

From functioning to flourishing: Researching school improvement from a positive organizational perspective

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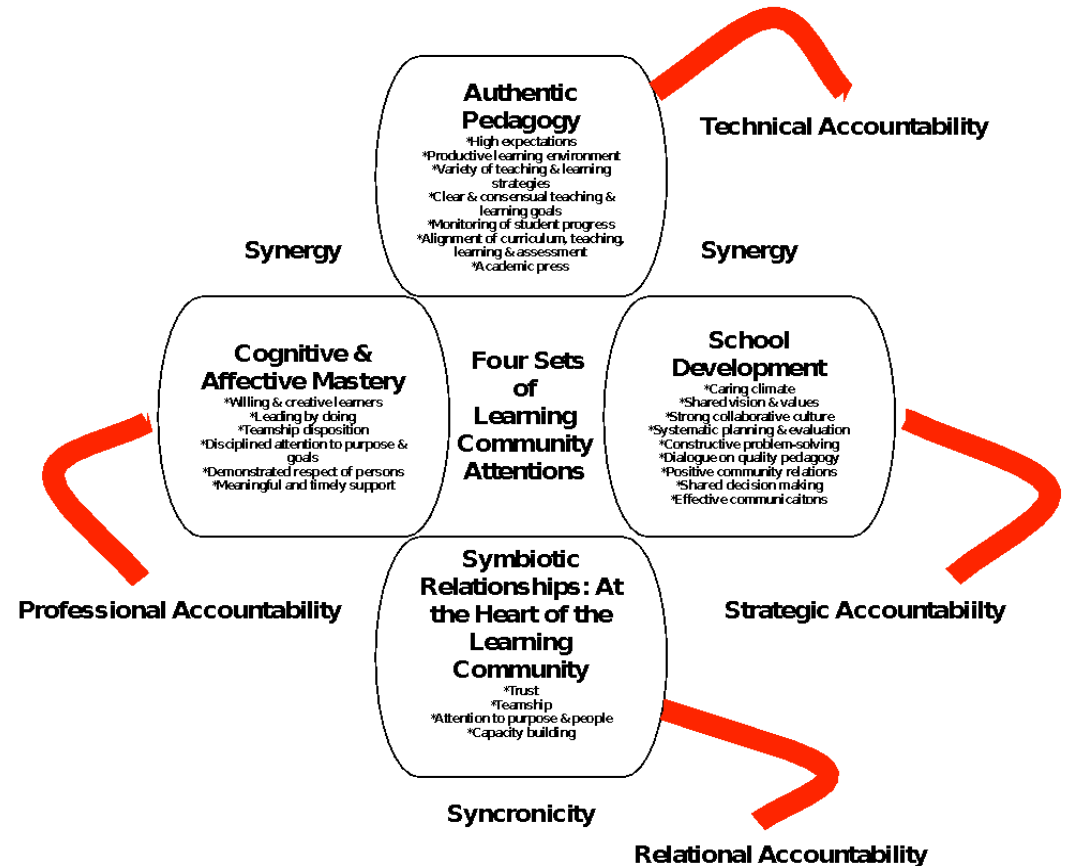
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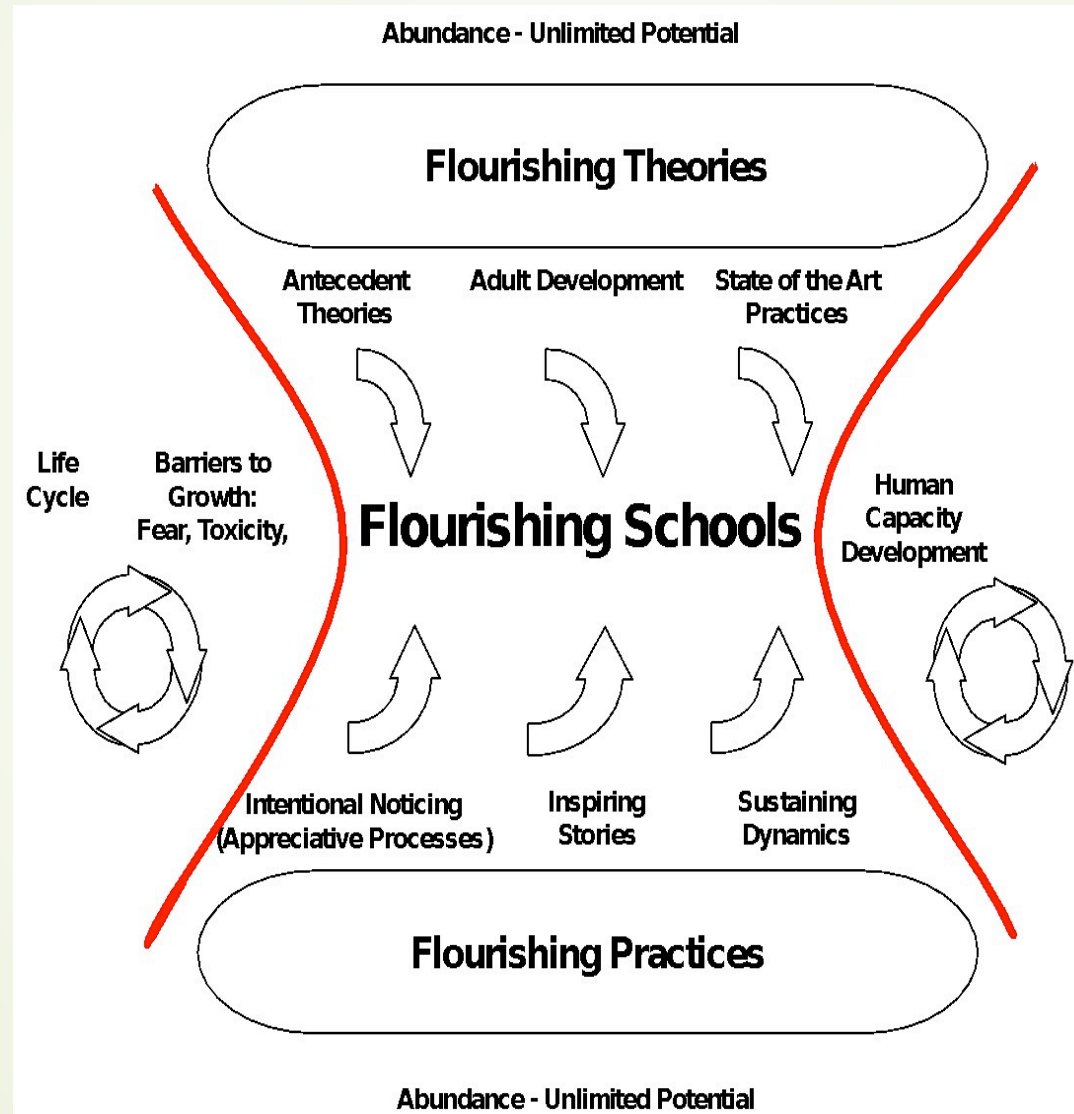
CPPA 2016


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This is what we knew about school improvement



This is where we then headed....





What happens if we shift the questions we ask about school improvement toward wellbeing?

- ▶ We use a positive organizational perspective to examine what it means for teachers and other school leaders to feel a sense of flourishing in their work.
- ▶ What are the benefits of attending to teacher well-being?
- ▶ Where/how do educators feel a sense of thriving?
- ▶ What provokes vitality in schools?





Theoretical Framework

► **Positive Psychology:**

A focus on the development of positive outlooks, habits, and mental models with a focus on describing and building positive qualities in individuals rather than a deficit-model approach of trying to repair the negative and destructive ones (Achor, 2011; Bakker & Schaufeli, 2008; Ben-Shahar, 2008; Carr, 2004; Keyes, Frederickson, & Park, 2012; Seligman, 2002, 2011; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000).

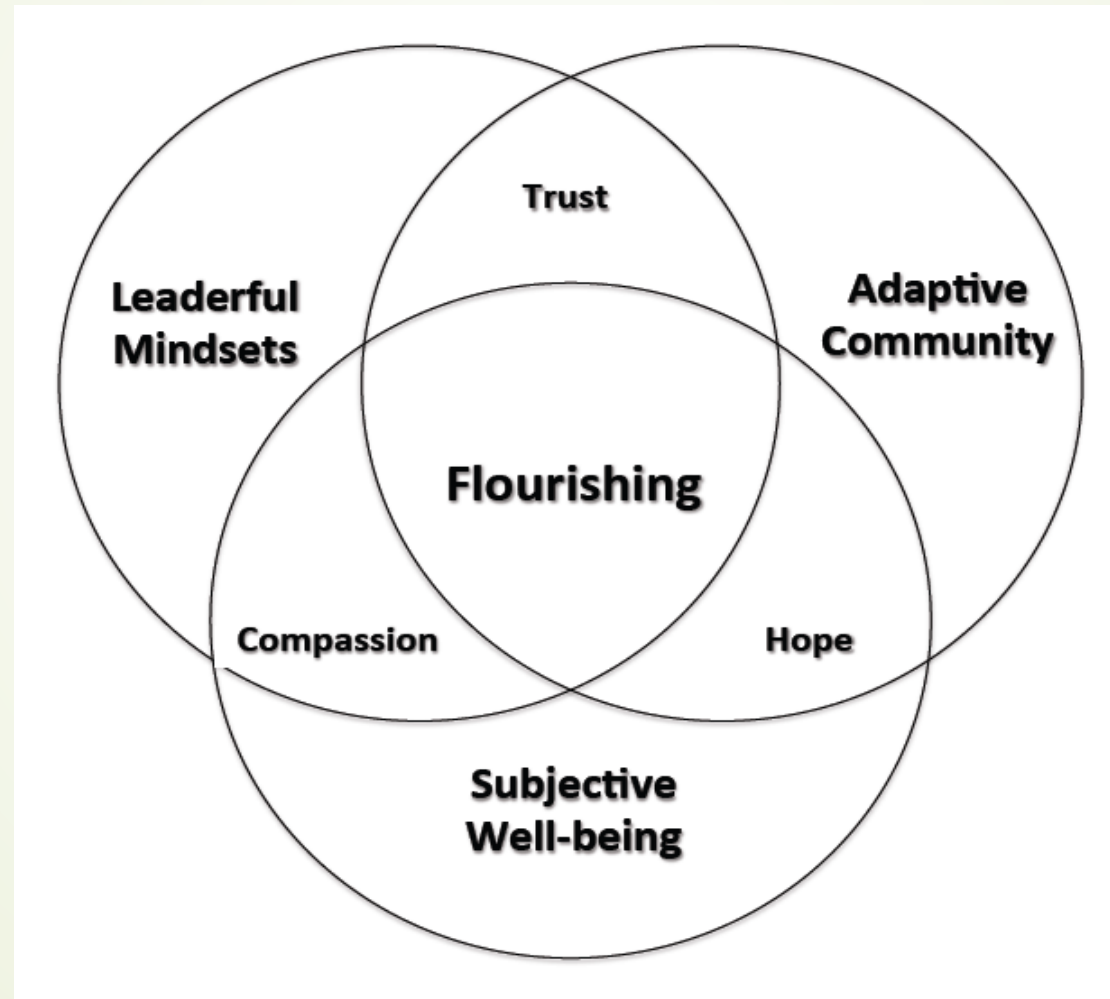
► **Positive Organizational Scholarship:**

There have been an increasing number of studies on compassion and other virtues at work (c.f., Lilius et al., 2008; Stevens et al., 2008; Youssef & Luthans, 2004, 2013) linking the presence of these virtues to other positive organizational outcomes.

► ***Learning communities***

Organisational structures that support the conditions for continuous learning that may lead to sustainable improvement (Fullan, 2006; Sergiovanni, 1994; Hargreaves & Fink, 2006; Mitchell & Sackney, 2009; Stoll & Louis, 2007)

Flourishing in Schools: A Conceptual Model





Domains



- **Subjective well-being** is understood as “peoples’ positive evaluation of their lives, which includes positive emotion, engagement, satisfaction, and meaning” (Diener & Seligman, 2004, p.1; Seligman, 2011).
- **Leaderful mindset**, in our model, the generative leader mindsets domain reflects the educational research findings that ensuring capacity for sustainable school improvement means that leadership capacity must be fostered at many levels of the school (Elmore, 2000; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012; Slater, 2008).
- **Adaptive Community** is linked to ideas of resiliency (Henderson & Milstein, 1996; Seligman, 1998; Werner & Smith, 2001; Wolin & Wolin, 1993) and self-aware, context-sensitive, emergent systems (Capra, 2003; Heifetz et al., 2009; Senge, 2006).

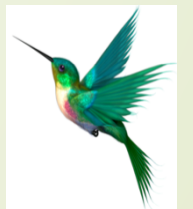


Flourishing Research Principles:

- Authentic partnerships—people are at the centre of our purpose.
 - Appreciative lenses—seeing flourishing as potential in all schools.
 - Generative dissemination—sharing of our learning in ways that reflects, informs, and inspires flourishing in all schools.
 - Integrative research agenda—we strive to research, teach, and live from a strengths-based, appreciative, positive perspective.
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Methods: Research as partnerships

- Case studies tailored to fit each school
 - Focused on building research friendships
 - Focus group and individual interviews, hunting expeditions, lunch room conversations
 - Appreciative perspectives (ie. think of times when you felt really alive and well in your work and describe what was happening)
 - Feed back the findings into the system that generated them.



Examples of research activities

Share stories, from your schools and districts, of flourishing in your small group.

What practices support flourishing
(list on slips of paper)



SCHOOL DISTRICT #63

Flourishing at SMS

Ice Cream Sundae Challenge

We are challenging you to notice "flourishing at SMS" for one month (May 15-June 15):

As often as you can throughout each week, send Jen a quick email (or send to your team leader) to share stories or descriptions (these can be brief) of moments that:

- made you feel really good/grateful/happy/alive and excited/ proud...
- made you feel connected with someone
- made you laugh out loud
- you felt really supported/cared for/loved/appreciated...
- you just want to share because they are special for some reason

We hope you'll have fun being "detectives for all the good stuff" that goes on at SMS (be on the lookout for good things happening with students, colleagues, staff, parents, visitors...).

Each week, we will send Silke a tally of the number of emails we receive from each colour team.

On June 15th, we will announce the team winners—they will receive a special celebration with ice cream sundaes! Good luck!

Jen & Sabre

FLOURISHING RESEARCH TEAM

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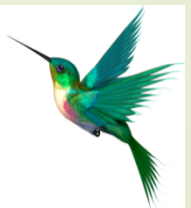
Write a letter to a future teacher
or administrator 5 years from now.

Dear future educator,
this is what we dream for you...

Early Themes:

In Flourishing schools we....

- Seek out positive experiences with colleagues.
- Create “reciprocal flourishing” experiences for and with students and others
- Find purpose in collaborating as part of a bigger team
- Feel like we belong, make a difference, are cared for, enjoy ourselves, grow and learn together
- Laugh a lot
- Rely on great leaders to create spaces for us to learn, grow and challenge each other with care and trust



Generative Dissemination:

- What does this research mean for teachers, students, school leaders?
- How can we include/influence participants in the work of using and learning from early findings?
- What if we approached research from a flourishing perspective (ie. monograph)?





Rosthern High School: A Partnership for Success

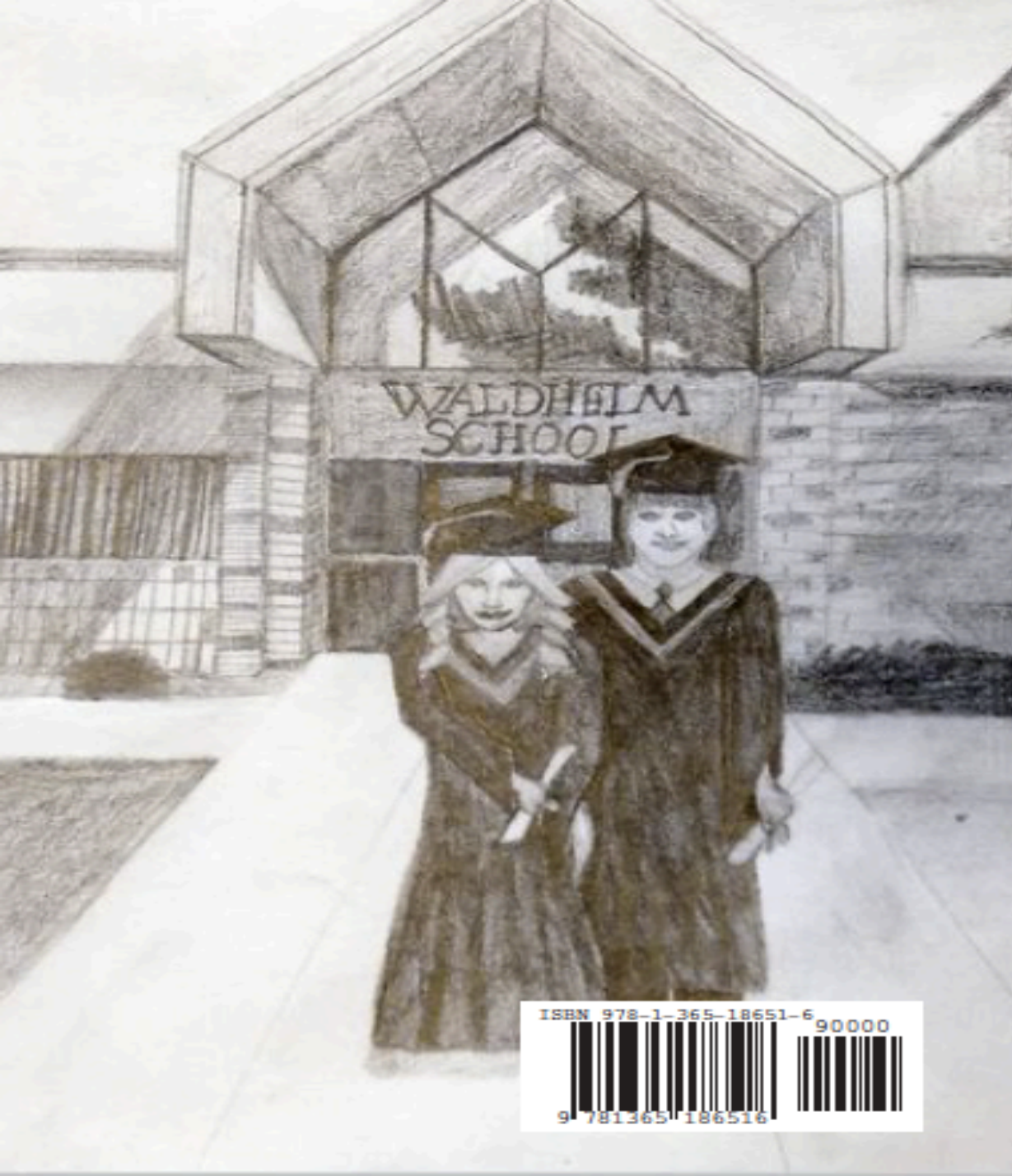
Staff and Students of Rosthern High School

Rosthern High School: A Partnership for Success



Sharon Roset
Keith D. Walker
Sabre Cherkowski
(Editors)

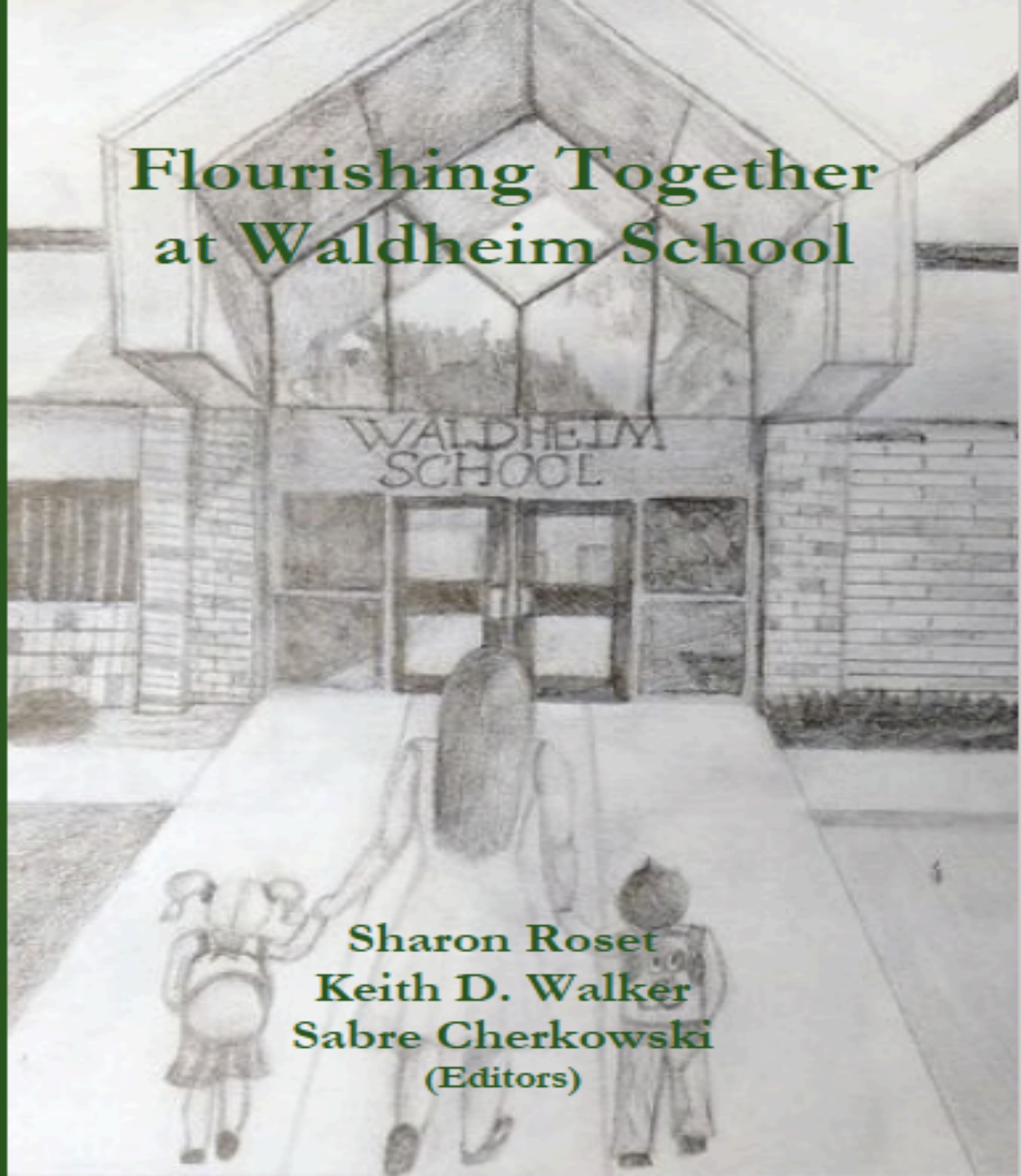




Flourishing Together at Waldheim School

Waldheim Students and Staff

Flourishing Together at Waldheim School



Sharon Roset
Keith D. Walker
Sabre Cherkowski
(Editors)



Langham Elementary School in Praire Spirit School Division provides many examples of what it means to thrive: to grow, learn, share and care. Principal, Laura Prefontaine says, "Langham Elementary School is a supportive community - a place where everyone knows everyone, a place where everyone cares for everyone, a place everyone can grow and have fun."

Langham Elementary School principal and staff members have partnered with The Flourishing Schools Project to bring to description some of the exciting and life-giving activities, mindsets and positive features of their school community. This initiative, together with a number of others in Saskatchewan and British Columbia seek to NOTICE, NURTURE AND SUSTAIN those aspects of school life and learning that contribute to well-being and positive experiences for students, staff members, parents and guardians, as well as local community members. Langham Elementary School features many of the sought after characteristics of a flourishing school and serves as an inspiration to all who read this book and listen to the voices of experience and positive focus.

The Flourishing School Research:
<http://flourishinginschools.com>



Langham Elementary School: Growing, Learning, Sharing, Caring

Langham Elementary School

Langham Elementary School: Growing, Learning, Sharing, Caring



Sharon Roset
Keith Walker
Sabre Cherkowski
(Editors)



Vital Friends: Bob Bayles is Superintendent for Human Resources with Prairie Spirit School Division and Keith Walker is a Professor in Department of Educational Administration and Johnson Shoyama Graduate School of Public Policy at the University of Saskatchewan. (Website: KeithDWalker.ca)

Sitting around the table, planning a one day workshop for Prairie Spirit School Division Learning Facilitators, with four keen Superintendents, it was suggested that perhaps a way to capture the learnings from the day might be to engage the always enthusiastic leader-participants in co-constructing an artifact or even a short book. Something they could look back to and something they might be willing to share with others. We decided to give this a try - an experiment. Bob and Keith would edit, Learning Facilitators, Principals and other Division Leaders would contribute and . . . well this is the result.



Reflections on Facilitating Learning

Prairie Spirit Learning Facilitators

Reflections on Facilitating Learning in Prairie Spirit School Division

Keith D. Walker
Bob Bayles
(Editors)

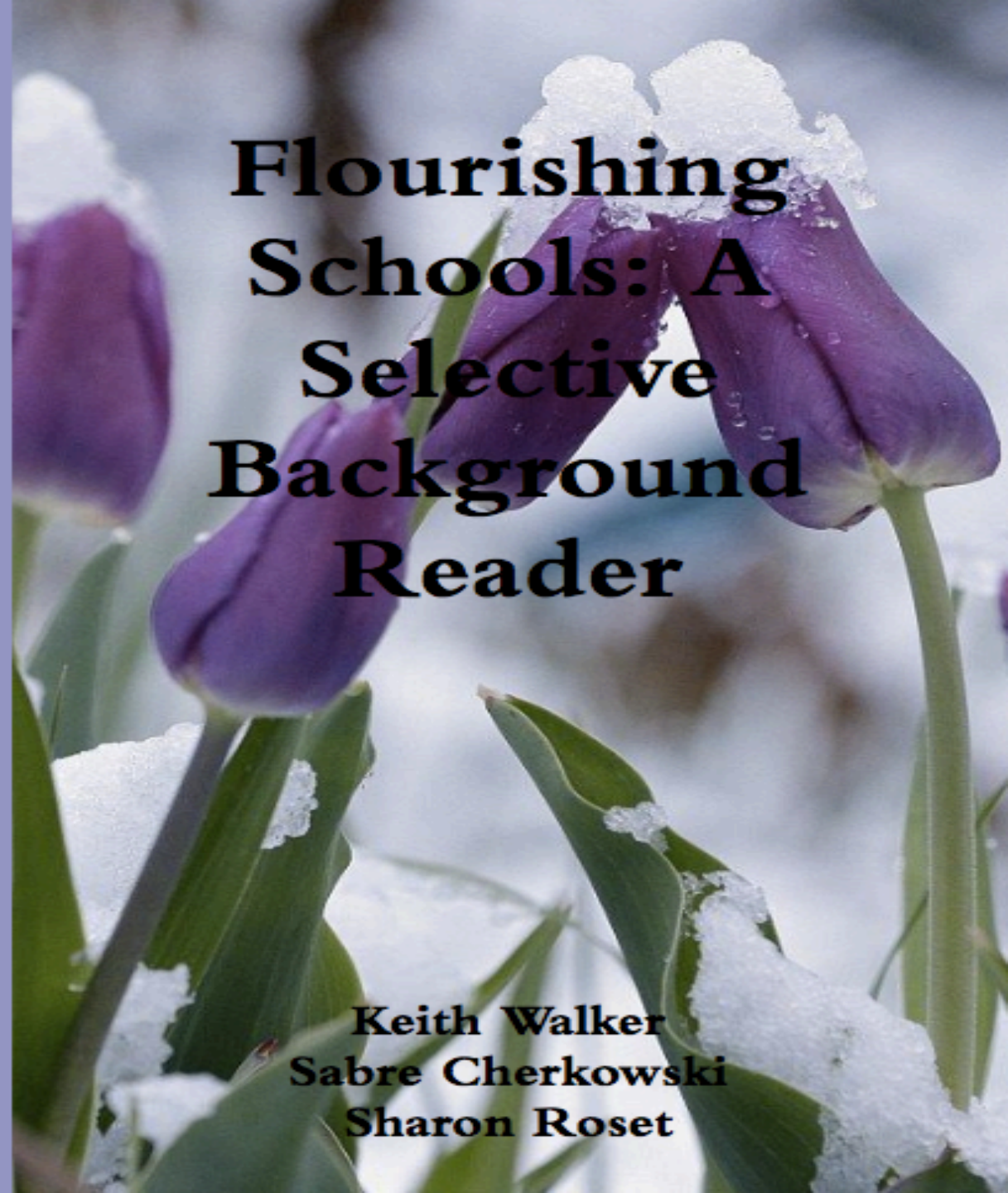


Flourishing Schools: A Selective Background Reader

Keith Walker, Sabre Cherkowski & Sharon Roset

Flourishing Schools: A Selective Background Reader

Keith Walker
Sabre Cherkowski
Sharon Roset



Seeing the research as flourishing:

- The process of appreciative conversations is immediately beneficial for participants.
- Being part of the co-construction of flourishing stories is inspiring and a generative process.
- For lasting change, we need to work with teachers, students, parents to learn how to create capacity for flourishing in ways that makes sense for them and their context.



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