Let's work together to think of movements or places where I can move to be the least disruptive.

- "Even though I am not looking at you, I can still listen to what you are saying…Let me look wherever I want when you talk to me."
  I know it is important to look at the people I am talking to in order to connect with them. I will do my best to make eye contact but know there will be times I can't. Those may be good opportunities to talk about my feelings and to think about strategies I can use to keep everyone engaged.

- "I actually listen better when I am rocking in my chair…Let me rock or slouch in my chair."
  I realize that when I rock or slouch in my chair, I can be sending a message to others that I am not interested and that can be hurtful. I will try my best to look engaged. When I am struggling, I will send you a message, like tugging on my ear, to let you know I need a break. Together let's think of other strategies I can use to show I still want to contribute.

- "It makes me feel sad when you tell me to try harder, even though I have already tried as hard as I can…No matter what, please don't take away my recess."
  If I don't seem to be trying hard, let's talk. Maybe this class is too easy or too hard for me, maybe there are other strategies I could try, or maybe it would be better if I did the work at another time or somewhere else. I know it is important to try my best - for <u>my</u> future - and that is all you expect of me.

- "Sometimes my mom or dad end up doing all of my homework…Give me homework I can do all by myself."
  If I find the homework too hard, I will tell you what it was I was able to do all by myself. Together we can then find ways for me to continue to learn. I know it is important to let you know my struggles—and also what I am strong at doing—so that I can overcome my challenges and do my best work.

- When you give me a bunch of directions, I start to think I will never remember all of this. Make your directions very short.
  The following could be *written down* to help the student.
  I will try hard to listen to your directions.
  When I am overwhelmed, I will tell you and I will be respectful.
  Shorter directions will help me focus better so that I can do my best work.

  (Maybe I could sit close to your desk so it is easier to get support or maybe we can show a friend in this class how they could help me.
  Two brains are often better than one - especially when we both try our best.)

- If you tell me, "Sit up straight," now I have to use all of my brain to do just that…Just ask me, "What does your brain need right now."
  If I am struggling, I will tell you what my brain needs. I will be respectful. I may need some quiet time first, in order to regroup. If you are busy with other

students, I will ask you to let me know when we can work together, so that I can have help managing my frustrations. I want to be able to contribute to this class.

- And one more thing, my brain may be different than yours but it's still amazing
  My brain is different. Thank you for helping me and the other people in our class realize and appreciate that it is still amazing.

Appendix F

Basic School Beliefs Survey

A.   Primal World Belief Measurement Items:

Prompts: Strongly Agree, Agree, Slightly Agree, Slightly Disagree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree

Despite everything wrong with the world, the good things make it all totally worth it.

While some things are worth checking out or exploring further, most things probably aren't worth the effort.

Most things in life are kind of boring.

The world is an abundant place with tons and tons to offer.

No matter where we are or what the topic might be, the world is fascinating.

The world is a somewhat dull place where plenty of things are not that interesting.

I feel everything is worth trying, learning about, or exploring further.

Most things are pointless and meaningless.

On the whole, the world is a place where we get what we deserve.

The world is a place where we rarely deserve what we get.

Life will find ways to reward those who do good and punish those who do bad.

Please mark this statement "slightly disagree."

The world is a place where working hard and being nice pays off.

If someone is generous and kind, the world will be kind back.

B.   Student Belief's About School Measurement Items:

Prompts: Strongly Agree, Agree, Slightly Agree, Slightly Disagree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree

When I was in High School, I would have told you that...

...despite everything wrong with school, the good things clearly outweigh the bad.

...while some things in high school are worth checking out or exploring further, most things clearly aren't worth the effort.

...most everything in school is really boring.

...high school is full of opportunities with tons to offer.

...when it comes to most topics and activities, school is fascinating.

...high school is a dull place where most things are not that interesting.

...most things at school are worth trying, learning about, or exploring further.

...most things at school are pointless and meaningless.

...on the whole, high school is a place where students get what they deserve (grades, recognition, discipline, etc.).

...high school is a place where students **rarely** deserve what they get (grades, recognition, discipline, etc.).

...high school fairly rewards students who do good and punishes those who do bad (grades, recognition, discipline, etc.).

...school is a place where working hard and being nice pays off.

...if someone is generous and kind, people at school will be kind back.

C.   Students' Perceptions of Parents Beliefs About School Measurement Items:

Prompts: Strongly Agree, Agree, Slightly Agree, Slightly Disagree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree

When I was in high school, my parents/guardians thought that...

...despite everything wrong with school, the good things clearly outweigh the bad.

...while some things in high school are worth checking out or exploring further, most things clearly aren't worth students' time.

...high school would be boring to anyone.

...high school is full of opportunities for students, with tons to offer.

…when it comes to most topics and activities, school is fascinating.

...high school is a dull place where most things are not interesting to students.

...most things at school are worth trying, learning about, or exploring further.

...most things at school are pointless and meaningless.

...on the whole, high school is a place where students get what they deserve (grades, recognition, discipline, etc.).

...high school is a place where students rarely deserve what they get (grades, recognition, discipline, etc.).

...high school fairly rewards students who do good and punishes those who do bad (grades, recognition, discipline, etc.).

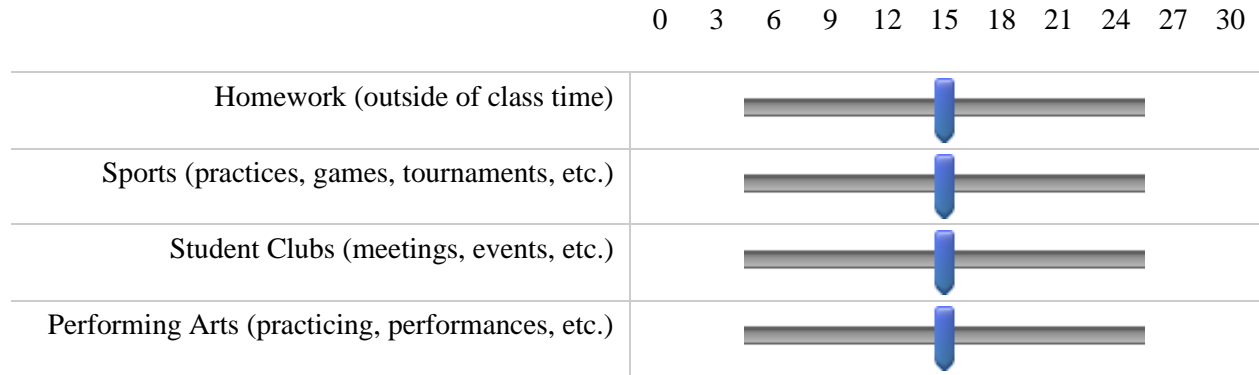...school is a place where working hard and being nice pays off.

...if someone is generous and kind, people at school will be kind back.

D.   Student Engagement

During High School, how often did your parents/guardians...

	never (1)	rarely (2)	sometimes (3)	often (4)	very often (5)
…criticize your teachers (saying they're unfair, incompetent, etc.)	○	○	○	○	○
...praise your teachers (saying they're fair, competent, etc.)	○	○	○	○	○
…say negative comments about your homework (it's boring, irrelevant, etc.)	○	○	○	○	○
...say positive comments about your homework (it's interesting, valuable, etc.)	○	○	○	○	○
…volunteer at your school (as a coach, chaperone, etc.)	○	○	○	○	○
…tell you about their own bad experiences of high school.	○	○	○	○	○

During High School, how often did **you**...

	never (1)	rarely (2)	sometimes (3)	often (4)	very often (5)
...complete homework on time	○	○	○	○	○
...find homework engaging	○	○	○	○	○
...pay attention in class	○	○	○	○	○
...engage in class discussions	○	○	○	○	○
...ask teachers for help	○	○	○	○	○

During an **average month** in High School, how often would you…

	zero times (1)	once (2)	twice (3)	three times (4)	four times (5)	five or more times (6)
…skip a whole day of school	○	○	○	○	○	○
…skip some classes	○	○	○	○	○	○
…arrive late for school	○	○	○	○	○	○

In a typical week during High School, about how many hours did you spend on the following school-sponsored activities?

	0	3	6	9	12	15	18	21	24	27	30
Homework (outside of class time)											
Sports (practices, games, tournaments, etc.)											
Student Clubs (meetings, events, etc.)											
Performing Arts (practicing, performances, etc.)											

Appendix G

Savoring the *Good* in School: Parent Handout

Savoring the *GOOD* in Schools Intervention

Parent Handout

Goals:

This intervention is designed to increase the awareness of personal and community strengths and, in the process:

- improve student and parent beliefs about school (e.g., school is just/fair, enticing, interesting, abundant/full of opportunity, worth exploring, meaningful),
- improve the well-being (PERMA) of both the parent and child,
- increase the child's sense of mattering,
- improve flourishing in schools,
- increase individual agency (e.g., the child, the parent) and collective agency (e.g., the school),
- create a pathway to hope.

Target Population:

Parents (guardians) with school-age children

Suggested Time Frame:

Four to Six Weeks (or longer)

Description:

Sit with your child every weekday after school and discuss the questions below. Then, on the weekend, reflect on and frame the prior week's positive outcomes in terms of hope for the coming week at school. It is recommended this intervention be scheduled around the same time—or same activity—each day to convert this activity into a habit. That will increase the likelihood of the intervention being completed consistently.

A) Weekdays

Each day, ask your child to think about times they felt good at school. Then, ask them to draw on those memories and discuss the following three main questions. Within each main question are three secondary questions designed to prompt deeper thought. The parent is to use the attached worksheet as a way to briefly document what is discussed. Discuss and write a brief response (1 to 2 sentences) in the attached chart around three questions.

Q. 1 How did you help someone at school today?

Further reflect on one of the following three questions.

a. Why was this meaningful to the other person?
b. Why was this meaningful to you?
c. How can you create more of these experiences?

Tips for Parents: *If your child struggles with this question (e.g., if they are introverted), meet with your teacher to share this intervention and discuss strategies for support. For example, if your child hasn't found a way to help someone by silent reading time in the afternoon, they could tap their nose when their teacher is looking, as a secret signal for guidance (you, your teacher, and your child may come up with a different signal). The teacher could then tap their nose, to let your child know they are aware, and then facilitate finding an opportunity to help (e.g., perhaps someone's coat has fallen on the floor so the teacher could suggest your child hang it up to prevent others from tripping). Be careful to ensure this doesn't become a vehicle for your child to develop an unhealthy dependency on their teacher or an opportunity for your child to be selective about what it is they are willing to help with. If they want to be more challenged, this would be a great time to develop strategies for further engagement.*

Q. 2 Describe an example of how someone at school helped someone else today.

Reflect on the same three questions as noted above.

Tips for Parents: *There is no need to gather too much detail (e.g., the other students' names) unless it is important to you or your child. This is a good opportunity for your child to learn that helping others sometimes takes courage, sometimes it doesn't work out as planned, and sometimes it can be hard. It is also a chance to learn what other resources exist at school for support and to make the connection that the more skills you develop, the more opportunities you have to engage in meaningful ways.*

Q. 3 What happened at school today to help you become a better person?

Further reflect on one of the following three questions.
a. Why was this meaningful to you?
b. In what way does this help you to learn about navigating into the future rather than simply responding to the past?
c. How can you create more of these experiences?

Tips for Parents: *This is an opportunity for you to help your child become more engaged in their learning. Although hard at times, try and use failures as opportunities for learning. You can also use these questions to highlight ways your child's choices have helped them to develop mastery in areas that interest them or to build healthy relationships. There is also merit in helping your child become more self-aware or to find a greater sense of meaning with the material they are learning about (often an adult or personal perspective helps). The following are learning constructs supported by empirical evidence.*

Positive Psychology:
"the scientific study of the strengths and virtues that enable individuals and communities to thrive."
https://www.authentichappiness.sas.upenn.edu/content/about-us
https://www.ipen-network.com/

Primal Beliefs:
The scientific study of people's "extremely basic beliefs about the world as a whole."
https://myprimals.com/

Grit:
"the secret to outstanding achievement is not talent but a special blend of passion and persistence"
https://angeladuckworth.com/grit-book/

Growth Mindset:
"the underlying beliefs people have about learning and intelligence"
https://www.mindsetworks.com/about-us/default

Self-Determination Theory:
"a formal theory that defines intrinsic and varied extrinsic source of motivation"
https://selfdeterminationtheory.org/the-theory/

Resilience:
Tools to "finding your inner strength and overcoming life's hurdles"
The Resilience Factor by Karen Reivich and Andrew Shatté

B) Weekend

Use the summaries in the attached chart from the prior week to highlight relevant themes going forward. Use these themes to respond to the following prompt: "I am hopeful you are going to have a good week at school because…"

Tips for Parents: Use this as an opportunity to build on what has gone well for your child, not to establish goals to be accomplished for the following week. For example, "I am hopeful you are going to have a good week at school because of how thoughtfully you developed a connection with a new friend last week," and not "Given how well you learned math this week, I am hopeful you are going to get a high mark on the test." It is good to set goals, but not as part of this intervention.

C) Variations

Parents are encouraged to try variations to the structured question format above simply for variety or to personalize this intervention based on a specific belief being targeted for change (e.g., you want to find more *interesting* things in school). Variations to these questions are provided in the chart below.

Savoring the Good in Schools: Intervention Variations

Main Question Variations (based on *just* primal)	
Q. 1 How did you *help* someone at school today?	• How did you *show generosity to* someone at school today? • How did you *demonstrate kindness to* someone at school today?

Q. 2 How did someone at school *help* someone else today.	• How did someone at school *show generosity to* someone else today. • How did someone at school *demonstrate kindness to* someone else today.

Secondary Question Variations (based on *Enticing interesting, abundant, worth exploring, meaningful* primals)

c. Why was this *meaningful* to the other person?	*Enticing:* *Interesting:* *Abundant:* *Abundant:* *Abundant:* *Worth Exploring:* *Meaningful:*	Why was this *fascinating* to the other person? Why was this *interesting* to the other person? Why was this *an opportunity for* the other person? Why was this *an opportunity to learn for* the other person? Why was this *an opportunity to become more engaged for* the other person? Why was this *worth exploring for* the other person? Why was this meaningful to the other person?
d. Why was this *meaningful* to you?	*Enticing:* *Interesting:* *Abundant:* *Abundant:* *Abundant:* *Worth Exploring:* *Meaningful:*	Why was this *fascinating* to you? Why was this *interesting* to you? Why was this *an opportunity for* you? Why was this *an opportunity to learn for* you? Why was this *an opportunity to become more engaged for* you? Why was this *worth exploring* to you? Why was this *meaningful* to you?

Savoring the *Good* in Schools Intervention

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday

1. How did you help someone at school today?
   a. Why was this meaningful to the other person?
   b. Why was this meaningful to you?
   c. How can you create more of these experiences?					

2. How did someone at school help someone else today?
   a. Why was this meaningful to the other person?
   b. Why was this meaningful to you?
   c. How can you create more of these experiences?					

3. What happened at school today to help you become a better person?
   a. Why was this meaningful to you?
   b. In what way does this help you to learn about navigating into the future rather than simply responding to the past?
   c. How can you create more of these experiences?					