



*Helping School Leaders
Flourish Not Just Cope*

2022 SUMMARY REPORT





This is a summary report of 'The Flourish Movement 2022 Report'.

To **read the full version**, which includes the full data for each construct, the detailed research and intervention methodology and references, click **HERE**.

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“ Participating in Flourish has been an absolute game-changer for me. I was finding it incredibly difficult to achieve and maintain a work-life balance. The increasing demands from Regional Office, a complex community, living on site, children with high levels of need and huge curriculum demands coupled with a 0.9 teaching load were really taking their toll. I found that I was taking work home constantly, sleeping poorly and my personal relationships were suffering as a consequence. Flourish has enabled me to create strong boundaries between work and home life which has led to better sleep, more ‘me time’ and improved personal relationships. I am more relaxed at work and I am achieving more during work time. My day is more structured and less chaotic and this is being reflected in a relaxed and happy workplace. I would highly recommend the Flourish program to anyone in a leadership role. Thank you Adam and team for a fantastic program!

- Hayley Laidlow - School Principal, QLD

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the following people and groups for their support in the development of both this report and The Flourish Movement.

To the instigators who sought out what was possible to improve the wellbeing of School Leaders:

- Bob Willetts
- Tony Gadd

There have been certain groups who have been exceptionally proactive and supportive of both their School Leaders and The Flourish Movement.

In NSW:

- The NSWPPA has been instrumental in their unwavering support of this program from their initial grant to aid in our launch, and to their School Leaders before, during and after COVID. Special appreciation to NSWPPA President Ms Robyn Evans for her vision, positivity, and leadership.
- The Catholic Diocese of Education Parramatta now in their fourth year and for extending the offering to the School Leaders, as well as School Principals. Special appreciation to Greg Whitby, Tim Hardy, Lesley Said and Greg Elliott.
- The Catholic Diocese of Wollongong for the early adoption of this program for their School Leaders. Special appreciation to Neil McCann and Gayle McMann.
- The Catholic Diocese of Wagga Wagga. Special appreciation to Danny Malone.

In other states:

- Department of Education Tasmania who have been exceptionally proactive in their early and ongoing support of their School Leaders since 2018. Special appreciation to Bernadette Howard, Malcom Elliot, Brett Mangion, and Sally Milbourne.
- Brisbane Catholic Education who was able to support their School Leaders. Special thanks to Pam Betts and Peter Hill.
- Western Cape College in Weipa for their dedication. Special thanks to Michelle Elms and Shirlee Gallo from Atherton Centre for Learning and Wellbeing.
- QASSP and the Gold Coast branch for their work in Queensland for their School Principals. Special thanks to Magdalene St Clare, David Turner, Leslie Singh and Samantha Donovan.

To the participants, we owe you a debt of gratitude. Thanks for taking the time to collaborate with us and for taking a leap of faith that helped us create something truly special. Thank you too for your time, your thoughts and most importantly your trust. The work you do in leading our schools is selfless and inspirational.





Preface

As researchers we specialise in numbers, data and accuracy. We don't specialise in emotion. However, 'The Flourish Movement' has been a very emotional project to work on. This project has been eye opening in terms of what an extraordinary group of people School Principals are. They literally need to wear capes to work.

The above paragraph was how we began our first report in 2019 after completing the research on the first eight groups in New South Wales. Nothing that we have observed or researched in the next 18 groups to complete Flourish has made us want to change this opening statement. In fact, it has only deepened our admiration and respect for this group of people.

To have the privilege to see how hard they work in the pre-COVID world was impressive, however, to see how adaptive and flexible they were to manage such a huge disruption to the way they work was inspiring and humbling to say the least.

Over the last six years there has been even more data published, such as Assoc. Professor Phil Riley's work, showing that the role is very challenging. The result is many School Principals exhibit significant increases in stress levels, emotional drain and feelings of burnout and frustration. The pandemic also increased the rate of change in their world and their role, leaving them to solve problems no one had ever faced before.

The Flourish Movement began as an altruistic partnership between Dr Adam Fraser, Dr John Molineux from Deakin University and the School Principals in NSW (led by Bob Willetts). This program has been designed with Principals, for Principals. The collaborative nature of the program is one of the reasons why it has been so incredibly successful. The program is now in 6 states and has seen over 900 School Leaders join the movement. The scope has also broadened to include Deputy and Assistant Principals and other Leadership positions. Essentially Flourish is for School Leaders as well as School Principals.



Previously, we were surprised by our research findings around how the School Leaders cope with such a difficult job, and this has not been dampened or changed in the last two years. What School Leaders have in common is that they have a suit of armour that they pull on each day to go to work. The armour consists of two parts:

1. The first is their incredibly high level of Psychological capital. Psychological capital consists of confidence, hope, resilience, and optimism. It is a tool kit they draw on to deal with high levels of pressure and stress. Our recent data shows that the Psychological capital of Leaders in recent groups is higher than earlier groups.
2. The second is the high level of meaning and purpose they have attached to the role. For them this job is a true vocation, it is bigger than themselves. This strong connection to meaning and purpose enables them to tolerate the difficult parts of the job. This was significantly tested over the pandemic and our research data has seen the first decrease in meaning in the role since we started this research in 2016.

While this armour protects them, it is a heavy burden to carry. The maintenance of the armour requires them to push themselves constantly, to overwork, to over commit and to feel guilty about taking time for themselves or their family. The guilt that Leaders feel when they are not able to be everything to everybody is palpable.

You could say in some ways School Leaders are too devoted, too resilient and too optimistic for their own good. We need to protect them, not because they are weak, but because they are too strong.

Wearing the armour comes at a cost. The most significant is the impact on their personal lives. During the pandemic, we know this only worsened their lack of work family balance and the stress of the day comes home with them. It also has a huge impact on their health, with many Leaders suffering significant health issues that can be related to stress. In this report we have reviewed these impacts to clarify their nature, as well as their



severity. Finally, their passion for the job is being eroded. Previously, the high levels of reporting and compliance took them further from the joy of focusing on education and making the school a better place to work and attend. Of concern though, our recent data shows that since the pandemic, there has been a reduction in the enjoyment of the role.

The Flourish Movement is a place where they can take off the armour, sit with their colleagues, be supported and have authentic and real conversations.

Throughout the pandemic we too had to change and adapt. We moved to delivering our program virtually which had the benefit of reaching more people in need and from all over Australia, but the challenge of not being in a space together.

Whilst this sounds like a sad tale it has a happy ending. Just like the Leaders themselves, we have hope and optimism for their future. The greatest things we have learnt from The Flourish Movement is that School Leaders are incredibly adaptable and have an amazing capacity to change their behaviour to improve their wellbeing, how efficient they are at work, their ability to deal with negative thoughts and emotions and their capacity to clearly articulate what they want to stand for as a leader. Given support and guidance, School Leaders have the capacity to dramatically evolve the way they work to make the job more sustainable, enjoyable and more impactful.

Dr Adam Fraser

Executive Summary

This report shows that The Flourish Movement program continues to lead to improvements in School Leaders wellbeing, balance and quality of life. These improvements occur regardless of the environment in which they find themselves in (COVID-19, managing from home) and how the program is delivered (face-to-face, fully virtual, or hybrid). When we look at all the groups over the last six years who have gone through The Flourish Movement, we see improvements in most constructs measured (see next page). All the changes have a tangible real-world impact. School Leaders' lives are significantly different, that being significantly better after participating in the program. These positive improvements can be translated to a return on investment (ROI) for school Leaders. The ROI calculation demonstrates that investing in the wellbeing of School Leaders gives a huge return. In fact, for every dollar spent on their wellbeing there is a 299% return in the first year and 231% in each subsequent year for the first four years.

As the Flourish research has been carried out consistently over the last six years, we are able to compare different groups so as to understand the impact of certain changes on School Leaders. We compared the percentage improvement in early groups (first 8 groups) vs the later groups (next 18 groups) and the face-to-face groups (first 16 groups, pre-COVID) vs the hybrid groups (10 groups that did the program following the start of COVID-19). For the majority of constructs, there is very little difference between the improvements in the various groups. Where we did see some differences was in the hybrid groups which didn't see as great an improvement in Work-family balance, Stressful issues, Work overload, and Boundary strength. However, this reduced improvement seems reasonable considering that the School Leaders were dealing with so much change and disruption due to the pandemic. The increased workload and urgency in the role over that time would mean that work was more frequently intruding into family time.

This was supported by the data, exploring how much time was spent in different work roles and tasks. Participants in the hybrid groups exhibited a reduction in the percentage of their day spent in proactive tasks such as Strategy and People development, while spending more time in reactive tasks like covering Teaching gaps, plus People management and Internal meetings.

An unexpected finding was that pre-program, the hybrid and later groups had higher scores for many of the constructs. Pre-program scores for Recovery, Work-family balance, Boundary strength and Psychological capital were higher for the hybrid groups when compared to the other groups. In addition, Stress levels pre-program were also lower for the hybrid groups. We expected that the pandemic would lead to increases in Stress and Workload and a decrease in Work-family balance. Some possible reasons for why our data showed the opposite are: some of the restrictions that occurred over that time such as not having parents on site, fewer initiatives launched, and less reporting required by each state's Department of Education actually reduced the pressure on the School Leaders. Another explanation is that these circumstances meant that the program attracted more proactive School Leaders. People with poor wellbeing habits tend to withdraw and push themselves harder when they go through a lot of change and disruption, while people with good wellbeing habits tend to invest more in themselves when they are under pressure. The context could have meant that the difficult circumstances attracted School Leaders with higher scores.

The results of this report show that participation in The Flourish Movement program leads to a significant and lasting impact on School Leaders' wellbeing and effectiveness, irrespective of time or mode of delivery.



Recovery activities
at home **14.4%**



Recovery activities
at work **27.6%**



Work-family
balance **17.6%**



Boundary
strength **54.2%**



My personal time
is my own **32.6%**



Wellbeing **9.0%**



Psychological
capital **7.8%**



Happy at work **9.1%**



Life close to ideal
14.9%



Resilience **10.2%**



Social support
5.8%



Time spent in
Research **22%**



Time spent in
Strategy **29.2%**



Time spent in
Coaching **29.7%**



Time spent in Leading
teaching and learning
23.1%



Time spent in People
development **16.2%**



Time spent in
School leadership
10.5%



Time spent in
Admin **-18.8%**



Time spent in
Conflict **-25.2%**



Time spent in
Crisis management
-23.4%



Interruptions
-35.5%



Stressful issues
-13.4%



Stress **-19.2%**



Work overload **-18.2%**



Sleep problems
due to work stress
-35.5%



Health risk for
heart disease and
stroke **-13.4%**

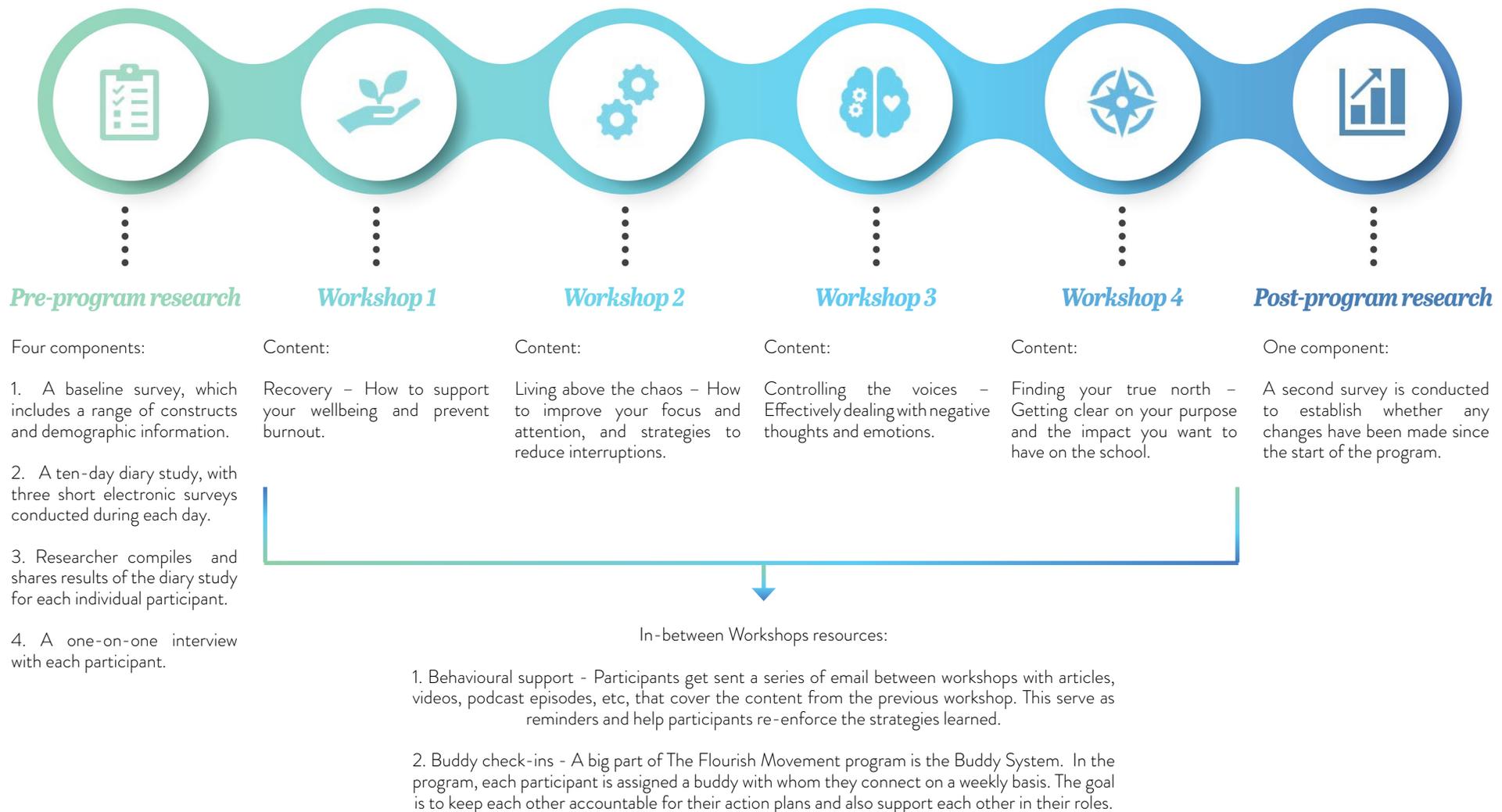


Likelihood of taking
leave to cope with
stress **-18.2%**



Likelihood of leaving
the role due to stress
and work pressure
-23.4%

Research and Intervention Methodology



Return on Investment



YEAR 1

ROI - **2.99**

Savings 1* - \$8,551.40

Savings 2** - \$9,702.55

YEAR 2

ROI - **2.31**

Savings 1* - \$6,606.60

Savings 2** - \$7,495.95

YEAR 3

ROI - **2.31**

Savings 1* - \$6,606.60

Savings 2** - \$7,495.95

YEAR 4

ROI - **2.31**

Savings 1* - \$6,606.60

Savings 2** - \$7,495.95

TOTAL

Savings 1* - **\$28,371.20**

Savings 2** - **\$32,193.40**

* Savings for participants who paid \$2,600+GST for The Flourish Movement Program (2016-2018)

** Savings for participants who paid \$2,950+GST for The Flourish Movement Program (2019-2022)

Issues still outstanding

On day two of the program, participants were shown their group results and observations made in relation to the use of their time by Dr John Molineux from Deakin University, who conducted the research aspect of the program. From the data collected, the following observations were made about School Leaders roles and very little seems to have altered over the last two years:

1 HIGH ADMINISTRATION AND COMPLIANCE WORKLOAD

A significant finding of this program and report is the large volume of time School Leaders spend in administration and compliance. There is a large amount of time taken up with routine administration work that doesn't utilise the skill and experience of School Leaders, which indicates poor utilisation of time. As a result, we found that many Leaders had very little time to focus on transformational activities that improves the educational outcomes for the students. Secondly the high administration and compliance workload results in leaders feeling less engaged and stimulated by their work.

2 HIGH LEVEL OF INTERRUPTIONS

Their working environment makes it very difficult for School Leaders to have time to focus and complete complex tasks such as strategy, planning and reporting. This is largely due to the large number of interruptions during the day, often by stakeholders who expect to get their time and attention instantaneously. A School Leader's time is often hijacked by other peoples' needs and agendas.

3 EXCESSIVE WORKING HOURS

In order to compensate for the above two issues, School Leaders are working excessively long hours and don't have time to complete their work without it significantly intruding into home life. This can result in work-family conflict, burnout and poor physical and mental wellbeing.

4 LOW LEVELS OF SELF-CARE AND RECOVERY

As a whole, School Principals and Leaders are not exhibiting appropriate levels of self-care. There is insufficient time allocated to psychological and physiological recovery activities, especially during normal work hours, and this may result in burnout or contribute to serious mental or physical illnesses. What drives this is a combination of; volume of workload to get through, guilt associated with taking time for themselves, high levels of meaning and purpose causing them to care for everyone else rather than themselves and finally a mindset that they need to be more resilient and just push through. Without doubt, the wellbeing area needs significant improvement through a number of avenues to allow aspiring, newly appointed and current Principals to have a range of resources that support them throughout their career stages and choices.

5 INEFFICIENT SYSTEMS

Throughout our interviews and research, School Leaders commented on their frustrations with existing systems that do not work effectively and the ineffective implementation, planning and resourcing relating to the introduction of new systems. While they accept there will always be new systems, they found that the systems themselves were not easy to use and seeking assistance with these systems was time consuming and did not offer a sophisticated solution.

6 EXPERT GUIDANCE

There are situations that many School Leaders find themselves in, for which they are the appropriate person within the school context to address the issue at hand, but for which they have not had specific training, e.g. conflict, counselling, health and safety, staff misconduct and management of work performance. Primarily, these areas are HR in nature and related to people management as well as general conduct of parents, and the student community.

Recommendations

1 HEALTH AND WELLBEING FOR SCHOOL LEADERS

- Provide ongoing systematic training on School Leader wellbeing, beginning at induction.
- Ensure a balanced approach to performance and wellbeing management by ensuring wellbeing is a consideration in Professional Development Plans and supervision conversations.
- Provide performance and wellbeing training programs to Directors Educational Leadership and non-school based staff to ensure a systemic cultural shift towards improved workforce wellbeing and work-life balance.
- Ensure that the programs offered are evidenced based and provide independent data that proves the program achieves its intended outcomes.

2 INTRODUCTION OF NEW SYSTEMS AND PROCESSES

- Integrated planning for introducing new software, initiatives, and policies.
- Using a high level of the best pedagogy (Andragogy/ Adult Learning) and learning approaches to learning when training School Leaders in any kind of new processes.
- Rigorous testing prior to releasing any new systems and processes and specific consideration to the time/workload impact at the school level.
- Consider the speed and pace at which new initiatives are expected to be implemented.

3 HR SUPPORT FOR STAFF PERFORMANCE ISSUES

- Local HR support should be provided around serious misconduct and under-performance processes with school staff. In very large schools, a dedicated HR manager should be employed.
- Ensure that Principals are effectively supported through accusations of parents and teachers. This will need to be in both policy and in action that actively supports Principals when parents and teachers act outside of the behaviour parameters set by the Department.
- Train School Leaders in counselling and performance management processes.
- Develop Principals as leaders, not just managers.

4 COLLEGIATE SUPPORT

- Acknowledge the research supports the importance of collegial support as a protective factor.
- Ensure that mentoring and buddying processes are in place for School Leaders.
- Actively encourage and support Principals' and School Leaders' attendance and engagement with professional associations that enhance collegial support.

5 LOCAL BUSINESS MANAGERS

- Consider introducing funding for business managers for groups of small schools that are able to run facilities, property, safety and finances, and complete appropriate compliance activities.
- Larger schools should have a full-time business manager. Smaller schools could share a business manager.

6 COMPLIANCE BURDEN

- Reduce compliance burden from compulsory reporting to exception reporting as a default or rotate compliance reporting to a three-year cycle, with different elements to be reported once every three years.
- Introduce centralised automated reporting systems to address mandatory NERA reporting requirements, collecting data once and then using it throughout the department.
- Consider reducing the burden on small schools or increase release time for the teaching Principal to undertake this work.

7 CLARIFY THE ROLES OF SCHOOL LEADERSHIP TEAMS TO IMPROVE PRINCIPALS' CAPACITY TO LEAD

- Provide School Principals with greater role clarity and assistance from their leadership teams at a system level, should further reduce their administrative burden, as well as build the capacity within the leadership team.
- Greater role clarity would help minimise some of the unhelpful mindsets that School Leaders fall into. Such as, 'I have to be everything to everybody, and I must solve everyone's problems and look after them'.
- Moreover, Principals struggle with delegation. Sometimes, they are not sure what they can delegate, and they often feel guilty for delegating tasks to staff, so they hold onto far too many tasks themselves. This results in them being very reactive and getting lost in the complexity of the role. As a result, they don't get to the more strategic parts of the role.
- Role clarity will help them understand where they should be spending their time and what tasks they can delegate to others. As previously mentioned, increasing

Future work

1 INCREASE ACCESS TO THE PROGRAM

In 2019, due to the strong results arising from the program, The Flourish Movement had already reached beyond the borders of New South Wales. The program was operating in other states of Australia, namely Queensland and Tasmania. In 2022, with the introduction of hybrid sessions we now have participants from all over Australia and in all states with the exception of Northern Territory. In Queensland and in Tasmania, many programs have been completed with only slight regional differences at baseline. Further the program has now been run for School Leaders from Catholic Dioceses in NSW and Queensland. Participants' feedback continues to be fantastic with many expressing similar changes and improvements as NSW participants, at similar stages throughout the program. This is encouraging as it continues to support so many of the findings of the Riley Report, as well as demonstrate relevance and impact in each region. Essentially, given the tools and the support, School Leaders will make and sustain changes that continue to benefit their role, their staff, their school and their own wellbeing.

2 BUILD FLOURISHING SCHOOLS

The participants were so energised from the positive results and impact of Flourish, they were keen to share the principles with their staff and schools. However, the Principals found it time consuming to prepare the material and customise it to their staff. This led us to develop the 'Flourish for Schools' program. This program is hosted online and is designed to be a leader led program for the entire school staff population. It takes key components of the course (in the form of videos, diagnostics and handouts) and customises them to suit the school staff population. Once registered, the school has access online for the School Leader to take the staff through the program at their desired pace. All staff are included in the program, including administration staff who often miss out on Professional Development. We believe this will increase and improve the relationships across the school itself. The program is sufficient for 12 months of staff Professional Development, allowing School Leaders to have a turn-key solution for their staff PD over that year. We have also included a survey as part of this course both to inform on the state and status of the staff population, but also to give group based and de-identified feedback to the Leader of each school on their own staff and their wellbeing. This will allow them to utilise this information in their delivery of the course, as well as address the overall school staff needs. We will be collating this data to get a wellbeing snapshot of school staff as well as measure the impact of the program.

3 BUILD FLOURISHING STUDENTS

With the introduction of Flourish for schools, it would be interesting to review internally captured school data and draw inferences on any impacts on the school staff population since the introduction of Flourish for the School Leader and again with Flourish for schools. Further, it would also be of interest to review how these changes impact student outcomes.

Comments

As part of the evaluation of The Flourish Movement, participants were asked six questions. These were:

1. Since your involvement in The Flourish Movement, have you noticed any changes in the way you deal with interruptions to work? Also, have you noticed any changes to work flow or work efficiency? Please describe.
2. Have you noticed any changes in relation to introducing Third Space transitions or changes in work-family or work-life? Please describe.
3. Have you noticed any changes to relationships in your school? Have you been able to pass on techniques from The Flourish Movement to your staff or school community? Please describe.
4. Have you been able to introduce new recovery activities or improve your recovery at work or after work? Please describe.
5. Have you noticed any change to your overall sense of wellbeing? Please describe.
6. Is there anything else you would like to add or provide feedback about The Flourish Movement?



1

Since your involvement in The Flourish Movement, have you noticed any changes in the way you deal with interruptions to work? Also, have you noticed any changes to work flow or work efficiency? Please describe.

“Definitely, I am using my time to work smarter rather than harder. I **schedule email** response times, strategic times for first thing in the morning when I am fresh, give myself recovery and fun time, use the flourish model every day on my way home, consider how I want to show up, I use the choice point analogy with staff via coaching now and in my own work to manage my responses from a growth perspective”

“I am able to block times and organise my leadership team to **better manage our collective time** to give each of the team an opportunity to work with reduced interruptions”

“Since my involvement in this program I have found that I am more present to my staff and family. I no longer answer emails or take work home. In my interactions with staff, students or parents I close my laptop while they are in my office to ensure **active listening**. When an appointment is requested I ask for an agenda to be forwarded prior to the meeting to ensure I am prepared. By limiting my jumping from task to task I have found that I am dealing with issues with greater clarity and efficiency. I am more discerning with the emails I tackle in my day and I feel less stressed if I don’t get to all of them by days end.”

“I indicate to others when I need to not be interrupted. I advise my office staff when I have critical work that needs to be completed and why I cannot be interrupted. My work flow is significantly altered. I work on a task until completion after scheduling time to complete it. I catch myself saying, ‘what next?’ And I then review my task allocation because I have allowed myself the **time to be focused on a singular task** until completion, being completely absorbed by it and not thinking of ‘other’ things I have to do.”

“I have noticed that the interruptions have significantly reduced compared to pre-Flourish days. Although, in saying that the changes with COVID-19 have meant a bit of a shift again. I find that I am much **more focused** on completing tasks rather than jumping from one to the other and not really doing anything properly.”

“Yes, I have learned to shut the door if needed and be **honest about my availability** and when I can get something back to them.”

“I’m more patient and tolerant of interruptions. Staff have become **more respectful** of me when interrupting. I’m prioritising tasks more effectively. Flow has improved and I feel more efficient in that one task is completed at a time (not working simultaneously across several)”

2

Have you noticed any changes in relation to introducing Third Space transitions or changes in work-family or work-life? Please describe.

“I have definitely noticed changes in my work-family life because of the Flourish program. The idea around ‘recovery’ being built into my daily, weekly, termly calendar has changed my life! I was always someone who worked flat out through the term and used school holiday periods to recover. I have made a shift in my life to **building recovery throughout the school term** including a weekend away mid-term with my family as made a significant difference to my energy levels and feeling of wellness which I’ve never had before. I am also more conscious of transitioning from work to home using the learning from Third Space.”

“I still do work at home and work a slightly longer day than my scheduled time but have much stronger boundaries and **can choose** if I am going to do work and do not feel stressed if I don’t do work at home like I used to, therefore I do feel like my time is my own.”

“My children now say to me when I get home, ‘Now, go and have your third space because I want to talk to your about/need your help with...’. I have a rule now that once I am home, I do NOT check emails, that it will have to wait until morning and this has **DRAMATICALLY improved my sleep**. I communicate with my family when I am going to be doing ‘school work’ at home, what this will look like and how long I will be doing it for.”

“The third space has been very helpful particularly on days where I have experienced high challenge for example staff and student behaviour / challenges. The third space has enabled me to make a distinction between school and home allowing me to **be present with my family** when I get home. I have made a conscious decision to create boundaries at home involving technology use in front of children and creating limitations on work each night. I prioritise what needs to be done through lists and only focus on, ‘What’s on top’.”

“Yes. I switch off far better, and never open my computer on the weekends. I send no correspondence at times where I want to **model** ‘not working’ also, as I know my **behaviour** impacts others.”

“I am able to separate myself from school. I go home earlier and I exercise more. If I have a particularly bad day, I don’t dwell on it, I go for a walk or do something I enjoy. As a result I am **calmer at school** and not so reactive and this has resulted in my team being calmer and less reactive. I transition between school and home much more successfully and am able to leave school behind, even though I still carry my bags full of stuff!! If needed I still will deal with essential items if I am out of the school but I have let go and trusted my team more.”

3

Have you noticed any changes to relationships in your school? Have you been able to pass on techniques from The Flourish Movement to your staff or school community? Please describe.

“I am **connecting more** and taking a personal interest in my staff. I have shared with staff the importance of boundaries and that we all need to value our time. That my time is no more important than support staff as we all have roles to play for the function of the school and for our kids. I have **modelled the boundaries** by setting time frames, with a timer, and sticking to it by ending meetings at the agreed time and actually telling staff when their time is up (previously I would let a meeting drag out for 2 hours just to be polite! I’m still polite now though lol). Information about Third Space and really making work work and home home but also being realistic that at times work will flow into home but we need to be mindful of how much.”



“Yes as a leader I have always placed great importance on wellbeing, but having participated in Flourish, I really feel I have a great deal **more confidence** in not only articulating the importance of wellbeing to my staff but in taking responsibility for my own wellbeing without a feeling of guilt for doing so”



“Some of the flourish strategies such as taking on challenging conversations at an appropriate time and place have enabled me to encourage a more **positive staff culture.**”



“I am **more open** about the impact my job and my personal life have on my ability to do my job. I talk with my team about the Flourish strategies and my own experience and journey and the impact they have had on my life balance. I notice when my team members are not themselves and actively seek them out and offer support. I have found that other **staff members seek me out** if they are feeling overwhelmed or stressed, often just to have a chat knowing that I don’t judge them or dismiss their feelings, and that I will offer practical solutions if that is what they want.”



“Absolutely. I utilise many tools introduced through the Flourish Project with day to day interactions, conflicts, problems of practice frequently. I have also commenced the Flourish Project with staff and the feedback has been overwhelmingly **positive.**”



“In what has been an incredibly stressful time in schools, I have found that I have been able to control my stress and emotions to provide my staff with **guidance and support.** The collegiality and collaboration amongst staff has been acknowledged and we are a very tight knit group. There was **genuine care** for each other and a lot of laughter kept all staff on track. I am talking about some of the strategies I use and would like to do more work in this area with staff. I feel I have been able to support staff during difficult times.”

4

Have you been able to introduce new recovery activities or improve your recovery at work or after work?
Please describe.

“At work I will make sure that if I am feeling tense or drained that I **get out of my office** and walk through the playground. I make a point of getting out of my office for lunch, going outside more has been the biggest change. After work I take half an hour to sit in silence and read a book or play a mindless game on the iPad. **Connecting** with my boys has been a big change and walking with my husband. Every 3 weeks I have established a craft group where we meet at my place and all have our own project to complete and catch up.”

“**Exercise and health eating** habits have seen me drop 20kgs and keep it off!”

“Engaging with students during break times and visiting more classrooms - grounds me, motivates me and reminds me why I do what I do. At home I have let my family have more of a say in what we do and when, rather than me staying home on the laptop I now go for the bike ride, watch the movie, play uno etc. I’ve also found a great **podcast** that I am listening to on my way to and from work - completely non-related to education. I look forward to the drive!”

“I have never implemented any meditation practices prior to Flourish, however, now it is a key part of my “Third Space” transition. I find that 5-10 mins **meditation** on a daily basis enables me to make the shift calmly to be able to take on my chaotic household of 6!”

“I have trouble switching my brain off so I have taken up reading books unrelated to education. Going to the gym and **debriefing with my buddy** or listening to music stops me from getting out my laptop and checking emails.”

“Joined the **gym** with another Flourish Principal and go together twice a week”

“I have finally embraced a **meditation** app - and couldn’t believe how much success I have experienced as a result! I still enjoy my wine - but I am significantly more mindful about it (I am now tracking all food/wine/exercise). When I need to ‘reset’ at work, or need a break, I will just go and drop in on classes - usually take some pictures, have children share their work with me, chat to children about what they’re doing - it reminds me why I do what I do.”

5

Have you noticed any change to your overall sense of wellbeing?
Please describe.

“It has been more stable and my mindset of being able to take on difficult/challenging situations has improved. I know **it is ok to sit with the uncomfortable** and that it will always be there with each new challenge/crisis but THIS IS OK, THIS IS NORMAL and being ok with feeling uncomfortable will ultimately lead me to proactive behaviours which in turn will improve the culture of my school (as I am more confident to address issues as they arise to maintain and model high expectations).”

“I definitely feel **calmer and more positive** about my job. I am better at navigating the challenges that come with our role and my sleep has improved.”

“In Flourish hearing that my colleagues also feel inadequate in some way, made me **feel much stronger as a leader**. If colleagues of their calibre have doubts about their abilities, it is ok for me to have doubts too. I have learned to accept the doubts and “Kevin” them. It has reduced my anxiety significantly.”

“Massively! I am a much **healthier, happier and more productive** Father, Husband and Principal.”

“COVID impacted my sense of wellbeing - however this is not the norm. What I am pleased about is that I had a significant ‘toolkit’ from Flourish that helped me to manage the impact on my wellbeing. I am currently **feeling the best I have in a very long time**. I am calmer, I feel more in control of ‘the stories I tell myself’. I feel settled. The constant level of anxiety I previously felt has all but disappeared.”

“Mainly the ability to set realistic goals of what can be achieved in a set time, how to prioritise and the knowledge that sometimes, things don’t get done and that is OK! I no longer put work before family and this has enabled me to be present in the lives of my children. I focus fully on work at work and then I focus on family at home. This **separation is key** in being able to properly relax in my own time at home and not feel guilty. My family also knows that when I am work - all communication to me has to wait until after school unless it is an emergency so the boundaries work both ways.”

“I am happier, have more energy and ensuring I put my own oxygen mask on before helping others. This makes me a **better leader**. I am having more **fun at work**.”

6

Is there anything else you would like to add or provide feedback about The Flourish Movement?

“I enjoyed the program, it made me realise that we all have the same doubts as leaders. I appreciated **getting to know my fellow principals** on a deeper level and the strategies shared to assist in making the work/life balance more harmonious. I really like the research behind the program and I now have a Flourish buddy who I contact weekly.”

“The presentations were all **easy to listen** to and follow. Some activities were uncomfortable but it is good to be pushed out of my comfort zone. Even though I haven’t been able to successfully implement all the strategies consistently I am going to keep trying as they have **made a difference** to my workload and recovery.”

“I have loved it! It has made a big difference. I have also made a great friend out of it, my **flourish buddy**. We have spoken every week since starting”

“Flourish has been invaluable in providing **research based skills** to balance workload, job expectations and my personal life. If I am not able to “recharge my own batteries” I am not able to function at my best at school for my staff and students.”

“I’m glad that I participated in the Flourish program at the beginning of my time as a Principal as it has given me many great strategies to put in place from the start. I also found that the **mix of experience** of the Principals in our cohort was great as their struggles were the same as mine and coming together has given me some great contacts and a **supportive network** of experts. The Flourish program at times made me **step out of my comfort zone** but I think it has provided me with some great tools to assist me in my daily job. It has given me the confidence to take a moment for myself without seeing this as “slacking off” from the work that I have to do.”

“Flourish has enabled me to **understand my role as a Principal and my role as a parent**. The personal and professional capital Flourish has given me has helped in shaping how I am perceived at home and at work.”

“Thank you is the biggest thing from me. I have gained so much from Flourish but also know that I can slip every now and then and that is okay. **Be kind to myself!** When I am calm and reflective as the leader, my team is much calmer, more productive and happy. I am so glad that I did Flourish. I’d sincerely like to thank the team but in particular, Adam. Keep up the fantastic work everyone.”



Thank you!

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