

## REL Appalachia at SRI International

Events of 2020 have created layers of unique challenges for educators across the country. Beginning in the spring with an abrupt transition from in-person learning to remote and hybrid models, educators have demonstrated unprecedented levels of agility and adaptability to support children and youth nationwide. Committed to taking care of others, educators face the emotional burden of supporting students who experience trauma while subject to potential trauma themselves. At this critical moment — in the midst of a pandemic, social unrest, and new learning modalities — REL Appalachia wants to call attention to the importance of educator well-being. Educators' mental health matters for its own sake, and it impacts retention, educator-student interactions, relationships, and a range of student outcomes. The personal wellness of teachers and education leaders is perhaps even more important this year, as there are multiple ongoing crises that are beyond educators' control. As flight attendants tell us, we have to put on our own oxygen masks first in order to help others. This newsletter provides resources designed to support educators in practicing self-care and promoting well-being. We invite you to connect with us via our [website](#), [Ask A REL](#), [Twitter](#), or at [rel.appalachia@sri.com](mailto:rel.appalachia@sri.com) with other ideas for how we can offer practical support to you in this challenging time.

## Featured Story

### Promoting educator self-care

Teaching is a stressful profession, and educators regularly experience overwhelming workloads, high stress levels, and burnout, even in normal times.<sup>[i],[ii]</sup> Add to that life-altering stressors and uncertainties associated with COVID-19, and there is reason to worry about teacher well-being and



retention. In [this presentation](#), REL Appalachia staff presented research findings suggesting that when teachers feel supported by their peers and by education leaders, they are better able to manage the daily stresses of

teaching, establish and maintain effective classroom management strategies that promote learning, and cultivate supportive and caring relationships with students. Check it out!

[i] Mearns, J., & Cain, J.E. (2010). Relationships between teachers' occupational stress and their burnout and distress: Roles of coping and negative mood regulation expectancies. *Anxiety, Stress & Coping*, 16(1), 71–82. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1061580021000057040>

[ii] Newberry, M., & Allsop, Y. (2017). Teacher attrition in the USA: The relational elements in a Utah case study. *Teachers and Teaching*, 23(8), 863–880. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13540602.2017.1358705>

## REL Appalachia Expert Spotlight



Dr. Yunsoo Park is a senior researcher and leader for the [Cross-State Collaborative to Support Schools in the Opioid Crisis](#). This collaborative is designed to enhance education stakeholders' capacity to select and implement evidence-based practices and to use data-based decisionmaking to

support students and educators experiencing trauma. The partnership was originally designed to address trauma specifically related to the opioid crisis. Fortunately, the resources and collaborative activities have relevance to any school community experiencing trauma. Yunsoo has extensive research and clinical experience in social-emotional learning, the impacts of trauma and stress, and psychological and behavioral well-being. As the lead of this collaborative, Yunsoo partners with stakeholders from state and local education agencies, community-based organizations, and universities in Kentucky, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia to address trauma-related consequences of the opioid epidemic in schools. To learn more, visit the [Cross-State Collaborative to Support Schools in the Opioid Crisis](#) page on the REL Appalachia website and browse the resources on self-care from the REL program and beyond.

## REL and Partner Resources

### Educator Self-Care Resource Corner

- [Reflecting on Teacher Well-Being During the COVID-19 Pandemic](#). This blog post from REL Pacific provides an overview of three human behavior frameworks—Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, the Five Stages of Grief and Loss, and the Concerns-Based Adoption Model—to support school leaders in identifying strategies to address the challenges that educators face when adapting to change.
- [Fostering Teacher Well-Being to Support Student Learning](#). This video from REL Pacific provides an overview of teacher well-being and provides tips and strategies to understand teacher needs and promote teacher well-being.

- [How to Grow Teacher Well-Being in Your Schools](#) This infographic from REL Pacific shares strategies school administrators can implement to better understand teachers' experiences, such as school-based surveys, one-on-one interviews, and focus groups, for the purpose of making positive changes. The infographic also provides a list of social and emotional activities to promote teacher well-being.
- [Strategies for Districts to Support Self-Care for Educators During the COVID-19 Pandemic](#). This presentation from REL West shares research-based strategies and practical information to support staff coping with COVID-19-related stressors. Recommended strategies include finding connectedness and a sense of belonging, choosing positive mindsets, and establishing healthy boundaries and interactions.
- [Self-Care and Re-Energizing](#). The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) Self-Care and Re-Energizing page features activities and resources for educators to assess personal self-care habits, learn self-care strategies, and make a self-care plan.
- [Self-Care Strategies for Educators During the Coronavirus Crisis](#). This brief from the Center to Improve Social and Emotional Learning and School Safety provides practical information and guidance on self-care for educators navigating the profession during the COVID-19 pandemic. Recommendations include practicing self-awareness, focusing on solutions, maintaining healthy connections with colleagues, and establishing boundaries with students, families, and work.
- [Reunite, Renew, and Thrive: Social and Emotional Learning \(SEL\) Roadmap for Reopening School](#). This roadmap from CASEL and contributing partners provides a roadmap that school leaders can use to reopen schools with equity-focused SEL strategies to support students and educators during times of great stress and uncertainty. The roadmap includes SEL critical practices, activities, and tools to implement and sustain the efforts.
- [Coping with the COVID-19 Crisis: The Importance of Care for Caregivers Tips for Administrators and Crisis Teams](#). This COVID-19 resource page from the National Association of School Psychologists features tips administrators and crisis teams can use to support the well-being of educators and mental health staff. The page includes tips for identifying signs and symptoms of chronic stress and secondary trauma as well as promoting personal and collective self-care.

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*This newsletter was prepared under Contract No. ED-IES-17-C-0004 by Regional Educational Laboratory Appalachia, administered by SRI International. The content does not necessarily reflect the views or policies of IES or the U.S. Department of Education, nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Government.*