Introduction to Special Issue School-Based Approaches to Promote Complete Mental Health: School Psychologists Working to Foster Students' Thriving Well-being

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Published online: 9 November 2015

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Abstract This article presents the rationale for and the manuscripts included in a special issue of *Contemporary School Psychology*, entitled: “School-Based Approaches to Promote Complete Mental Health: School psychologists working to foster students’ thriving well-being.”

Keywords Well-being · Complete mental health · School psychologists · Positive psychology

More than a decade ago, Chafouleas and Bray (2004) had the foresight to develop a major special issue of *Psychology in the Schools* addressing the topic of “positive psychology and wellness in children.” Their efforts challenged school psychologists to consider how positive psychological principles and practices could be used to create more nurturing schools that had the effect of fostering the multiple dimensions of students’ well-being. In the subsequent years, it has been increasingly recognized that school psychology, with its roots in child development and education, is inexorably linked with efforts to foster the robust and vital development of all youth—school psychologists recognize that the absence of problems is an insufficient objective because the penultimate prize for school psychologists and their educator colleagues is to help shepherd all children toward competence and meaningful life-long engagement. Ben-Arieh (2008) recognized this positivity principle in a discussion of well-being as a fundamental right, as articulated by a United Nations Convention (Hart and Hart 2014; Nastasi and Borja 2016). This fun-

damental right is grounded in the *best* interests and *optimal* development of children because well-being is more than mere survival and not simply the absence of problems or deficiencies.

This special issue of *Contemporary School Psychology* aims to contribute to the growing literature on approaches that school psychologists can use to better understand and implement practices grounded in positive principles that enhance optional youth development, and, given school psychologists’ focus, particularly subjective well-being and complete mental health. The manuscripts examine best practice addressing how school psychologists are working effectively to foster the development of “noncognitive” factors that promote student success and foster the flourishing well-being of all students. These articles provide examples of how school psychologists are engaged in assessment, prevention, and intervention practices that foster the internal assets and external resources that help all students manage life’s myriad development tasks in a manner that lead to robust subjective well-being and purposeful life engagement.

Cefai and Cavioni (2015) provide a conceptual frame for the special by arguing that well-being enhancement is not achieved via add-on programs, but that efforts to foster complete student development require sensitivity to and awareness of how to infuse efforts into all school contexts—academic, interpersonal, and extra-curricular—with strategies that promote the thriving well-being of all students. Within the context of a whole school strategy, one important component of school psychologists’ efforts has been the development of measures and procedures to monitor students’ personal and social assets that are associated with flourishing and thriving development. Ito et al. (2015) provide an example of how the Social Emotional Health Survey-Secondary was adapted for use with Japanese students, such efforts are important to achieve the goal of validating well-being related instruments

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that can be used in research and applied settings cross nationally (Kim et al. 2016). Although the development and refinement of well-validated measures is vital, school psychologists also need to know how to use these measures most effectively in support of school-based well-being enhancing initiatives. To this end, Moore et al. (2015) and Sweeney et al. (2015) present examples of how school psychologists can plan for and implement whole school screening procedures that facilitate school care coordination teams' efforts to foster youths' complete social emotion health. Along this same theme, Pennell et al. (2015) and Heffel et al. (2015) examine how information about students' psychological distress and internal assets at one time are associated with later psychological developmental challenges, which recognizes school psychologists need empirical evidence of how student psychological experiences at the time of screening are associated with later quality of life experiences. Finally, and most vital to changing youths lives, four contributions (Suldo et al. 2015; Wendt et al. 2015; Wang et al. 2015; Claro et al. 2015) provide empirically evaluated psychoeducational strategies that can be used as universal or targeted interventions logically linked with fostering students' high levels of well-being.

School psychologists are encouraged to contact the special issue contributors for more specific information as they consider how to enhance their services in ways that improve the quality of life for all students.

Compliance with Ethical Standards

Conflict of Interest The author declares that he has no competing interest.

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