The **Positive Psychology** research group is focused on identifying various factors that predict optimal psychological functioning in youth, and developing and testing interventions to improve youth, educator, and family well-being. Recent accomplishments by team members include dissertations and theses on relevant topics (for instance, a dual factor model of mental health in elementary school students; character strengths in high school students; associations between mental health status and academic outcomes), dissemination of results via published manuscripts (peer-reviewed publications based on students’ theses and collaborative research co-authored by volunteer graduate students on our research group) and conference presentations (e.g., NASP, FASP, Advancing School Mental Health), and contributions to the field through peer reviews of others’ research and completion of our own empirical studies. In 2019-20, research group members worked closely with Hunters Green Elementary School, Greco Middle School, and Pizzo K-8 to provide a targeted positive psychology program to 2nd - 8th grade students. Following the onset of the pandemic, these services turned to telehealth and we now provide positive psychology interventions to children in the community referred by concerned adults. To increase school mental health providers’ wellness promotion capacity, we created a virtual professional development series and debuted it in June 2020 with 100 school psychologists and counselors throughout Florida districts to develop their knowledge and skills to provide positive psychology interventions to students outside of the Tampa area.

In July 2020, we received a 5-year grant from the Institute of Educational Sciences (IES) to study of the efficacy of a Tier 2 positive psychology intervention (the Well-Being Promotion Program; WBPP) with middle school students. We are now partnering with colleagues at the University of Massachusetts Amherst to implement and evaluate a 10-session positive psychology group intervention with a parent component and booster sessions to middle school students in 6 middle schools in Hillsborough and 7 schools in MA. We have trained school mental health staff (counselors, psychologists, social workers, behavior specialists, nurses) to lead and co-lead (alongside study staff) the WBPP. During 2020-21, we are implementing, monitoring, and evaluating the WBPP at Weightman Middle School in Pasco County Schools. We welcome assistants to help us prepare for this work, track fidelity of implementation, and provide the WBPP to students assigned to the delayed-intervention control group. Individuals interested in this project can contact Letty DiLeo or Dr. Kai Shum at [kshum@usf.edu](mailto:kshum@usf.edu).

In Fall 2020 and Spring 2021, research group members (led by Katrina Scarimbolo and Alexis Elvy) offered four sections per semester of an undergraduate course “Positive Psychology in the Schools,” a service learning course which facilitates our partnerships with local schools and community referrals to increase students’ happiness. Positive psychology research group members directly support any children in excess of those that can be accommodated by the students in the course. In addition to these intervention and writing goals, we are preparing to present our research at conferences such as NASP; continue to provide peer reviews of articles submitted for publication relevant to positive psychology; and support team members as they continue their dissertation and thesis research on topics relevant to positive psychology.

Also in summer 2020, we resubmitted a multi-year grant proposal to develop a refined Tier 1 positive psychology intervention for elementary school students, teachers, and parents. In 2020-21, we are providing a pilot of this work- including comprehensive professional learning to K-5 teachers to increase subjective well-being- at Mort Elementary School in Hillsborough. If you are interested in that project, please contact Myesha Morgan or Alexa Petrie.

The **Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate (AP/IB) research group**, led by Drs. Shannon Suldo and Elizabeth Shaunessy-Dedrick (Gifted Education), in collaboration with Drs. John Ferron and Robert Dedrick (Measurement and Research), investigates the psychosocial functioning of high school students in college-level classes. In August 2015, we began a second federally-funded study, to apply findings from the first study in order to develop prevention and intervention strategies to support AP and IB students. This $1.5 million project, entitled “Facilitating Academic Success and Emotional Well-Being among High School Students in Accelerated Curricula,” was funded by IES. In the first year of the project (2015-16), we developed universal and targeted curricular materials for AP/IB students (with companion materials for teachers and families), geared towards facilitating adaptive coping and engagement strategies among these youth. The universal curriculum is termed the ACE (Advancing Coping and Engagement) program and the targeted intervention is termed MAP (Motivation, Assessment, and Planning) meetings. In the second year (2016-17), we piloted ACE and MAP with about 350 high school freshmen at two high schools (one IB Program, one AP Program). Then, we revised our ACE curriculum (in-person classroom lessons for students, online webinars for their teachers, and in-person workshops and flyers for their parents) and MAP procedures (universal screening to determine risk status; for at-risk students, 2 individual sessions of motivational interviewing-based counseling targeting students’ personal goals) in line with feedback received from youth and adult stakeholders. In the third year (2017-18), we provided the refined ACE + MAP intervention to freshmen entering AP or IB courses in a randomized controlled trial involving 15 high schools across Pinellas (4 schools), Pasco (4 schools), and Hillsborough (7 schools). In 2018-19, we offered the intervention to the 7 control schools, and recruited about 350 students to take part in a 1-3 year follow-up study of intervention outcomes. In Fall 2020, we completed this project and reported findings from post-intervention and 1-year follow-up. We are in the midst of disseminating our work from Years 1 – 4 in publications and presentations, and resubmitting in summer 2021 a grant application to further evaluate ACE + MAP in about 60 high schools throughout Florida. If you want to learn more about this research group, please contact Letty Dileo.

**Related Publications**

(+graduate students’ names denoted)

## Book

1. Lazarus, P. J., Suldo, S. M., & Doll, B. (2021). *Fostering the emotional well-being of youth: A school-based approach.* Oxford University Press (OUP). see <https://global.oup.com/academic/product/fostering-the-emotional-well-being-of-our-youth-9780190918873?cc=us&lang=en&>
2. Suldo, S. M. (2016). *Promoting student happiness: Positive psychology interventions in schools*. Guilford Practical Intervention in the Schools Series. New York: Guilford. see <http://www.guilford.com/books/Promoting-Student-Happiness/Shannon-Suldo/9781462526802>

## Book Chapters

1. Suldo, S. M., +DiLeo, L., & +Scarimbolo, K. (in press). Positive psychology in education. In L. Theodore, M. Bray, & B. Bracken (Eds.), *Desk Reference in School Psychology.* Oxford University Press.
2. Suldo, S. M., Hoffman, J., & Mercer, M. (in press). Striving for work-life balance, engaging in self-care, and preventing burnout. In R. G. Floyd & T. L. Eckert (Eds.), *Handbook of University and Professional Careers in School psychology.* New York, NY: Routledge
3. VanDerHeyden, A. M., Briesch, A. M., Suldo, S. M., Roach, A., Sullivan, A., Hoffman, J. A., Garbacz, S. A., Sanetti, L. M. H., & Codding, R. S. (2019). Future issues and controversies that will shape school psychology (pp. 494-522). Chapter 30, in M. Burns (Ed.) *Introduction to school psychology: Controversies and current practice*. New York: Oxford University Press.
4. Suldo, S. M., Parker, J. S., Shaunessy-Dedrick, E., & O’Brennan, L. M. (2019). Mental health interventions.In J. A. Fredricks, A. L. Reschly, & S. L. Christenson (Eds.), *Handbook of Student Engagement Interventions: Working with Disengaged Youth* (pp. 199-215). Elsevier Press. doi: 10.1016/B978-0-12-813413-9.00014-0.

## Selected Recent Publications

1. Suldo, S. M., Wang, J. H., O’Brennan, L. M., Shaunessy-Dedrick, E., Dedrick, R., +DiLeo, L., Ferron, J. M., & Lee, J. (in press). A motivational interviewing intervention for adolescents in accelerated high school curricula: Applicability and acceptability in a second sample. *Prevention Science.*
2. +Sanchez, A. M., +Latimer, J. D., +Scarimbolo, K., von der Embse, N., Suldo, S M., & +Salvatore, C. R. (2020). Youth Mental Health First Aid (Y-MHFA) trainings for educators: A systematic review. *School Mental Health.* https://doi.org/10.1007/s12310-020-09393-8
3. +Smith, N. D. W., Suldo, S. M., Hearon, B. V., & Ferron, J. M. (2020). An application of the dual-factor model of mental health in elementary school students: Examining academic engagement and social outcomes. *Journal of Positive Psychology and Wellbeing, 4*(1), 49-68.
4. O’Brennan, L. M., Suldo, S. M., Shaunessy-Dedrick, E., Dedrick, R. F., Parker, J. S., Lee, J., Ferron, J., & +Hanks, C. (2020). Supports for youth in accelerated high school curricula: A first study of applicability and acceptability of a motivational interviewing intervention. *Gifted Child Quarterly, 64* (1), 19-40. doi: 10.1177/0016986219886933
5. Parker, J. S., +Shum, K. Z., Suldo, S. M., Shaunessy-Dedrick, E., Ferron, J. M., & Dedrick, R. F. (2019). Predictors of adaptive help seeking across ninth-grade students enrolled in Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate courses. *Psychology in the Schools, 56* (5), 652-669.doi: 10.1002/pits.22223
6. Suldo, S. M., +Storey, E., O’Brennan, L. M., Shaunessy-Dedrick, E., Ferron, J. M., Dedrick, R. F., & Parker, J. S. (2019). Identifying high school freshmen with signs of emotional or academic risk: Screening methods appropriate for students in accelerated courses. *School Mental Health, 11* (2), 210-227. doi: 10.1007/s12310-018-9297-9
7. Suldo, S. M., Shaunessy-Dedrick, E., Ferron, J., & Dedrick, R. (2018). Predictors of success among high school students in Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate programs. *Gifted Child Quarterly, 62* (4), 350-373. doi: 10.1177/0016986218758443
8. \*+Wingate, E. J., Suldo, S. M., & Peterson, R. K. S. (2018). Monitoring and fostering elementary school students' life satisfaction: A case study. *Journal of Applied School Psychology, 34* (2), 180-200*.* doi: 10.1080/15377903.2017.1403399
9. +Roth, R., Suldo, S. M., & Ferron, J. (2017). Improving middle school students’ subjective well-being: Efficacy of a multi-component positive psychology intervention targeting small groups of youth and parents. *School Psychology Review, 46* (1), 21-41. doi: 10.17105/10.17105/SPR46-1.21-41