



Supporting Staff Wellness

2025/2026

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Acknowledgments

The content for this training day was developed based on the work of:

- Edutopia
- National Center on PBIS
- Society for Public Health Education

Purpose

This session will explore the impact of stress, burnout, and compassion fatigue on educators, and how these challenges can be mitigated through proactive wellness practices. Educators must prioritize their own wellness, both to perform at their best and to support the academic, social, emotional, and behavioral health needs of students.

Intended Outcomes

- Understand the unique wellness challenges educators face and their impact on professional and personal well-being
- Learn Social, Emotional, Behavioral Health (SEBH) practices that can be used to reduce burnout
- Discover strategies for building a system of resilience and helping staff stay motivated to best meet the needs of students

Agenda

1.0 Wellness Challenges

2.0 Practices to Support Staff Wellness

3.0 Systems to Support Resilience

4.0 Wrap Up and Next Steps

Activity 0.1 Self-Check for Readiness

Feelings Identification Activity: Where Are You Right Now?

1. Things are good. I am not stressed and am focused and ready for today's session.
2. Just a little hiccup or so, nothing I can't handle. I can do this.
3. Oh, c'mon; What the heck? This is going to be tough.
4. Super frustrated. Not sure I can engage in this session.
5. I am overwhelmed and stressed. I can't do this session today.

Activity 0.2 Supporting Readiness

- If you are at 1 or 2:
 - Take a moment to acknowledge the fact that you are currently feeling pretty good and have a high readiness for engagement in today's learning
- If you are at a 3, 4, or 5:
 - Take a moment to determine what you need to do to increase your readiness for engagement in today's learning. What do you need?
 - Do you need to close your door to better focus?
 - Do you need to send out one last quick email?
 - Could taking a few deep breaths help?
 - Do you need to take this session at another time?

1.0 Wellness Challenges

Activity 1.1

Staff who support students wear many “hats”

- Make sure your camera is on!
- For every “hat” you wear, hold up one finger
- Keep your fingers up and keep adding as we go—don’t put any down



Passion Can Lead to Burnout

“It is very difficult to burn out of something you don’t care about deeply. A passion for teaching leads to commitment, which encourages you to work harder and take on more tasks. This tipping of the scale begins the cycle of burnout”.

Kevin Leichtman, 2022

Understanding Emotional Strain

Stress

- A common physical and/or emotional response to the demands and pressures of life
- Can be short or long term
- Typically resolves once a stressor is removed

Burnout

- A state of emotional, mental, and/or physical exhaustion caused by prolonged and excessive stress
- Develops over time
- Recovery usually takes time and requires significant changes

Compassion Fatigue

- A specific type of emotional exhaustion resulting from chronic stressors and/or exposure to other people's challenges
- Rooted in secondary trauma
- Recovery usually requires significant processing

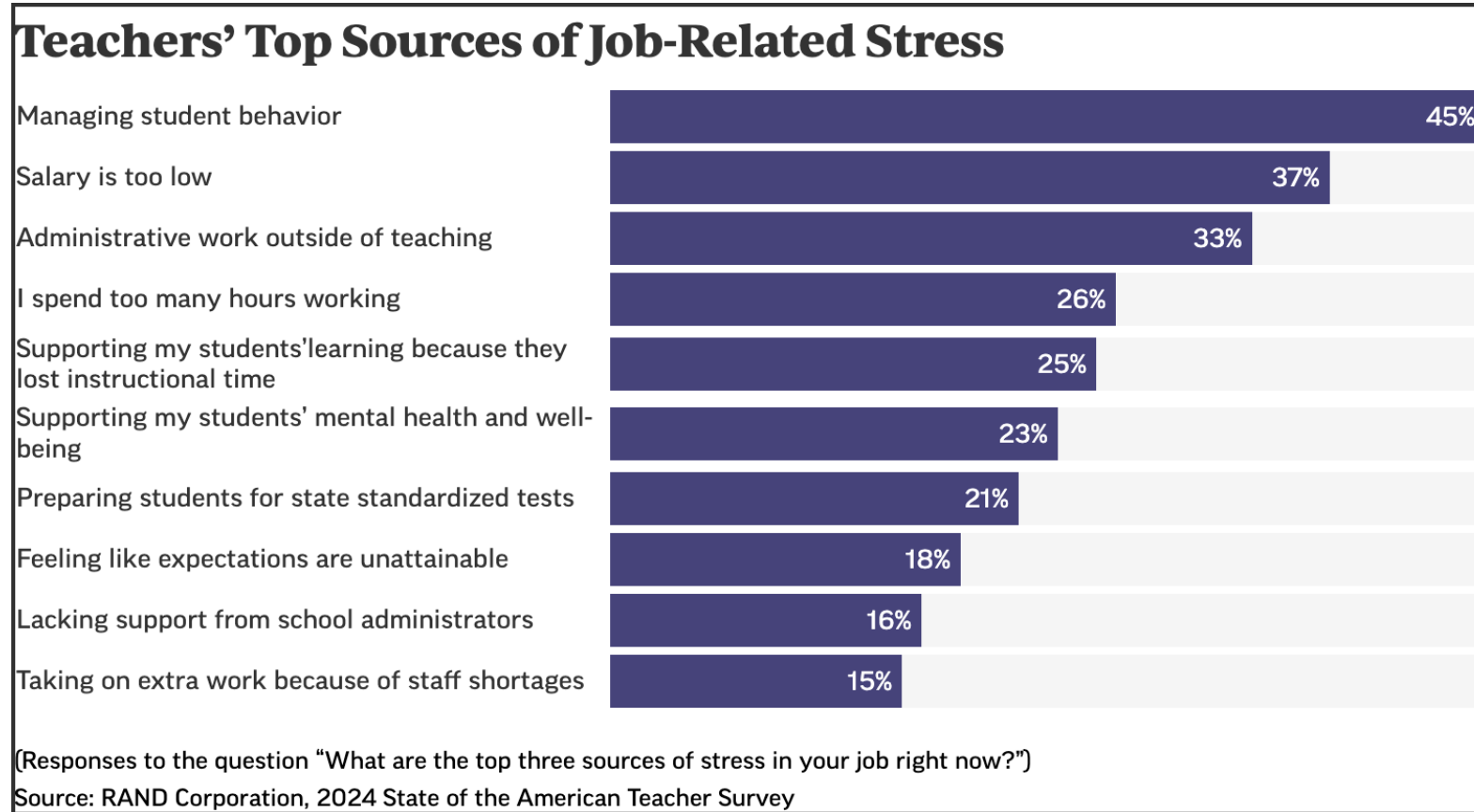
The 2024 State of the American Teacher Survey

In January 2024, teachers' reported well-being was worse than that of their counterparts in other similar professions

- This has been a consistent pattern since 2021
- Approximately twice as many teachers reported frequent job-related stress and three times as many struggled to cope with job-related stress, compared to other similar working adults
- On average, teachers reported working nine hours more per week than other similar working adults and earning about \$18,000 less in base pay on average

RAND, 2024

Data Snapshot



Walker, 2025

Assessing Risk

Assessing the risk of burnout is important

- Helps recognize early warning signs
- Allows you to provide early intervention, prevent long-term harm
- Promotes self-awareness and work-life balance
- Helps maintain job effectiveness
- Supports a sustainable career



Activity 1.2

Risk for Burnout Self-Check:

- Do you typically skip your scheduled lunch break?
- Do you send or respond to emails outside of scheduled work hours?
- Do you find it hard to close your door to take undisturbed breaks?
- Do you show up before scheduled work hours?
- Do you stay after work hours?
- Do you suppress the need to use the restroom for longer than you should?
- Do you find yourself regularly completing work tasks on weekends and holidays?

2.0 Practices to Support Staff Wellness

First Thought

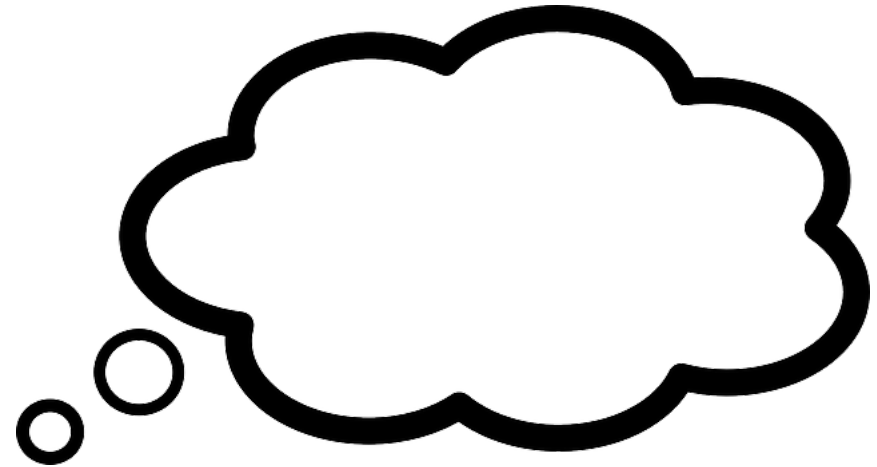
- A clinician who spends lunch in their car to eat and read
- A principal who asks the office staff to hold all calls (unless there is an emergency) and eats lunch in their office for 20 minutes daily
- A teacher who is a new parent and leaves at the end of the contract day to pick up their newborn
- A new teacher who leaves twice a week at the end of the contract day to attend a spin class
- A veteran teacher who closes his door at lunch for 15 minutes and meditates

First Thought (continued)

- A veteran teacher who stays late every day and comes in most Saturday afternoons to work
- A clinician who works and eats at the same time through their lunch break every day
- A principal who sends out emails at 3 am to all staff
- A staff member who volunteers for multiple school committees that meet on different days of the week and after school

5 Steps to Untwisting Your Thinking

- Step 1: Identify the problem situation
- Step 2: Identify the automatic thought
- Step 3: Decide if you are falling into a “thinking trap”
- Step 4: Ask yourself some tough questions
- Step 5: Define your coping thought



Prioritizing Self-Care





Activity 2.1

Quick Write Part 1:

- Imagine a student comes to you feeling tired, stressed, or overwhelmed. In your own words, how would you explain to them what self-care is and why it is important?
- Consider the prompts below:
 - Self-care means...
 - It is important because...
 - One small way you can practice it is...

Activity 2.2

Quick Write Part 2:

- Take a moment to turn your message to your student inward. What do you need to hear right now about your own self-care?
- Consider the prompts below:
 - Lately, I have needed...
 - One thing that makes me feel good is...
 - Taking care of myself matters because...
- When prompted, answer this question in the chat:
 - Was it easier to give self-care advice to a student or to yourself?

Social, Emotional, Behavioral Health (SEBH) Supports

Promote **well-being** and **mental health**:

- Social – how we interact
- Emotional – how we feel
- Behavioral – how we act



SEBH Practices: Social Self-Care

Connect with others

- Create comfortable social spaces
- Build supportive relationships with others, personally and professionally
- Volunteer in ways that bring you joy
- Set boundaries
- Connect with friends, family, or peers who share similar interests

SEBH Practices: Emotional Self-Care

Understand, identify, and express your feelings

- Use a Daily Feelings Log
- Journal
- Use “I Statements”
- Engage in positive self-talk
- Practice mindfulness
- Expressing gratitude

SEBH Practices: Behavioral Health Self-Care

Embrace behaviors that positively impact your physical and emotional wellness

- Practice good sleep hygiene
- Stay well-nourished and hydrated
- Take movement breaks
- Give yourself permission to pause
- Seek help when needed
- Use regulation routines

Regulation and Wellness

- Regulation is the ability to recognize, understand, and manage your emotions in healthy ways
- Individuals who can regulate their emotions can adapt their behavior when the situation demands it
- When experiencing regulated emotions, individuals can control their thoughts, feelings, and actions
- Strong emotional regulation skills can help contribute to an individual's overall well-being and wellness

Student Impact

- Educators who are regulated are better able to show empathy
- Educators have to be able to show empathy to form supportive relationships with students
- Supportive relationships are essential in helping students succeed academically and with their Social, Emotional, Behavioral Health (SEBH)

Regulation Routines

- Consistent practices or strategies that individuals use to help manage social, emotional, behavioral health and responses, especially to stressful or challenging situations
- They should be:
 - Intentional
 - Consistent
 - Personalized
 - Accessible

Regulation Routine Examples

- In the Moment
 - Breathing exercises
 - Stretching
 - Grounding activities
 - Mindful moments
- Long Term
 - Meditations
 - Gratitude practices
 - Exercise
 - Connecting with a mentor
 - Therapy, counseling, and/or support groups
- Work Specific
 - Taking intentional, full lunch breaks
 - Have a calming object at your desk
 - Have a pre-class grounding routine and a between-class class reset
 - After-work decompression plan

Activity 2.3

- Reflect

- Consider your context
- When you think about wellness, what does it mean to you personally?
- What helps you feel well, supported, and able to thrive at work?
- What are some things that help you feel recharged and balanced?

- Share

- Consider which responses you feel most comfortable sharing with others
- Discuss your thoughts with your small group
- Take a moment to reflect on the responses that other participants have shared
- Take note of any that you find personally helpful

3.0 Systems to Support Resilience

Causes of Burnout

- Workload
- Perceived Lack of Control
- Lack of Rewards and Recognition
- Poor Relationships
- Lack of Fairness
- Values Mismatch

Moss, J., The Burnout Epidemic, 2021

Assessment

Identify current beliefs, behaviors, and desired outcomes

- Collect data
 - Anonymous staff wellness surveys
 - School-wide ProQol assessment
 - Wellness Culture and Climate Checklist
- Analyze attendance, turnover, and use of PTO
- Facilitate focus groups or office hours to collect staff input
 - Audit existing wellness resources (frequency of use, effectiveness, etc.)

Professional Quality of Life Scale (ProQOL)

- 30 items, self-report questionnaire
- Free and validated
- Measures compassion satisfaction, burnout, and secondary traumatic stress
- Designed for helping professionals

Professional Quality of Life Measure (ProQOL 5.0)

When you help people you have direct contact with their lives. As you may have found, your compassion for those you help can affect you in positive and negative ways. (We use the words "help" and "helping" in order to include a wide range of helping disciplines including child protection, social work, counseling, psychotherapy, nursing, physiotherapy, psychiatry, medical care, and many others).

Below are some questions about your experiences, both positive and negative, as a helper. Consider each of the following questions about you and your current work situation.

Select the option that honestly reflects how frequently you experienced these things *in the last 30 days*.

1. I am happy. *	Never <input type="radio"/>	Rarely <input type="radio"/>	Sometimes <input type="radio"/>	Often <input type="radio"/>	Very Often <input type="radio"/>
2. I am preoccupied with more than one person I help. *	Never <input type="radio"/>	Rarely <input type="radio"/>	Sometimes <input type="radio"/>	Often <input type="radio"/>	Very Often <input type="radio"/>
3. I get satisfaction from being able to help people. *	Never <input type="radio"/>	Rarely <input type="radio"/>	Sometimes <input type="radio"/>	Often <input type="radio"/>	Very Often <input type="radio"/>
4. I feel connected to others. *	Never <input type="radio"/>	Rarely <input type="radio"/>	Sometimes <input type="radio"/>	Often <input type="radio"/>	Very Often <input type="radio"/>
5. I jump or am startled by unexpected sounds. *	Never <input type="radio"/>	Rarely <input type="radio"/>	Sometimes <input type="radio"/>	Often <input type="radio"/>	Very Often <input type="radio"/>

Wellness Culture and Climate Checklist

Wellness Culture and Climate Checklist (Y = YES, N = NO, IP = In progress)			
	Y	N	IP
Our mission and values reflect input from <i>all</i> school employees.			
School employee wellness is a key component of the district/school strategic plan.			
Creating an inclusive culture and climate for school employee wellness is a strategic priority.			
The annual budget dedicates funds to school employee wellness.			
TIP Most staff and leadership meetings incorporate and discuss school employee wellness (e.g., weekly/monthly meetings and professional development).			
Developing the social-emotional competence of school employees is a priority.			
A two-way communication system (between the school/district and employees) exists and is valued, supported, encouraged, and transparent.			
School leadership demonstrates a commitment to school employee wellness through regular communications about the importance of health and wellness.			
A dedicated staff person is paid (either full-time or part-time) to coordinate employee wellness.			
An employee wellness committee or team exists.			
Needs assessments are conducted frequently with employees to update employee wellness efforts and policies.			
Policies and practices to ensure the health, safety, and well-being of employees are reviewed regularly.			
Employee wellness plans are tailored to the unique needs of employees and involve employees in the design and development of the plan. TIP			
Employees are encouraged to adopt healthy lifestyles.			
Facilities are available to support employee wellness efforts (e.g., fitness facilities, healthy vending options, breakroom).			
Employees are educated about preventive services and the benefits covered by their health insurance plan (more than just promotional materials).			
External partners (e.g., the community, health insurance companies, unions) support school employee wellness efforts. (See <i>Engaging Key Partners for School Employee Wellness</i> .)			

- Helps identify if employee wellness programs are embedded into an organization's culture
- 17-item checklist
- Items are scored as:
 - Yes
 - No
 - In progress

SOPHE School Employee Wellness

Alignment

Co-create a shared wellness vision with staff that aligns with the school's vision/mission, staff values, and strategic priorities

- Leadership should model the desired behavior (email boundaries, etc.)
- Integrate wellness goals into school improvement plans, professional development goals, and discuss them at staff check-ins
- Evaluate teaming structures
 - Identify existing teams to coordinate the work
 - Streamline and reduce redundancy

Elevation

Shift from compliance to engagement by helping staff feel valued and invested in a culture of wellness

- Incorporate staff voice
- Offer flexible, personalized wellness resources
- Give teachers agency in decision-making when possible
- Peer-to-peer wellness efforts
- Normalize giving teachers respite

Tap-In/Tap-Out



Tracking

Measure and review wellness practices regularly

- Ongoing surveys, pulse checks
- Track data
- Schedule regular check-ins with teams who support staff wellness initiatives
- Review the use and efficacy of wellness programs/initiatives
- Create a feedback loop that ensures that wellness initiatives are responsive to the ever-evolving needs of staff

Communication

Keep wellness impactful, visible, and valued

- Provide regular wellness updates
 - Standing agenda item at staff meetings
- Newsletters, bulletin boards
- Share impact stories
- Visual spaces
 - Designated wellness corners
 - Relaxation rooms or staff lounges

Staff Wellness Rooms



Effects of Supporting Staff Wellness

- Teachers with lower occupational stress are more likely to provide emotional support and positive relationships
- Teachers who provide emotional support and positive relationships can positively impact students' mental health
- Reducing teacher stress can decrease the likelihood of vulnerable decision points, which disproportionately impact marginalized groups

Leadership support is key to making this a reality!

National Center on PBIS, 2021



Activity 3.1

Group Discussion:

- Discuss some of the prompts below with your group:
 - What are some wellness initiatives taking place at your school?
 - What barriers to staff wellness exist in your school or system?
 - If you could prioritize one wellness initiative this year, what would it be?
- Be prepared to share some of your key takeaways with the larger group via the chat or by coming off mute

4.0 Wrap Up and Next Steps



Activity 4.1

Closing Review (True or False)

1. Burnout is inevitable. It cannot be prevented.
2. Compassion fatigue is rooted in secondary trauma.
3. There are many SEBH practices that can support individual wellness needs.
4. Staff wellness is only the responsibility of the individual educator.
5. Staff wellness directly impacts student outcomes.

Key Points

- Teachers face unique challenges that can cause them to feel high levels of stress
- If left unchecked, stress can lead to burnout and compassion fatigue
- The root causes of burnout do not usually lie within individuals
- Wellness should be a priority, not a luxury
- Staff who are well can better support students
- Wellness should be prioritized individually and organizationally

Individual Next Steps

- Remember that you have permission to attend to your own wellness needs
- Attending to your wellness needs allows you to attend to the wellness needs of others
- Identify one wellness strategy that you are willing to try and build upon that
- Consider acquiring an accountability partner and work together to address your wellness needs

Organizational Next Steps

The goal of staff wellness should be to create a systematic, sustainable culture of wellness

- Assessment: Plan how to identify your school's needs
- Alignment: Define your why—what is your purpose?
- Elevation: Empower ownership, consider how you will incorporate staff voice
- Tracking: Develop a plan to measure the impact of wellness programs/initiatives
 - Communication: Develop a plan to keep the work visible and prioritized

Activity 4.2

Ready, Set, Go!

- Take a moment to think of one word that captures how you feel after the PD session
- Share it in the chat, or hold it in your mind
- Take some calming breaths before returning to the rest of your day



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