



— ThitarceSarmkasat/Stock/Getty

Student and Staff Well-being

EDITOR'S NOTE

Creating a positive school environment can improve student and staff well-being. This Spotlight will help you explore the benefits of investments in mental health services; learn best practices for COVID-prevention; gain insights into how the Monkeypox outbreak may affect schools; investigate research on setting regular bedtimes for students; examine data on staff's job-related stress; discover effective strategies for reducing principal burnout; and more.

Nearly \$300 Million in New Grants Aim to Bolster Mental Health Services in Schools2

White House Outlines Key COVID-Prevention Strategies For This School Year.....3

The Monkeypox Outbreak: What School Leaders Need to Know.....4

Are Children Getting To Bed On Time? Here's What New Data Show5

Stress, Burnout, Depression: Teachers and Principals Are Not Doing Well, New Data Confirm..... 6

7 Ways to Reduce Principal Burnout..... 8

OPINION

Find What Matters. Get Rid Of What Doesn't. Your Mental Health Depends on It.....9

Don't Let Kindness Stand In the Way of Safety.....11



—Wildpixel/Stock/Getty Images Plus

Published July, 29, 2022

Nearly \$300 Million in New Grants Aim to Bolster Mental Health Services in Schools

By Libby Stanford

Schools can access funding for mental health services through two new U.S. Department of Education grants that aim to build a pipeline of support in schools, part of the Biden administration's efforts to address mental health challenges resulting from the pandemic.

The Education Department announced the new grants alongside the White House on Friday. Funded by the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act and the \$1.5 trillion fiscal 2022 spending package, the grants will offer nearly \$300 million in total for mental health support in schools.

The new Education Department grants come after two school years that have been particularly damaging for student mental health. More than 40 percent of students said they experienced persistent feelings of sadness in the 12 months prior to January through June 2021, according to a Centers for Disease Control and Prevention survey. And in a 2021 American Psychiatric Association poll, more than 50 percent of adults with children under

18 in their homes said they were concerned about the mental state of their children during the pandemic.

Money bolsters the pipeline of mental health providers in schools

The grants aim to tackle student mental health challenges by addressing staffing shortages within schools. While the National Association of School Psychologists recommends that schools maintain a ratio of one school psychologist for every 500 students, data suggest the national ratio is one psychologist to every 1,200 students, according to the association. However, there is great variability among states with some states approaching a ratio of one psychologist to every 5,000 students.

The first of the two Education Department grants, titled the Mental Health Service Professional Demonstration Grant, will provide over \$140 million to "support a strong pipeline into the mental health profession," according to a White House fact sheet.

The grant will help fund school efforts to recruit and train quality school-based mental

health professionals. Schools will also be able to use the money to provide "culturally and linguistically inclusive and identity safe environments for students," administration officials said during a Thursday news conference about the initiatives. The money will also help diversify the school-based mental health professional workforce, administration officials said.

The second Education Department grant, titled School-Based Mental Health Services Grant Program, will provide \$140 million to schools and states to support efforts to increase the number of qualified school-based mental health providers. The grant is aimed at increasing the number of school psychologists, counselors, and other mental health professionals serving students.

The Education Department will release proposed rulemaking related to the grants in the coming months, administration officials said. The rulemaking will provide more information on how the grants can be used and which schools will be prioritized for funding.

White House highlights other efforts to support student mental health

In addition to the new grant programs, the Biden administration also sent a letter sent to governors Friday, highlighting ways in which they can invest in mental health services for students.

The letter, signed by U.S. Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona and U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services Xavier Becerra, previewed upcoming guidance on how states can leverage Medicaid funding to deliver mental health services to students, according to the fact sheet.

Over the next few weeks, the White House said, the Health and Human Services Department also will be evaluating applications for \$7 million in grants for education activities designed to help students access trauma support services and mental health care.

The administration has also increased funding for the Education Department's Full-Service Community Schools Program, which awards \$68 million to schools that provide wraparound services including mental health care. The Biden administration proposed to dedicate \$468 million to the program in the fiscal 2023 budget.

And the Education Department will be awarding \$5 million to school districts through its Project Prevent program, which provides grants to help districts implement strategies to mitigate community violence and its impacts on students. ■

24

BREATHE EASY WITH IN-CEILING AIR FILTRATION

The StrataClean IQ™ Air Filtration System quietly captures airborne bacteria, viruses, mold, and particulates for cleaner, healthier indoor air quality. The in-ceiling system works more effectively than floor-based units, using proven MERV 13 filtration and three fan speeds to optimize air changes/hour in your school facility. The energy efficient design uses only 15 watts per hour – less than a traditional incandescent light bulb and operates at a mere 29 dBA for less disruption in the classroom.

Learn more at armstrongceilings.com/healthyschools



**24 / 7
DEFEND™**
Solutions for Healthier,
Safer Spaces

Published August 17, 2022

White House Outlines Key COVID-Prevention Strategies for This School Year

By Libby Stanford

As students return to school for the third full year of pandemic-era learning, President Joe Biden's administration is emphasizing robust vaccination and testing efforts as well as improved air quality to protect school communities from the COVID-19 virus.

The White House released a back-to-school fact sheet Aug. 16 with information on COVID-19 safety best practices and resources for districts as they begin another school year. The information came days after the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention released new COVID-19 guidance for schools, rolling back "test-to-stay" and quarantine requirements that guided school responses to the pandemic for the past two-plus years.

Under the new CDC guidance, schools are encouraged to let community considerations drive safety strategies, recommending masks only in areas with "high community levels" of virus spread. As of Aug. 11, 40 percent of counties, districts, or territories had a high level of the spread of COVID-19, according to the CDC.

In its fact sheet, the White House followed the CDC's lead, de-emphasizing the importance of masking and quarantining and instead focusing on vaccinations, testing, and air quality as major prevention strategies.

"I'm confident that with the support of the American Rescue Plan and other federal resources, we can keep all our children, all across the country, safe, healthy, and learning on the road to success," Education Secretary Miguel Cardona said in a statement.

Vaccines and boosters are a 'first line of defense'

School districts should have a robust plan to ensure all teachers and students who want to be vaccinated can do so, the White House said.

Vaccines are available for everyone 6 months and older, and boosters are open to every person 5 years and older. The White House suggests districts use vaccines as the "first line of defense" against the virus by



Rich Pedroncelli/AP

ensuring students, employees, and families know their options. (The CDC and White House guidance do not recommend requiring that students be vaccinated against the virus, but rather instruct districts to encourage students to get vaccinated.)

The Biden administration plans to work with the American Federation of Teachers and the National Education Association to encourage members to get a COVID-19 booster this fall. The CDC has various resources, including a "Booster Tool," a COVID-19 vaccines page, and Vaccines.gov, that all have information on who is eligible for boosters and how to access them. The AFT and NEA will also emphasize the importance of educators who are 50 or older getting their second booster if they have not done so.

The White House used the fact sheet as an opportunity to call on school districts to host vaccine clinics. Schools can use funding from the American Rescue Plan and the Federal Emergency Management Agency to cover the costs of vaccine clinics, and the CDC published its own guide for schools planning vaccination clinics.

A 2nd grade student is given a COVID-19 rapid test at H.W. Harkness Elementary School in Sacramento, Calif., in February. The Biden administration plans to send millions of COVID-19 tests to school districts over the 2022-23 school year as part of its COVID-19 response.

COVID-19 testing remains a key prevention strategy

In its new recommendations, the CDC scaled back testing guidance, removing the popular "test-to-stay" strategy, which allowed students to remain in class after being exposed to the virus if they undergo periodic testing. Instead, the health agency recommended diagnostic testing for anyone who is showing symptoms of the virus. It also recommended screening testing be used for high-risk activities, such as contact sports and early childhood education programs, for schools in areas with high community spread of the virus.

In its fact sheet, the White House empha-

sized testing as a strategy to protect students from the virus. The Biden administration plans to distribute 5 million over-the-counter rapid tests and 5 million swab PCR tests as well as additional point-of-care rapid tests to schools over the next year.

Districts can order the tests through January 2023, according to the fact sheet. Schools can also use funding from the CDC Epidemiology and Laboratory Capacity program, which provided \$10 billion to K-12 schools to pay for tests, the fact sheet said.

Funding available to improve air quality

Schools are still able to use American Rescue Plan dollars to pay for air quality improvements in their buildings. According to the fact sheet, the funds can be used to cover the costs of inspections, repairs, upgrades, and replacements in HVAC systems. The money can also go toward air conditioners, fans, portable air cleaners, and germicidal UV light systems, as well as repairing windows and doors.

The administration plans to collaborate with HVAC professional associations to provide expert guidance and technical support to improve indoor air quality at schools.

The U.S. Department of Education and the U.S. Department of Energy also plan to highlight school districts that are “excelling in efforts to improve indoor air quality” through the energy department’s “Efficient and Healthy Schools Campaign” over the coming months. The departments plan to release criteria for recognition in the coming weeks, according to the fact sheet.

The Environmental Protection Agency also has a set of resources that schools can use to improve air quality, including its “Clean Air in Buildings Challenge” and a guide for indoor air quality in schools. The CDC provides air ventilation guidance through its interactive school ventilation tool. ■

Start your day with us.

EdWeek Update

Stay on top of everything that matters in K-12

SIGN UP

EducationWeek™ EdWeek Update

SCHOOL & DISTRICT MANAGEMENT LEADERS TO LEAD THE CHARGE

Building a Community for Black Male Teachers

By: [Name]



A visitor checks in at a pop-up monkeypox vaccination site in West Hollywood, Calif.

Richard Vogel/AP

Published August 5, 2022

The Monkeypox Outbreak: What School Leaders Need to Know

By Evie Blad

Though federal health officials have declared monkeypox a public health emergency, there’s no cause for panic among school and district leaders, epidemiologists told Education Week Friday.

The COVID-19 pandemic may have primed public expectations about such an emergency declaration, but the monkeypox outbreak remains smaller and—unlike COVID-19—unlikely to be spread through brief incidental contact or interactions, experts said.

Just five of the 7,000 confirmed cases of monkeypox in the United States were children, according to the latest data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

While there are likely to be additional pediatric cases as the country works to contain the outbreak, school leaders should be informed, not alarmed, said Wafaa El-Sadr, professor of epidemiology and medicine at Columbia University.

“It’s really important to distinguish that this is not COVID-19. I would allay that anxiety,” El-Sadr said. “Obviously, there is always a concern when there is an outbreak

of any infectious disease, but at the same time, there is no cause for panic.”

Here’s what school leaders need to know about monkeypox and about the emergency declaration.

What is monkeypox? Can children get it?

Monkeypox is a rare disease that was first documented in humans in 1970 and has caused occasional outbreaks since, according to the CDC. Symptoms include a blister-like rash that lasts for two to four weeks, fatigue, fever, aches, nasal congestion, and cough. The virus is rarely fatal, the agency said in guidance to physicians.

The virus is spread primarily through direct, person-to-person contact or through contact with items like towels and bed linens that have touched an infected person’s rash, the CDC says.

Children who are at higher risk of severe illness include those 8-years-old and younger, children with compromised immune systems, and those with skin conditions like eczema or severe acne. Health officials expect they will identify additional cases in children as testing becomes more widely available.

The current outbreak has spread to the

“Obviously, there is always a concern when there is an outbreak of any infectious disease, but at the same time, there is no cause for panic.”

WAFAA EL-SADR

Professor of Epidemiology and Medicine, Columbia University

United States and Europe, and the vast majority of documented cases have been in LGBTQ patients—specifically men who have sex with men, federal health officials said Thursday. The disease is not believed to be sexually transmitted, but it has spread through intimate, skin-to-skin contact, the CDC health guidance said.

The White House, in coordination with other federal agencies, is focusing much of its messaging efforts on that affected population while acknowledging that the virus can spread in the general population. Agencies have ramped up vaccinations and testing, and officials plan to work with LGBTQ advocates and community groups to spread messaging about risks and symptoms of monkeypox.

Could monkeypox spread in schools?

When Illinois officials announced that an adult worker at a Champaign child-care facility tested positive for monkeypox Friday, they stressed that the virus does not spread as easily as COVID-19. Children who attend the center will be screened for the illness, but none had tested positive Friday, they said.

The CDC and other federal agencies have not released any official guidance for school and district leaders about monkeypox as children have represented very few cases.

The pediatric cases documented in the United States have been transmitted between members of the children’s households at home, said El-Sadr, of Columbia.

“While COVID-19 is transmitted by casual contact and by people who have no symptoms at all ... with monkeypox it’s quite different,” she said. “The main route

of transmission requires prolonged skin-to-skin contact.”

Although it’s possible that contact could occur in school settings or through contact sports like wrestling, it’s still likely to be a relatively rare occurrence, El-Sadr said.

School and district leaders should listen to local health officials and encourage children with bumps, rashes, or lesions to consult a doctor, she said.

And, because transmission is largely through direct contact, it’s unnecessary for school leaders to prepare detailed contact tracing plans like they did for COVID-19, El-Sadr said.

Schools can play a role in combatting monkeypox stigma

Monkeypox “is not nearly as contagious as some other diseases children routinely pass from one person to another, but it has happened, and school administrators should be aware it could happen,” said Gigi Gronvall, a senior scholar at the Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security at the Bloomberg School of Public Health.

Because the disease has largely been associated with LGBTQ people, a population that is subject to stereotype and discrimination, school leaders should be prepared to confront misinformation and stigma if parents become aware that student has contracted a case.

That may mean providing basic information about the illness, clarifying that it can be spread through non-sexual contact, and connecting families to resources from trusted sources, she said.

For example, in San Francisco, one of the cities that has seen rising cases of monkeypox, school district officials have shared information from the local health department on the school system’s website.

Why declare a public health emergency?

U.S. Health and Human Services Secretary Xavier Becerra declared a public health emergency Thursday.

Such a declaration will allow federal officials to more easily direct resources like vaccines and therapeutics and to collect and share state-level information about cases.

“We are applying lessons learned from the battles we’ve fought—from COVID response to wildfires to measles, and will tackle this outbreak with the urgency this moment demands,” he said in a statement. ■



—nattress/E+

Published June 23, 2022

Are Children Getting To Bed On Time? Here's What New Data Show

By Sarah D. Sparks

Children and teenagers who keep a set bedtime every school night are half as likely to be tired in class, according to a new report from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. But some of the most academically vulnerable groups of students are also those most likely to have inconsistent sleep times.

Nationwide, a third of children sleep less than the amount recommended by the American Academy of Sleep Medicine: 9 to 12 hours for children ages 6 to 12, and 8 to 10 hours for teenagers ages 13 to 18.

Researchers used 2020 data from a National Center for Health Statistics survey to analyze weeknight bedtimes for children ages 5 to 17. Only 47 percent of them always went to bed at the same time, but more than 4 out of 5 children went to sleep at the same time most school nights.

However, the CDC found that among children living below the poverty line, Black children, and those in single-parent households, more than a quarter didn’t keep regular bedtimes on school nights.

That’s a problem, sleep experts say, because setting specific sleep and wake-up times, particularly for children and adolescents, can help regulate core systems for sleep.

Two interconnected systems govern sleep. At the most basic level, the longer it has been since you’ve slept, the more the body will release the sleep-regulating hormone melatonin, and the sleeper you’ll feel. The second system,

known as the circadian cycle, changes body hormones, temperature, and activity levels in response to changes in light and dark levels.

Circadian rhythms may change throughout the year in response to light levels, and also shift to about an hour later in adolescence. The CDC found elementary- and middle school-age children were 10 percentage points more likely to have consistent sleep times than older students.

Set sleep times and pre-bedtime periods can also help families to manage students' screen time, which has been shown to disrupt student sleep by mimicking natural sunlight.

Harvard Medical School studies have found that exposure to so-called “blue light” devices—including smartphones, tablets, and laptops—in the late afternoon and evening can disrupt sleep cycles by as much as six to eight hours. That's equal to the “jet lag” caused by a flight from Washington, D.C., to Honolulu.

While families set and enforce students' sleep times, experts say school policies can help encourage more-consistent school night sleep habits. For example, the Minnesota Sleep Society, which works with schools, recommended school leaders:

- Include sleep education in health class and parent workshops.
- Make electronic homework submission deadlines no later than early evening, such as 5-6 p.m., rather than 11:59 p.m.
- End school activities such as sports practices or clubs no later than 10 hours before morning bus pick-up the next day. (Later adolescent wake-up times may also affect early morning practices and bus pick-ups at the secondary school level.)
- Ask teachers to coordinate test and major project deadlines to help students avoid late-night “cramming.”
- When giving electronic devices to students, provide guidelines and if possible parental controls to turn them off at least one hour before bed.
- Assess students for sleep deprivation as part of developing an individualized education program. ■

Additional Resource

To view the charts that accompany this article, click [here](#).



— Veajic/Getty

Published June 15, 2022

Stress, Burnout, Depression: Teachers And Principals Are Not Doing Well, New Data Confirm

By Madeline Will

Yet another survey confirms: Teachers and principals are stressed and burned out—and more than a quarter are experiencing symptoms of depression.

In fact, educators navigating pandemic-era schooling are faring worse than other working adults these days. That's according to a new nationally representative RAND Corporation survey of 2,360 teachers and 1,540 principals, conducted in January. The researchers fielded the same questions to a nationally representative sample of working adults to compare results and found that educators have worse well-being on all five of the indicators in the survey.

Nearly three-fourths of teachers and 85 percent of principals are experiencing frequent job-related stress, compared to just a third of working adults. Fifty-nine percent of teachers and 48 percent of principals say

they're burned out, compared to 44 percent of other workers.

A silver lining? Most educators say they're coping well with job-related stress. And just under half of teachers and two-thirds of principals report being resilient, meaning they bounce back quickly after stressful or hard times.

In interviews, many educators “talked about how they still find great joy in their work,” said Elizabeth Steiner, a policy researcher at RAND and a co-author of the report. “They don't want to leave teaching, but they find the context [in which they are teaching] stressful.”

About one-third of teachers and principals said they were likely to leave their current job by the end of this school year, up from when RAND last surveyed educators in early 2021. Teachers of color were more likely to say they intended to leave than white teachers—41 percent compared to 31 percent.

District leaders and policymakers have been concerned about the possibility of

educators leaving en masse at the end of this stressful school year. However, previous research suggests not everyone who says they'll leave will actually do so. A prepandemic analysis found that just one-third of teachers who indicated they would leave the profession as soon as possible actually did so.

And the RAND researchers estimated that only 19 percent of principals who reported on a previous survey that they intended to leave their jobs before the end of the 2020-21 school year resigned by fall 2021.

Even so, the researchers noted that district leaders should still take seriously teachers' and principals' intent to leave. Educators who experienced frequent job-related stress, burnout, symptoms of depression, and who were not coping well with stressors were more likely to say they intended to quit, they found.

"The intention-to-leave measure is still a very, very important indicator of job satisfaction," said Sy Doan, an associate policy researcher at RAND and a co-author of the report. "Despite the fact that it is an overestimate, ... it relates a lot to the general theme of educator well-being."

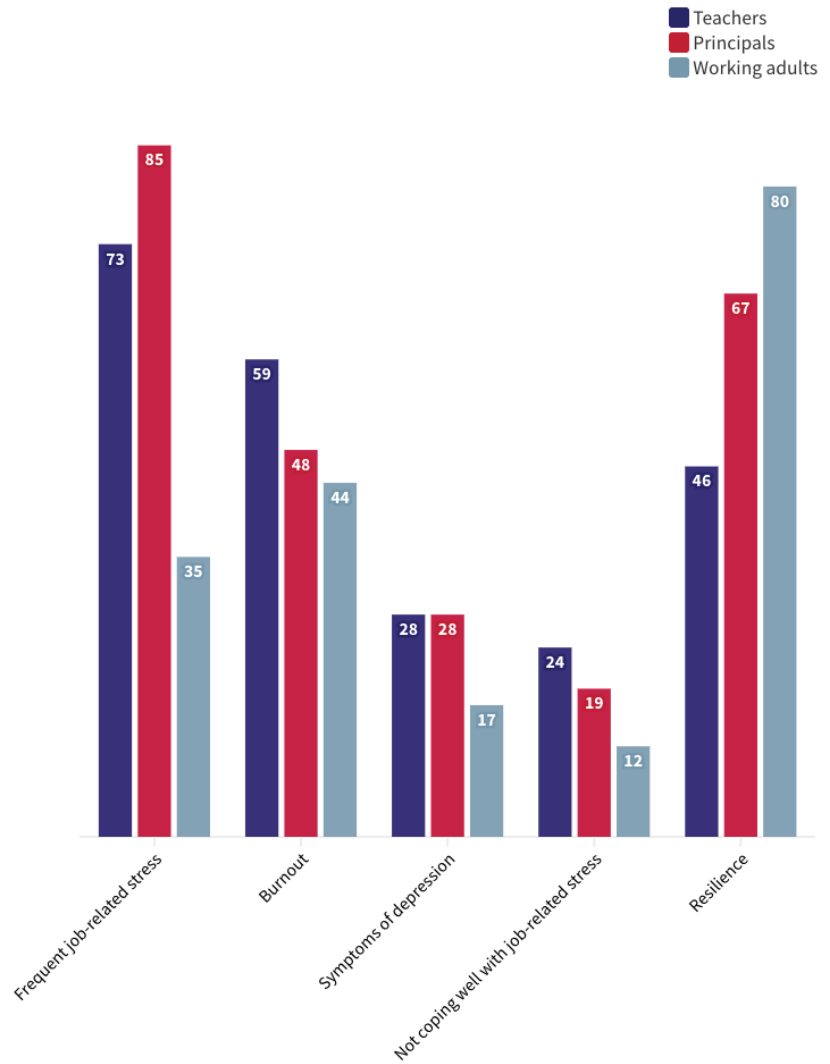
Educators are under a lot of stress

The new research broadly echoes past EdWeek Research Center data showing that teacher job satisfaction appears to be at an all-time low as their stress levels have skyrocketed since the start of the pandemic. While most schools were open for in-person learning this academic year, teachers still had to navigate staffing shortages, COVID-19 quarantines, interruptions in student learning, an uptick in misbehavior, and political tensions over what is taught in schools.

The RAND survey found that the top-ranked sources of job-related stress among teachers were:

- Supporting their students' academic learning because they lost instructional time during the pandemic (47 percent),
- Managing student behavior (29 percent),
- Taking on extra work because of staff shortages (25 percent),
- Supporting students' mental health and well-being (24 percent),
- Spending too many hours working (23 percent), and

Well-Being of Teachers, Principals, and Working Adults in January 2022



NOTE: This figure shows the percentage of teachers (blue), principals (red), and working adults (gray) who reported experiencing each indicator of well-being.
SOURCE: RAND Corp.



- Having a salary that's too low (22 percent).
- The top-ranked sources of job-related stress among principals were:
- Staffing teaching and nonteaching positions at their school (56 percent),
 - Supporting teachers' and staff's mental health and well-being (44 percent),
 - Supporting students' academic learning

- because of lost instructional time (34 percent),
- Supporting students' mental health and well-being (32 percent), and
- Implementing COVID-19 mitigation strategies (31 percent).

Female teachers and principals were more likely to experience frequent job-related stress than their male counterparts, the survey

found, perhaps due to child-care responsibilities, which disproportionately fall to women.

Also, Hispanic teachers—who make up about 9 percent of the workforce—were more likely to report poor well-being than any other teachers. One-third of Hispanic teachers experienced symptoms of depression compared with a quarter of non-Hispanic teachers. That difference remained significant even after the researchers controlled for the demographic characteristics of their schools.

The RAND survey, which over-sampled educators of color, also found that nearly half of principals of color and 36 percent of teachers of color said they experienced at least one incident of racial discrimination on the job this year. Those incidents include being held to a different set of standards and expectations than their peers because of their race or ethnicity; experiencing verbal or nonverbal microaggressions at school; and having people act as though they were uncomfortable approaching them because of their race.

Seventy percent of principals who experienced racial discrimination said that parents and family members of students were the source, while 56 percent of teachers who expe-

rienced such discrimination pointed to fellow staff as the culprits.

Both teachers and principals of color who work in schools in which at least half the teaching staff were people of color were less likely than their peers to report experiencing racial discrimination. Nationally, nearly 80 percent of teachers and 78 percent of principals are white.

Lean into timely mental health supports, researchers say

The RAND study found that positive school environments—in which educators are involved in decisionmaking and feel supported—are linked with better educator well-being and a decreased likelihood of leaving. Teachers and principals told RAND researchers that positive relationships with their colleagues help them cope with the stresses of their jobs.

District leaders should try to facilitate those positive relationships, paying close attention to the needs of educators of color, the RAND report says.

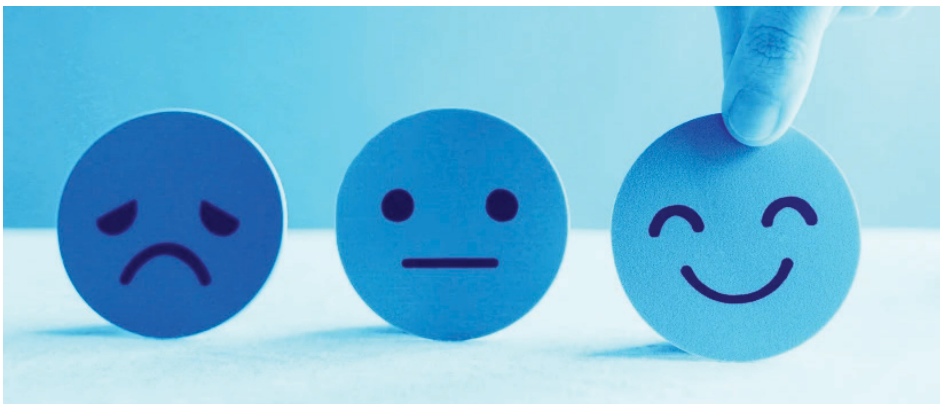
And districts should offer mental health supports, the researchers said. Twenty per-

cent of principals and 35 percent of teachers said they either didn't have access to employer-provided mental health supports or didn't know whether they had access.

Sometimes, district offerings aren't convenient or are too limited to meet educators' needs, the researchers noted. For example, Steiner said that teachers complained in interviews that district wellness programs would start well after school ended, and they needed to get home or spend time grading and lesson-planning.

"There seemed to be a disconnect between what teachers and principals needed or found helpful and what districts are offering," she said.

An EdWeek Research Center survey, conducted in January and February, found that the most common step among school and district leaders to address staff mental health needs was offering professional development on self-care. But many teachers say sessions on superficial self-care—like breathing exercises, yoga, and reminders to take a bubble bath or go for a walk—are no substitute for the kind of broader, systemic change that would keep them from feeling that their jobs have become untenable. ■



—ThitareeSarmikasat/iStock/Getty

Published July 26, 2022

7 Ways to Reduce Principal Burnout

By Apoorvaa Mandar Bichu

Pincipal turnover rates have been rising, with some surveys suggesting that as many as 4 in 10 principals expect to leave their profession in the next three years. But positive psychology techniques can

help reduce principal burnout and potentially bring down turnover rates in the long run.

That's according to Eleanor Su-Keene, a doctoral candidate in educational leadership at Florida Atlantic University, and David DeMatthews, an associate professor at the University of Texas at Austin.

"Historically, psychology has been focused

around the ailments and the problematic issues with human mental health," Su-Keene said. "But positive psychology is kind of refocusing on some of the elements of being human that are really powerful, [by] enhancing well-being and positivity."

Through their research, Su-Keene and DeMatthews wanted to not just study burnout in school principals, but also provide evidence-based practices that could improve school leaders' mental well-being.

"So [we're] not just looking at how difficult and stressful the job could be, but what can we actually do to help principals," said DeMatthews.

Their research provides individual and district-level recommendations to show how proven positive psychology strategies can be used to reduce job stress in school principals. Here are seven lessons drawn from their research article, which was published *The Clearing House: A Journal of Educational Strategies, Issues, and Ideas*:

1) 'Savoring the moment'

Su-Keene and DeMatthews define savoring as "the psychological process of noticing

and deepening the experience of positive emotions.”

Principals should recognize positive experiences like watching a school play set up by students or having a former student speak about the school’s positive impact, and try to be mindful of the positive feelings they experience during these moments.

By doing so, they can “deepen the experience by focusing and sharpening the physical sensations around that positive feeling,” such as smiling or laughing, according to the study.

2) Memory-building promotes positive feelings

When going through positive experiences, principals should slow the moment down in their mind and try to build a mental picture, the research suggests.

This way, they can savor the memory, both during the moment and over the long-term.

3) Savor moments in retrospect

One way principals can hold onto and enjoy memories in the long term is by journaling positive workplace experiences and reflecting on them.

DeMatthew’s prior research found that while principals do experience large amounts of stress at their job, they also experience moments of pride and joy in their work.

“We know in our work and in our research that principals are enjoying things about leadership on a daily basis,” Su-Keene said. “There are things happening inside classrooms, inside schools, with conversations with other teachers and students that are really meaningful.”

The research found that by recalling these memories, principals can further boost positive feelings they experience from their work.

4) “Cultivating sacred moments” can help

According to the article, “principals often find strength by turning inward toward their ‘why’ or purpose.”

By identifying certain moments in the school setting as sacred, in that they stand out as special and timeless, principals can find a sense of purpose in the work they do.

These moments can be incorporated as part of a routine (for example, focusing on the moment of welcoming students into school every morning), or symbolized

with a sentimental keepsake like a gift or a drawing received from a student.

5) Districts can provide cognitive behavioral coaching

Cognitive behavioral coaches work with principals confidentially in a safe space and help them set small goals in working toward a healthy and positive sense of self.

“We encourage districts to have ... systems and people in place that can support principals on a coaching level,” Su-Keene said.

By providing this solutions-focused coaching, principals can “address stressors and feel confident in their strengths and efforts as they work towards their goals,” the research says.

6) Principal supervisors can be trained in positive psychology interventions

DeMatthews and Su-Keene’s research suggests that in districts that provide mental health resources to school staff, principal supervisors should be trained in positive psychology interventions or PPIs.

“We encourage the supervisors to be cognizant of the ailments and the problems and all of the really negative stuff that’s occurring for educators and principals right now,” Su-Keene said, so that they can provide school staff with much-needed mental health support.

These PPIs could include providing principals with training sessions on self care and managing job-related stress, as well as creating a broader mental health support network.

7) Provide spaces for principals to complain

Principals need to kvetch, too. One unusual suggestion the research puts forth is to create effective safe spaces for principals to voice their complaints.

“In the literature, complaining gets a really bad rep,” Su-Keene said. “But it has been shown to be an effective way of releasing some of that stress; being able to talk about complaints but not just in feeling negativity, but actually effectively addressing the base of those complaints.”

By hearing complaints, she said, districts can learn more about the problems principals face and figure out ways to address these issues. ■

OPINION

Published July 17, 2022

Find What Matters. Get Rid Of What Doesn't. Your Mental Health Depends On It

By Peter DeWitt



h, summer ...

A time when teachers, leaders, and students recharge their batteries, shake off the stress from last year, and take time to focus on reading books that do not involve education. That’s a good thing, because according to an Education Week Research Center survey, “91 percent of teachers experience job-related stress sometimes, frequently, or always.” Teachers are not alone in the job-related stress department. A well-known combined study by the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) and the Learning Policy Institute (LPI) found that 42 percent of school principals have considered leaving their jobs.

The issue with summer is that when teachers and leaders recharge, they promise themselves that they will do things differently in their classrooms and school buildings, but when the school year begins, many times they revert to old habits.

I have been guilty of continuing on that same hamster wheel. As a teacher and former school leader I used to to suffer from anxiety, as well as never feeling like I gave enough to the schools where I worked. As an author and workshop facilitator, I was on the road about 45 weeks a year prior to COVID. I used to wear that as some sort of badge of honor because it showed how busy I was and that my work was in demand. Then, in March 2020, COVID came crashing into our lives, and everything stopped as far as road travel and in-person professional learning was concerned.

I quickly had to pivot my work into remote sessions to accommodate schools and organizations that were trying to focus on instructional leadership, which was the focus of my book that came out the month before COVID.

Improving Indoor Air Quality = Keeping Students + Staff in School

By the time a student graduates from high school, they will have spent an estimated 15,600 hours in a school building. We know the built environment directly impacts a student's ability to learn and perform – demonstrating the need for improved indoor environmental quality (IEQ) in school facilities. IEQ encompasses acoustics, air quality, light, aesthetics, temperature and more. Let's take a closer look at improving indoor air quality (IAQ).

According to the Lancet COVID-19 Commission, we know that schools are chronically under-ventilated and improving IAQ is essential to students' health and well-being.

“Ventilation and filtration should continue to be key focuses. We should think of this as a once-in-a-generation opportunity to address decades of school infrastructure neglect.”

- DR. JOSEPH ALLEN

A recent NY Times piece published by Dr. Joseph Allen, a public health scientist, highlights ways to keep kids in school this fall and beyond.

“Ventilation and filtration should continue to be key focuses. These measures operate in the background and don't require behavior changes, and they provide multiple benefits beyond preventing the spread of COVID. We should think of this as a once-in-a-generation opportunity to address decades of school infrastructure neglect.”

Source: [nytimes.com/2022/08/04/opinion/covid-school-policies.html](https://www.nytimes.com/2022/08/04/opinion/covid-school-policies.html)

(continued on next page)



Breathe easy with in-ceiling air filtration for superior indoor air quality



In-ceiling air purification technology draws air up and away from kids sitting at their desks and then recirculates clean air back into the room

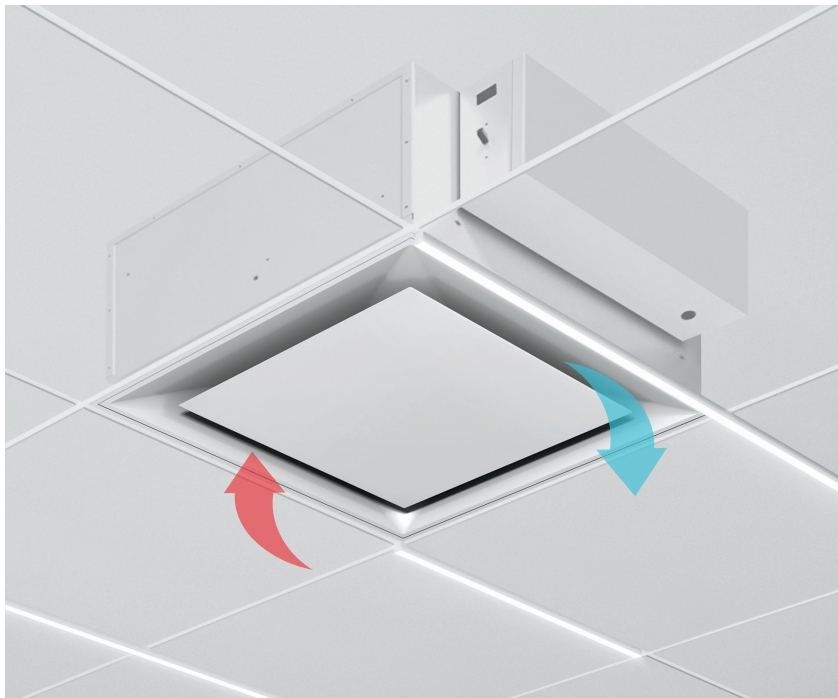
Improving Indoor Air Quality = Keeping Students + Staff in School

(continued from previous page)

The recent Clean Air in Buildings Challenge presented by the White House and EPA has also placed a priority on ways to improve IAQ. Air filtration with recommended MERV 13 filters or air disinfection with UV-C air cleaning technology will purify the air. The Armstrong Ceiling 24/7 Defend portfolio of air purification products offer both of these purification options.

When considering school facility improvements and improving the air quality, you can start by looking up. The ceiling is an ideal place to retrofit or install air purification technology. When air cleaning technology is installed in the ceiling, it eliminates the tripping hazards and lost floor space from portable air purification units. The unobtrusive, in-ceiling air purification technology also draws the air up and away from kids sitting at their desks and then recirculates clean air back into the room.

Improving indoor air quality by purifying the air will not only remove viruses from the air, but it will also contribute to healthier spaces by minimizing allergy and asthma triggers. Now is the time to focus on improving school facilities and creating healthy buildings with improved indoor air quality for students and staff.



The StrataClean IQ™ Air Filtration System quietly captures airborne bacteria, viruses, mold, and particulates for cleaner, healthier indoor air quality



By creating healthy indoor environments, we can keep students and staff in schools

**Every Space Can
Be a Healthy Space**

Learn more at
armstrongceilings.com/healthyschools

IEQ IMPACTS GPA



BETTER ACOUSTICS

Higher Test Scores

CLEANER AIR

Less Missed School Days

IMPROVED LIGHTING

Better Sleep & Concentration

Indoor environmental quality directly impacts student performance. Air quality, acoustics, temperature, lighting, sustainability, and design all play a role in how well students perform. Armstrong's broad portfolio of ceiling solutions can help create healthy learning spaces with great acoustics, clean air, and high light reflectance.

Learn more at armstrongceilings.com/healthyschools



24 / 7
DEFEND™
Solutions for Healthier,
Safer Spaces

Peter DeWitt and his family spend time together at his sister Trish's home in New York in 2020.

My Mental Health Flourished

Something that was more important happened for me at that time. I was home. I had always promised myself and my partner that I would be on the road less, but I never held the promise. How many teachers and leaders promise their partners, spouses, and children that they will not work on the weekends or late into the night and then find themselves backtracking on those promises? During COVID, I found myself with the opportunity to be home. Yes, I was in my office from the very early morning to late in the evening due to transferring everything from in person to remote, along with working in different time zones. However, once a week, I would go up north to stay with my mom, who was in her mid-80s. My siblings and I were worried about her being isolated because she still lived alone in the house she and my dad built in 1959.

On those nights I stayed up at my childhood home, my mom and I would bring dinner over to my sister Trish and brother-in-law Hassan. My nephew Khalil and his wife, Richele, would come over with their dog, Elbie. During the warm months, we sat on their back deck. In the colder months, we sat in the garage with a heater. My sister was going through her second battle with cancer, and we needed to be careful because all this was before we had a vaccine.

At heart, I was always a bit of a mama's boy because I called her almost every day, even while I was traveling, just to check in on her. I texted with Trish and my oldest brother, Frank, every day. My mom and sister always came with me on at least one work trip per year, and we vacationed together with my partner once a year as well. This time, however, our trips did not revolve around my work. Those promises of being home more were coming true, and I became one of the people who actually benefited from COVID, because I was forced to find a work-life balance and I was happy to do so.

What does this have to do with teaching and leading?

Teachers and leaders are fully committed to their jobs and many times think that anything other than working seven days a week means they don't care about their work. I know it was an opinion I held. COVID forced many of us to find a balance between being inno-



Peter DeWitt

vative and actually being present with family and friends. In my case, I didn't understand how distracted I was until I committed to being more present with my family.

In fact, in the fall of last year, I began writing a book called *De-implementation: Creating the Space to Focus on What Works* (Corwin Press, 2022), because I was heavily concerned about the mental health of leaders and teachers. I was tired of hearing people say that well-being and mental health were just about giving teachers and leaders the opportunity to breathe. In my experience, mental health and well-being are about doing what you love but making time to spend time with those you love. Mental health and well-being is about doing things that are impactful personally and professionally and not spending energy on those things that waste our time, and that is what de-implementation is all about.

Van Bodegom-Vos L et al. (2017) says that de-implementation is the process of "abandoning existing low value practices." Farmer RL, Zaheer I et al. (2021) suggests that low-value practices are those practices:

- that have not been shown to be effective and impactful,
- that are less effective or impactful than another available practice,
- that cause harm, or
- that are no longer necessary.

While researching the topic and writing the book, I began to suggest that there are two ways to approach de-implementation. Those are:

- **Partial reduction**—What do we not need to do as much?
- **Replacement action**—What can we get rid of because it doesn't work, and what is something more impactful we can replace it with?

I also, through research and working with leaders and teachers, found that there are two types of de-implementation, which I suggest are:

- **Informal de-implementation**—A team is not required, and this action can be taken immediately. One of the most popular suggestions was that of reducing the number of times we check email or give assessments to students.
- **Formal de-implementation**—A team is needed to make this decision. An example could be replacing zero-tolerance policies with restorative-justice practices. For formal de-implementation, I created a de-implementation checklist and pacing chart and provided other samples that will help leaders and teachers formalize the process.

For full disclosure, every school team can find an initiative that they can focus on for the formal de-implementation process, but we need not wait for a team to engage in the informal de-implementation process. Every single day we wake up matters, and we should look at the time we do control and make sure that we are engaging in valuable actions during those times.

In actuality, de-implementation is as much about how we implement as it is about what we

need to suspend or get rid of because we found something more impactful. It is about finding the balance between work and home, and it certainly doesn't mean we care less about our students and job. Instead, it means we want to take action to be more committed to our everyday lives. What I didn't realize during writing the book is that I would once again learn how important work-life balance truly is because life is precious.

In the End

We often promise ourselves that we will slow down or that we will take more time to find the elusive work-life balance we always strive for as we get older. Unfortunately, we revert to old habits because we tell ourselves that if we work less, we must care less about our profession or the kids. I believe that the

opposite is true, because I feel that when we have a better balance between home and work, we are more impactful in what we do. Stepping back allows us the time to focus on what matters, and that is good for our mental health and well-being.

During COVID, Frank, whom I am close with, had a massive heart attack, which scared us all. That emphasized for me that being home more was important because family will not always be around. Having lost our dad in 1982, we knew all too well how precious life is but somehow forgot as time went on. Thankfully, Frank is doing well now.

After writing the first draft of the de-implementation book, though, my mom passed away. It was the day before last Thanksgiving, and Trish, Frank, and I were there to say goodbye. Four months later, Trish passed away surrounded by family, including Frank and

me. My mom and sister are two major reasons for any success that I may have, because they urged me to get an associate degree. I am the first in my family to get a college degree. I never let them forget how grateful I was to have had them in my corner.

As we approach this coming school year, don't take for granted that family will always be there or that your mental health can take a backseat to something more important like your work. Don't get me wrong. I loved being a teacher for 11 years, a principal for eight years, and coaching and running workshops based on my own work for the last eight years, but we will all be better at our work if we spend every day that we can connecting with family and friends and having a life, too. ■

Peter DeWitt is a former K-5 public school principal turned author, presenter, and leadership coach.

OPINION

Published July 22, 2022

Don't Let Kindness Stand in the Way of Safety

By Lory Walker Peroff

My dad is a bluegrass guy. He loves everything about it: the fiddles, the banjos, the stand-up bass, the tinny harmonies. A perfect day for him is pulling up his rocking lawn chair at a bluegrass festival green and listening to music all day long. Recently, my daughters, ages 9 and 10, and I joined him at one such event. Uninterested in the music and not too keen to sit still, my daughters scampered around the fields with other kids in the back of the venue. I moved my chair closer to the back to keep an eye on them while also enjoying the music.

At some point, I became aware of a man in his 50s eyeing my 10-year-old. She didn't notice, but I did. I watched closely as he approached her, put his hands out, and asked her to dance. She looked conflicted, confused, and frightened. She, like many kids her age, is being raised to value kindness. She even has a "Choose Kindness" shirt (although she was not wearing it). She has been taught to be polite to adults but also to be wary of strangers.

I could see her mind racing. What should she do? Be kind and accept his offer or run



— Alex Potemkin/E+

away in stranger danger? I didn't give her time to make a choice. I made a beeline to her and pulled her away. As I did, the man said to her back, "You are a very beautiful little girl."

Recently, I read in the news that a 10-year-old rape victim was forced to scramble across

state lines to terminate her unwanted pregnancy. Now, in the safety of our own home, as I watch my daughters through the kitchen window make "stew" out of potting soil, bird seed, and wildflowers from our backyard, I can't stop thinking of this child rape victim. The

same age as my eldest daughter, that child should be giggling in a sandbox not searching for abortion clinics.

The sunlight catches my daughters' golden hair as they playfully stir their colorful concoction. The man at the concert was right. They are beautiful. And so very innocent. How do I explain things like abortion, sexual predators, and rape to them? More importantly, how can I keep them safe?

In light of recent school shooting tragedies and monumental setbacks in reproductive rights, I plan to start this school year in my 4th grade classroom differently. I, like many other educators, usually begin the school year by co-constructing strategies to create a kind and respectful classroom environment. But I think this model may be missing a vital component.

This year, I would like to highlight the importance of awareness and self-advocacy. I would be remiss if I didn't provide students the tools to advocate for themselves. Whether it be an unwanted advance, an offensive comment, or an uncomfortable situation, students should be equipped to define their boundaries and keep themselves safe. Here are some strategies I encourage my fellow educators to join me in implementing.

1. Set out a “yuck it” bucket.

Empower students to identify unwanted behaviors through an anonymous “yuck it” bucket in the classroom. This is a place where students can anonymously share anything inside or outside school that has made them feel uncomfortable or “yucky.”

Teachers can also pair the “yuck it” bucket with a “smile pile” where students leave anonymous notes describing welcome behaviors that made them smile. This is a way that students can practice identifying behaviors that are wanted and unwanted. This will help them develop a clearer picture of how they want to be treated as well as how others around them want to be treated.

2. Model “I Feel ... When you ... Could you please...” language.

Once students have identified unwanted behaviors, they need a vocabulary to communicate assertively to put an end to it. This vocabulary can be used by students to advocate for themselves when they feel uncomfortable, bullied, or unsafe.

Teaching students to use “I” statements can help them communicate clearly and as-

sertively. Sentence starters such as “I feel... When you... Could you please...” make it simple for students to verbalize to others how unwanted behaviors of classmates and teachers make them feel.

For example, a student can use this construction to share her feelings to a teacher stating, “I feel uncomfortable when you call on me when my hand is not raised, because I’m shy. Could you please only call on me when my hand is raised?” Teachers could place a poster with sentence stems in a prominent place in the room for students to reference. Students use this tool to help them advocate for themselves in an assertive and appropriate way.

3. Act it out.

Some students may need practice advocating for themselves. Provide them with opportunities to act out scenarios to practice communicating assertively. Scenarios can be fictitious or drawn from the “yuck it” bucket. This is a fun and safe way for students to experiment with voice and expression to convey their message. Encourage them to use a firm voice and exhibit strong body language to become comfortable with telling others how they feel. Sentence starters are a great tool to use during dramatizations to help students communicate effectively and confidently.

In addition to being kind to others, students must be kind to themselves. This can start with defining their own boundaries. I want students to be able to tell people how they feel, what they like, and what they don't like. Educators need to teach students to not let kindness stand in the way of their own safety. They must understand that it is OK to tell people, even adults, what they don't like. It is not unkind or impolite to stand up for yourself.

I will never know the true intentions of the man at the concert. But I do know that it is my responsibility to teach students not only to be kind but also to be safe. I hope that students, like my daughter, will not be at a loss for words when an unsafe person approaches them at a concert, on the street, in their neighborhood, or even at school. Every student leaving my classroom will have the confidence to say, “Your behavior is making me uncomfortable, leave me alone.” ■

Lory Walker Peroff is a 4th grade teacher at Waikiki Elementary School in Honolulu, where she lives with her husband, two daughters, six chickens, two ducks, and one stubborn goat.

Copyright ©2022 by Editorial Projects in Education, Inc. All rights reserved. No part of this publication shall be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted by any means, electronic or otherwise, without the written permission of the copyright holder.

Readers may make up to 5 print copies of this publication at no cost for personal, non-commercial use, provided that each includes a full citation of the source.

For additional print or electronic copies or to buy in bulk, click [here](#).

Published by Editorial Projects in Education, Inc.
6935 Arlington Road, Suite 100
Bethesda, MD, 20814
Phone: (301) 280-3100
www.edweek.org

SPOTLIGHT

Get the information and perspective you need on the education issues you care about most with Education Week Spotlights

- The Achievement Gap • Algebra • Assessment • Autism • Bullying • Charter School Leadership • Classroom Management • Common Standards • **Data-Driven Decisionmaking** • Differentiated Instruction • Dropout Prevention • E-Learning • ELL Assessment and Teaching • ELLs in the Classroom • Flu and Schools • Getting The Most From Your IT Budget • Gifted Education • Homework • **Implementing Common Standards** • Inclusion and Assistive Technology • Math Instruction • Middle and High School Literacy • Motivation • No Child Left Behind • Pay for Performance • **Principals** • Parental Involvement • Race to the Top • Reading Instruction • Reinventing Professional Development • Response to Intervention • School Uniforms and Dress Codes • Special Education • STEM in Schools • **Teacher Evaluation** • Teacher Tips for the New Year • Technology in the Classroom • Tips for New Teachers



VIEW THE COMPLETE COLLECTION OF EDUCATION WEEK SPOTLIGHTS

www.edweek.org/go/spotlights