

Applying Positive Psychology to School Administrators¹

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Abstract

Over the past 20 years the positive psychology movement has identified content germane to school administrators enhancing their job performance and satisfaction. Positive psychology focuses on the well-being and positive aspects of mental health, as opposed to psychology that has traditionally focused on negative factors such as weaknesses and mental illnesses of people. Specific aspects of positive psychology addressed are: mindfulness, mindset, resilience, grit, optimism, well-being, emotional intelligence, social intelligence, strengths management, and managing energy. Effective application of these positive psychology components will prompt those with whom school administrators interact to be more successful at meeting their job expectations and enhancing job satisfaction. These positive psychology components will also benefit school administrators through elevating their job performance and satisfaction.

Key words: school administrators, apply positive psychology

1.0 Basic Principles of Positive Psychology

The positive psychology movement offers school administrators reference points for reflecting on how they perceive themselves and work with staff and other stakeholders to create the most effective culture and climate for student learning. According to Seligman (2011), who coined the term in 1998, positive psychology is the scientific study of the positive aspects of the human experience. It examines the strengths that enable people to thrive and reach full potential both at work and in their personal lives. Positive psychology focuses on the well-being, satisfaction, and positive aspects of mental health, as opposed to psychology that has traditionally focused on negative factors such as weaknesses and mental illnesses of people.

Major aspects of positive psychology applicable to school administrators maximizing job performance and satisfaction are: (a) embracing the challenges of the job with a passion and being energized to successfully meet them; (b) learning from setbacks and adversity at work and not being discouraged; (c) engaging staff and other stakeholders in developing a school's goals and taking actions to accomplish them; (d) viewing staff as the district's and schools' major asset for improving education for students and helping staff to be their best; (e) focusing on building positive and meaningful relationships with all of a school's stakeholders; (f) finding fulfillment and excitement in being creative to solve problems and be more productive on the job; and (g) looking beyond oneself to help staff and others find satisfaction and enjoyment in their work, which will ultimately benefit students (Seligman, 2011; Seligman, 2002; Grenville-Cleave, 2012).

Other descriptors of positive psychology applicable to school administrators are self-determination to achieve goals, adaptive behaviors to make needed adjustments, optimism to have a significant impact on important aspects of the job and students, and experiencing enjoyment or *good feelings* when breaking through barriers to have major accomplishments at work and truly impacting the lives of students. Topics within positive psychology follow with specific information applicable to school administrators enhancing their job performance and satisfaction and ultimately improving student learning (Seligman, 2011; Seligman, 2006).

The following factors of positive psychology are presented in the remainder of this article: mindfulness, mindset, resilience, grit, optimism, well-being, emotional intelligence, social intelligence, strengths management, managing energy, image, reputation, and impression management. This is preceded by indicating the linkage of positive psychology to research pertaining to effective leadership.

2.0 Linkage of Positive Psychology to Leadership

- Leaders being rated in the top 10 percent of leadership was due to exceptional abilities for driving projects and results, and working well with people (Warren, 2017, p. 69)
- Focus on results and interpersonal skills are a powerful combination [for being an effective leader] (Zenger & Folkman, 2009, p. vii)
- In the 1940's Shartle's studies of leaders identify initiating structure (task/results focus) and consideration (concern for other members of the work group—building relationships) as the two major factors of effective leaders (Bass & Bass, 2008, p. 59)

Two factors of effective leaders that have been identified for decades are: (1) accomplishing results [goals] and (2) building positive relationships that influence people to achieve these goals. Note that the interaction between these two factors of leadership is critical to accomplishing results (goals). The aspects of positive psychology discussed here lean toward the relationship factor of effective leadership. One factor, grit, aligns with the accomplishing results factor if a school administrator's personal goals align with the needs of the district or school.

2.1 Mindfulness

Mindfulness means that school administrators are consciously focusing on being aware of what others are likely thinking and feeling in a given situation, as well as analyzing their own thoughts before speaking or taking action. Sometimes school administrators are on *automatic pilot* and not thinking much about others and all the factors that give context to a situation. Mindfulness is performing effectively *in the moment* by processing what others say, their likely motives, and focusing on what the school administrator wants to accomplish in a situation.

Meditation is also a part of mindfulness. The modern-day multitasking and digitally-connected school administrator occasionally needs to call time out, clear the mind, and focus attention on one thing at a time through meditation. Meditation has moved beyond the yoga mat into offices or any quiet place. It emphasizes school administrators reducing stress and anxiety through relaxation. Meditation focuses upon thinking clearly about a specific problem or issue and removing *clutterful* noise from a multitude of issues out of the brain.

Mascarelli (2017) suggests these steps for newcomers to meditation: (a) find a quiet place and schedule a regular time; (b) identify what motivates you to focus on today's meditation; (c) focus on a single issue at a time; (d) although numerous thoughts may enter your mind, continue to focus on what you set out as your point of concentration; (e) relax, feel comfortable, and do not self-judge; (f) be patient; and (g) start with short sessions of several minutes and build up to 30-60 minutes.

2.2 Mindset

Examples of Dweck's Mindset

Fixed vs Growth

ability is static	ability can be developed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • avoids challenges 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • embraces challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • gives up easily 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • persists in obstacles
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sees effort as fruitless 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sees effort as necessary
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ignores useful criticism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • learns from criticism
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • threatened by others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • inspired by others' success

Dweck's (2016) approach to *mindset* is based on the premise that school administrators can choose to believe that factors such as intelligence and personality are unchangeable (fixed mindset), or to believe that these factors can be nurtured and developed (growth mindset) for professional and personal enhancement. This represents the proverbial *Nature vs. Nurture*; debate that has been discussed for centuries. School administrators are impacted by both; but believing that nurturing can improve oneself—growth mindset—will likely enhance the expertise and, thus, performance of a school administrator.

School administrators challenging themselves to develop existing attributes and being willing to put forth the effort to do so is key to the growth mindset and increasing productivity and satisfaction at work. Purposefully engaging in professional development is key to maximizing potential and enhancing achievements. It is important for school administrators not to stereotype themselves in ways that deter motivation to improve. For example, if a school administrator believes she/he has never been—or cannot ever be—a good public speaker, there is likely little motivation to improve. Willpower is essential to overcoming setbacks and pursuing needed change for improved performance.

Focusing on the growth mindset leads to reviewing these important points:

- Have purpose drive your work;
- Deal head-on with deficiencies instead of hiding from them;
- View setbacks as a learning opportunity for future success;
- View staff members as collaborators and stress the team approach;
- Nurture a burning desire to keep learning new knowledge and skills;
- Find inspiration from the successes of others and learn from them;
- Understand that everyone can change and grow through passion, effort, application, and experience;
- Be ready to take risks, confront challenges, and keep working to get better even when feeling distressed; and
- When relationships with people in the work environment go wrong, view this as a learning experience and identify positive actions for future relationship-building.

Dweck (2016) cautions that inadvertently some people have fallen into the *false growth mindset* via two misunderstandings: (1) individuals identifying the attributes they like about themselves and calling them collectively a growth mindset and (2) that growth mindset is solely about effort and praising effort. Dweck reminds us that, simply put, growth mindset is about believing people can develop their abilities (p. 214-215).

The Arbinger Institute's (2016) in Outward Mindset: Seeing Beyond Ourselves describes mindset as being *inward* or *outward*. A school administrator's mindset is paramount to enjoying the job and performing exceptionally well. Mindset is how a school administrator views oneself, staff, and others according to the Arbinger Institute. With the inward mindset, school administrators are generally self-centered and often pay little attention to the needs and wants of staff and others pertaining to what needs to be changed and improved in the work settings. School administrators with an outward mindset see staff and others as similar to themselves, whose efforts and work matter to everyone—especially the students.

With the outward mindset, the approach to establish and meet goals to improve the district and schools is viewed as a collaborative effort that considers the creative and innovative ideas of everyone involved and prompts an environment where staff eagerly share ideas. Whenever possible, the school administrator works with staff and others to help them develop knowledge and skills to *be their best*. This has a positive impact on serving the students, achieving the district's and schools' goals, and resulting in satisfaction for all.

On any given day, most school administrators display some inward mindset thoughts and behaviors. The goal is, though, for school administrators to continually reflect on how their mindset can:

- Make a difference daily in the lives of students.
- Nurture staff and others to work together and accomplish goals for the betterment of student learning.
- Create a culture and climate in which staff, students, parents, and other stakeholders work together for a common good.

2.3 Resilience and Grit

Resilience and Grit have commonality in that both are based, in part, on perseverance. Grit is broader in concept than resilience because it is predicated on establishing goals that are driven by passion. Grit has an enormous emphasis on effort.

Grit has received considerably more attention than resilience in that Duckworth's bestselling 2016 book entitled *Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance* has prompted much interest in grit. Miller's (2017) book entitled *Getting Grit* has extended grit's attention remaining in the professional news and media.

2.3.1 Resilience. Resilience is composed of four characteristics: (1) school administrators clearly accepting the harsh realities facing them in their jobs, including difficult and discouraging events; (2) finding meaning and learning from situations that are difficult; (3) having the uncanny ability to improvise and make do with whatever resources are at hand, as limited as they may be, to be effective; and (4) having unwavering optimism (Coutu, 2010).

Facing a harsh reality means a school administrator is realistic—but not pessimistic—about the difficulties and barriers (e.g., finances and other resources) that sometimes exist to accomplish an important task or goal. This type of a school administrator creates an optimistic and positive attitude that allows for enduring and moving forward when things go wrong and not letting negative events have a lasting effect on motivation. (Remember that optimism is motivational and breeds a *can-do* attitude, whereas pessimism leads to a lost sense of control and a *cannot do* attitude.)

Outward mindset school administrators do not view themselves as a victim in difficult situations. Rather, they view the situation as a learning experience and are not overwhelmed by it. When events do not go according to plans, it is important for the school administrator to improvise or have alternative plans of action. Being resourceful during difficult times means the school administrator is constantly looking for immediate and additional resources by, for example, networking with staff in the district and peers outside the district. Throughout such times, the school administrator remains unequivocally optimistic.

2.3.2 Grit. *Grit* is perseverance and passion coupled with extraordinary effort. Passion includes interest, desire, enthusiasm, and a devotion to goals. Intrinsically enjoying what one does and feeling that it is purposeful and matters flames passion. Connecting with people is often important to sustaining passion, as is having a job that is viewed as a *calling*. A futuristic vision and discovery of new information and experiences helps drive passion and develop new or enhanced skills (Duckworth, 2016).

Perseverance is composed of will power, persistence, self-discipline, hope, and learned optimism. A high achievement drive, coupled with a belief in striving for continuous improvement, is indicative of perseverance. Stubbornness in the form of not giving up when obstacles occur is also important.

Effort is critical to perseverance and is an essential element of grit. Effort combined with talent leads to improved skills. Additional effort matched with these improved skills greatly enhances the probability of achieving the desired goal. *Talent* is important but often overrated, limiting what school administrators believe they can achieve. Talent is composed of intrinsic factors such as gifts, knowledge, intelligence, judgement, and the ability to learn (Duckworth, 2016).

Grit includes school administrators having a limited number of prioritized goals for a sustained time period that serves as a focus for one's energy and creates a *persistence of motive*. Grit is not a constant in a person; it can be *grown* or enhanced at any age or point in a person's career. Four psychological aspects important to developing grit are: (1) interest that intrinsically motivates what you do, (2) a purpose that is genuine and you feel really matters, (3) hope that prompts you to keep going even when doubts or difficulties arise, and (4) practice for continuous improvement that causes you to strive to do things better in the future and avoid complacency (Duckworth, 2016).

Lastly, school administrators who possess grit hold fast to an important interest, are loyal and unwavering to a limited number of goals, are steadfastly persistent, are socially intelligent, ceaselessly strive for excellence, effectively control their emotions, and have positive *self-talk*.

2.4 Optimism and Well-being

These two concepts have commonality through each stressing being positive. Optimism addresses the practicality that all will not always go as hoped or planned, and school administrators need to be prepared to deal with such incidents. Well-being is important for school administrators to actively seek happiness, gratification, and enjoyment as rewards for their challenging jobs.

2.4.1. Optimism. Malouff and Schutte (2017) found that optimism can be learned and that “greater optimism is related to better mental and physical health (p. 594). Optimism means that school administrators have positive mindsets even when things go wrong. The optimistic school administrator views an unsuccessful event as a temporary setback limited to a particular situation. The school administrator is not fazed by defeat and continues to strive to *be the best* in meeting the job’s challenges.

Practicality requires the school administrator to be cautiously optimistic. For example, if the state has reduced funding to the district for the past several years, the school administrator needs to be realistic when planning next year’s budget. The school administrator can still be optimistic about what can be accomplished in the future, even with a difficult financial situation.

2.4.2. Well-being. Happiness, gratification, and day-to-day enjoyment are important to school administrators’ ongoing motivation and job satisfaction. Seligman’s (2011) PERMA Model (Positive Emotions, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, and Accomplishments) is good for them to follow to achieve happiness and enjoyment from the job.

Positive emotions mean that the school administrator is upbeat and optimistic in the moment and consistently throughout the day. Being creative and seeking intellectual stimulation from the job enhances enjoyment and satisfaction for school administrators.

Engagement means pursuing activities that fully challenge the ability to learn; being mentally engaged in work to the point of being *a good kind of tired*; and, at the day’s end, feeling satisfied about what was experienced and accomplished.

Relationships are important to school administrators in that they are meaningfully and authentically engaged with others so there is a feeling of *social connection*. Feeling upbeat and gratified about relationships and interactions with others at work, especially during difficult and challenging times, creates satisfaction.

Meaning for school administrators is reflecting and putting into context the significant impact their work has on the mission and vision of the district and all the stakeholders they serve. School administrators need to take pride in their career accomplishments through working with others and receiving positive feedback.

Accomplishments mean school administrators are achieving their goals and experiencing *personal bests*. When school administrators create environments for those they supervise to achieve new personal bests, the rewards include satisfaction and positive feelings.

2.5 Emotional and Social Intelligence

Emotional intelligence focuses on the crucial set of human capacities within an individual. It deals with the ability of a school administrator to manage her/his own emotions and *inner-potential*. Essentially, emotional intelligence deals with how a person manages oneself in order to form positive relationships with others.

Social intelligence goes beyond the *one-person* psychology of emotional intelligence. It is a *two-person* psychology focusing on what transpires when two individuals connect through their interactions. Social intelligence is the synergy of the interactions and *connectedness* of two people, whereas emotional intelligence approaches a situation from only one person’s perspective or mindset. In practice, social intelligence and emotional intelligence complement each other. If properly used, these interactions will result in a positive image for school administrators through the relationship factor and will likely help to achieve district goals—the productivity factor (Goleman & Boyatzis, 2013).

2.5.1. Emotional Intelligence. Emotional intelligence is a combination of mental abilities and skills that help school administrators successfully manage themselves (Walton, 2012; Bradberry & Greaves, 2009). It includes using emotions to think creatively and make decisions (Bass & Bass, 2008).

Emotional intelligence also involves being consciously perceptive of one's own emotions in a given situation, understanding their meaning, and using this information as input to effectively adjust one's actions (Robbins & Judge, 2013).

Emotional intelligence stresses: (a) knowing yourself, (b) controlling emotions through self-management, and (c) motivating yourself (Bradberry & Greaves, 2009; Goleman, 2015). Specific explanations for each of these three areas are:

- (1) Knowing yourself stresses being cognitively aware of your thoughts and how they are likely to play out through your behavior. When experiencing negative thoughts (e.g., anger) it is usually best to reflect before reacting unless eminent danger exists. It is important to have *positive self-talks* in order to avoid negative thoughts. Thinking positive thoughts should prompt a positive demeanor. This includes recognizing one's overall strengths and weaknesses; and viewing oneself in a positive, but realistic, light (Bradberry & Greaves, 2009; Goleman, 1995).
- (2) Controlling emotions through self-management is dependent upon the school administrator's acute awareness of his/her emotions for the purpose of remaining flexible and striving for positive behaviors. In some situations, the school administrator's emotions can prompt an adrenaline rush that instantly results in a behavior which may not be appropriate at that time. "Real results come from putting your momentary needs on hold to pursue larger, more important goals" (Bradberry & Greaves, 2009, p. 33).
- (3) Motivating yourself means using emotions to gain focus and energy to work effectively with others and attain goals. This includes effectively dealing with delayed gratification (rewards) and stifling impulsiveness that can cause undesirable behaviors. It also means getting into a positive *flow* of activities that prompts meaningful relations with others and causes exemplary performance (Seligman, 2011).

School administrators must recognize, understand, and acknowledge their negative thoughts and emotions; and then develop the *emotional agility* to move past them. The process of emotional agility includes accepting negative emotions, analyzing what factors in a situation prompted them, and being agile enough to switch to positive actions to produce a solution to address the situation. This managing of negative emotions so that the result is a productive solution to a situation is called *workability* (David & Congeton, 2015).

Goleman (1995) observed that individuals have two minds: (1) the rational mind that is logical and (2) the emotional mind that is impulsive and sometimes illogical. Because of the potential for the emotional mind to be illogical, it is imperative that school administrators pause and reflect before letting their emotional minds' thoughts be expressed either verbally or nonverbally.

If used effectively, emotions are powerful weapons for motivating school administrators and others. School administrators need to closely observe how they behave emotionally, and the positive or negative impact these behaviors have on the people with whom they interact. A school administrator also needs to solicit feedback from those with whom regular interactions take place to determine the impact of behaviors driven by the school administrator's emotions. Most importantly, a school administrator must have honest soul-searching reflections based on this feedback in comparing the images represented by her/his self-perceptions of the behaviors' impacts. Lastly, school administrators must comprehend the *ripple effect* of their emotions.

2.5.2. Social Intelligence. Social intelligence is defined as a set of interpersonal competencies that inspire others to support the school administrator's efforts and tasks to be accomplished (Goleman and Boyatzis, 2013). School administrators must develop a genuine interest in developing the skills needed for causing positive feelings in those whose support and cooperation are needed to complete important tasks and accomplish goals.

Social intelligence advocates that being attuned to the moods of others affects the school administrator as well as others. In essence, a school administrator exhibiting a very caring mood prompts the person with whom the interaction is taking place to be on the same *brain frequency* as him/her. Once this *interconnectedness* takes place, the other person is more inclined to behave in a positive manner and want to support and work to achieve the goals identified by the school administrator. Some school administrators have more talent in the area of social intelligence than others. Nevertheless, social intelligence can be learned.

Basic social intelligence skills are: (a) empathy; (b) attunement; (c) organizational awareness; (d) influence; (e) developing others; (f) teamwork; (g) inspiration; (h) situational awareness; (i) presence; (j) authenticity; (k) clarity; and (l) knowledge of social roles, rules, and scripts (Goleman & Boyatzis, 2013; Riggio, 2014).

- Empathy means being sensitive to the needs of others, demonstrating an effort to understand their particular situation, building connections between self and others, and identifying what motivates them. The focus is on establishing rapport.
- Attunement means listening carefully to determine how others feel and connecting with their moods. This also includes positive communication through non-verbal behaviors.
- Organizational awareness means understanding the social networks at work; being cognizant of their apparent intended meaning, as well as unspoken norms; and appreciating the culture and values of the organization and work unit.
- Influence is getting support from others by appealing to their interests, thereby persuading them to be engaged in discussions and openly expose their thoughts. This is especially important to develop in the staff members who are most respected by their peers.
- Developing others means demonstrating interest and providing meaningful feedback that is helpful. This involves the commitment of personal time and energy in compassionate coaching and mentoring.
- Teamwork involves providing psychological support for group members and creating a cooperative spirit in which everyone participates for the common good of team. This includes providing support and demonstrating a personal interest in each team member.
- Inspiration is communicating a compelling vision, building pride, establishing a positive emotional tone, and motivating individuals to do their best work.
- Situational Awareness means utilizing skills in observing and understanding the context of a situation and the ways it dominates or shapes the behaviors of people.
- Presence is the overall impression or *total message* sent to others by one's behavior. (Presence involves the inferences that others make about your character, competency, and sense of yourself based on your behaviors which they observe.)
- Authenticity is the extent to which others perceive you as acting from honest and ethical motives; and the extent to which others sense that your behaviors are congruent with your personal values, and that you are *playing it straight*.
- Clarity is the skill in expressing your ideas clearly, effectively, and with impact. It includes paraphrasing, semantic flexibility, skillful use of language, skillful use of metaphors and figures of speech, and explaining things clearly and concisely.
- Knowledge of social roles, rules, and scripts means understanding the informal rules or *norms* that govern social interaction in a setting. It is *knowing how to play the game* of social interaction and being viewed as socially sophisticated.

2.6 Strengths Management²

The axioms listed below represent a *strengths-based mindset* for school administrators.

- School administrators achieve maximum effectiveness by utilizing their strengths and managing their weaknesses, not through the elimination of weaknesses.
- Productivity of school administrators is maximized by focusing on strengths.
- Strengths management leads to an understanding of the difference between good and great.
- The study of strengths leads to productive conclusions; the study of weaknesses leads to ineffective conclusions.
- School administrators are stronger when they have their successes and strengths clearly in mind.
- School administrators should find out what they do not do well and stop doing it.

Many school administrators spend too much time and effort trying to improve weaknesses that, in reality, are never going to be much stronger. It is more productive for school administrators to use their energy in determining how to identify, maximize, and nourish their strengths. As Drucker (1966) noted, "The effective executive [school administrator] makes strengths productive. He knows one cannot build on weaknesses" (p. 71).

The general well-being and feelings of gratification of school administrators are enhanced by meaningfully engaging their strengths in the work environment (Seligman, 2002). Zenger and Folkman (2009) urge school administrators to continually play to their strengths and not *tone them down* (p. 143).

It is important for school administrators to distinguish between their patterns of behavior and preferences and what constitutes their authentic strengths. Patterns of behaviors represent what a school administrator has previously done, which may not be her/his strengths. Strengths are those activities in which a person exhibits *consistent, near-perfect performance* (Buckingham, 2007, p. 21). Time is a limited resource, so it is imperative that school administrators understand that success comes from spending time on utilizing and enhancing strengths.

School administrators should have others do what they are responsible for getting done when they can do it as well or better. This assumes that the school administrator is in a position to delegate. It is essential, though, that the school administrator understands the importance of image. If consistently assigning tasks to subordinates that can do them as well or better makes the school administrator look ineffective in the eyes of superordinates, there may be a problem.

It is useful for school administrators to seek feedback from others with whom they work about their strengths and weaknesses. This feedback can be compared to the school administrator's self-perceptions to more accurately identify strengths and weaknesses. School administrators also need to develop habits in their work that prompt them to play to their strengths.

There are four myths that, if countered, can maximize performance for school administrators (Clifton and Nelson, 1992):

2.6.1. Myth 1: Fixing weaknesses will make everything all right. Many school administrators subscribe to the notion that fixing their weaknesses and those of staff members will make everyone stronger. This thinking has a common-sense appeal but is wrong and, at best, leads to average work by school administrators and staff members. The reality is that excellence is achieved by focusing on strengths and managing weaknesses, not through the elimination or *shoring up* of weaknesses.

2.6.2. Myth 2: Let the strengths take care of themselves. School administrators should operate on the premise that their strengths and those of staff members need to be continually nourished and further developed, and that time is best spent on the intense focus and practice of strengths.

2.6.3. Myth 3: Success is the opposite of failure. Strengths and weaknesses have their own unique basis and are not the opposite of each other. School administrators and staff members cannot enhance their understanding and development of strengths by studying and focusing on their weaknesses.

2.6.4. Myth 4: Everyone can do anything to which they put their mind. Each school administrator has a unique set of strengths and weaknesses. The truth is that a given school administrator can be strong on some factors and weak on others. School administrators can be anything their strengths allow them to be, but cannot be anything that requires outstanding performances in the area of their weaknesses. School administrators will be most successful when they work in positions that play to their strengths because this will help them to be more engaged, productive, and satisfied (Buckingham and Clifton, 2001).

School administrators' strengths are often represented by functions from which they receive great satisfaction and are motivated to rapidly learn more about how to enhance competency for such functions. Another good indicator of a school administrator's strength is his/her passion for a particular function.

School administrators should not confuse strengths with advantages. For example, a school administrator that previously held position may be at an advantage when she/he applies for a new position in the present organization. This compares to a strength which could be represented by the school administrator being able to instantly identify, establish rapport, and quickly build a strong bond with those interviewing him/her for the new position.

It is important for school administrators to focus on a limited number of strengths and maximize them. This is in opposition to pursuing too many strengths and not being able to have the time, effort, or knowledge to meaningfully address each one. A school administrator should strive for mastery of the substance representing a strength.

For example, if a school administrator's strength is quickly building rapport with others in the work setting, she/he needs to be extremely knowledgeable of a wide array of techniques useful in creating rapport, as well as understanding how to apply these techniques.

While it seems that school administrators would know what constitutes as their weaknesses, this is not always the case. The following are behavioral clues that help a school administrator to identify a weakness: (a) being overly defensive about performance and perceiving that criticisms by others are unjust, (b) developing an obsessive behavior in an unsuccessful attempt to correct a mistake, (c) experiencing *slow learning* by repeatedly returning to a particular behavior in an effort resulting in minimal improvement of a function, (d) repeating experiences not improving performance in an area, (e) having to think consciously through the steps of a given process or function analytically each time it is performed in an attempt to thoroughly understand it, (f) experiencing a lack of confidence from performing a function and wanting to get through the function to simply finish it, and (g) becoming burned out attempting to complete a task or function (Clifton & Nelson, 1992). In summary, school administrators must be honest about *owning* their weaknesses.

2.7 Managing Energy

"Most of us respond to rising demands in the workplace by putting in longer hours, which inevitably takes a toll on us physically, mentally, and emotionally" (Schwartz & McCarthy, 2010, p. 61). School administrators often try to *outwork* increased job demands, which results in an energy drain. In the long run, putting in more time is not the answer to effectively addressing an increased workload. School administrators need to allocate their energy so that it is not depleted and consciously focus on how best to use it for maximizing productivity. As Kogon, Merrill, and Rinne (2015) note "Extraordinary productive people consistently recharge [their energy]" (p. 15).

The capacity for work energy comes from four sources: (1) the body, (2) emotions, (3) mind, and (4) spirit. For each of these factors, energy can be expanded and renewed with *intentional practice* (Goleman, 1995). School administrators need to identify situations that place considerable demand on their energy with limited payoff to their overall productivity and, to the extent possible, minimize or eliminate them. This may be difficult because of the nature of a school administrator's job needing them to be *fluid* (flexible to change) based on the unexpected events in a given day, week, or month. The bottom line, though, is that school administrators must manage their jobs as opposed to the jobs managing them.

A resurgence in energy can be enhanced physically by school administrators having proper diets, exercise, and sleep. Meditation, which creates relaxation, can also play an important role in regenerating energy. Energy regeneration can be addressed by school administrators managing their daily schedule to build in periodic breaks throughout the work day, even if only for a few minutes, to rest their minds. School administrators must condition themselves to relax in order to regenerate energy (Kogon, Merrill, & Rinne, 2015).

Reducing interruptions by others and the interruptions school administrators create on their own (e.g., hyperpaced tech-enabled activities such as emails, cell phone calls, texts, and tweets) is crucial to controlling depletion of energy (Kogon, Merrill, & Rinne, 2015). Expressing appreciation to others, and receiving positive feedback from them, is an excellent source for regenerating energy.

The nature of school administrators' jobs is that they are considered as *always-on workers*. This term means that there are often few boundaries between the work life and personal life of school administrators. While it is not possible for school administrators to always separate their work and personal lives, doing so is important for recharging their energy whenever possible so that work life factors do not interfere with the rewards and relaxation gained from their personal lives (Feintzeig, 2017).

3.0 Concluding Thoughts

The body of knowledge flowing from positive psychology over the past 20 years is useful for reviewing ways in which the performance and job satisfaction of school administrators can be enhanced. The specific components of positive psychology presented here serve as reference points for school administrators to reflect upon their beliefs and behaviors to determine how integrating information from these components will improve their work effectiveness and job satisfaction. These positive psychology components effectively applied by school administrators will also raise the level of performance and job satisfaction of those with whom they work.

4.0 Footnotes

¹This article is based in part on: Bartz, D.E. (2017). Integrating leadership and positive psychology for principals (in progress); Bartz, D.E. (2017) Managers effectively applying strengths managements and emotional intelligence. *International Journal of Business and Social Science*. Bartz, D.E. (2017). Using positive psychology to enhance the performance and job satisfaction of school administrators. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 7(5); Bartz, D. (2016). What is your “mindset”? And do you have “grit”? *Leadership Matters*. Springfield, IL: IASA; Bartz, D., Mattox, A., Johnson, C., & Hall, L. (2017). Emotional and social intelligence: How “smart” are you? (submitted for publication); Bartz, D., Thompson, K., & Rice, P. (2017). Principals managing and developing their human capital. *National Forum of Educational Administration and Supervision Journal*, 34(4).

² The following are good resources for information pertaining to strengths management: Buckingham, M. & Clifton, D.O. (2001). *Now, discover your strengths*. New York: Gallup; Buckingham, M. (2007). *Go put your strengths to work*. New York: Free Press; Clifton, D.O. & Nelson, P. (1992). *Soar with your strengths*. New York: Delacorte Press; Collins, J. (2011). *Good to great: Why some companies make the leap... and others don't*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers; Drucker, P.F. (1966). *The effective executive*. New York: Harper and Row; Eureka Books. (2015). *Key takeaways, analysis and review of Tom Rath's strengthfinder 2.0*. CreateSpace Publishing; Rath, R. (2007). *Strengths finder 2.0*. New York: Gallup Press; Rath, T. & Conchie, B. (2008). *Strengths based leadership: Great leaders, teams, and why people follow*. New York: Gallup; Zenger, J. H. & Folkman, J. (2009). *The extraordinary leader: Turning good managers into great leaders*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

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