

Activity: Evidence-based SEL practices to support teacher well-being

Time: 13 minutes

Purpose: This activity engages educators in identifying their own social and emotional needs and exploring promising practices to help them meet those needs.

Instructions: Getting started

1. Choose a timekeeper to keep track of the time to ensure that your group completes the activity.
2. Choose someone to report the highlights of your discussions when you return to the large group.
3. Read the following section, up to the “reflection” section in the gold bar below. This should take about one minute.

Activity: Exploring concerns and evidence-based practices

Teachers’ mental well-being matters both for teacher effectiveness and student performance. In *Reflecting on Teacher Wellbeing During the COVID-19 Pandemic*, Tameka Porter of REL Pacific describes teacher well-being as “the reaction to the individual and collective physical, environmental, and social events that shape how educators respond to their students and colleagues.” Research shows that “...teacher wellbeing can be linked to both teacher effectiveness and student performance.”¹

REL Pacific (2020b) also points out that the pandemic and its impacts on both teachers and students can provide educators an “opportunity to reflect on how to foster teacher wellbeing practices that encourage teachers to build and strengthen caring relationships with one another and with their students and prioritize designing and sustaining classrooms where everyone feels emotionally and physically safe and supported.”

¹ Becker, E. S., Goetz, T., Morger, V., & Ranellucci, J. (2014). The importance of teachers' emotions and instructional behavior for their students' emotions— experience sampling analysis. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 43, 15–26 as cited in REL Pacific. (2020, June 22). *Reflecting on teacher wellbeing during the Covid-19 pandemic*. https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/pacific/blogs/blog28_reflecting-on-teacher-wellbeing-during-COVID-19-pandemic.asp.

Research suggests that educators can take steps in their daily practice in relatively little time to make changes that will have a positive impact on their social and emotional well-being and mental health.² Research also indicates that developing and nurturing peer-to-peer relationships through collaborative professional development supports teacher well-being and the “processing of our own SEL” as educators.³

Research offers the following evidence-based practices:

Daily practices

- Practice self-reflection and check in regularly with yourself and others.
- Protect personal time (away from work) and establish healthy boundaries in the workplace.
- Express yourself in fun, creative ways.
- Take five “mini-vacations” a day, in which you do something fun for yourself.
- Be mindful and meditative.⁴

Connecting with colleagues through personalized professional learning

- Call on your colleagues and identify reflective learning partners.
- Co-develop professional learning plans.
- Engage with groups and activities that instill personal pride and professional identity.⁵

Reflection

1. With your small group, create a shared online document or use sticky notes and chart paper to answer the following question (5 minutes):

What concerns do you have about your own social and emotional needs as you return to school?

² This definition and description of culture was taken from REL Pacific. (2020a, May). *Key considerations for promoting culturally relevant SEL during COVID-19*. https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/pacific/blogs/blog26_key-considerations-for-promoting-SEL-during-covid-19.asp

³ REL Midwest. (2020, April). *Research-based resources, considerations, and strategies for remote learning*.

⁴ These evidence-based practices can be found in REL Appalachia. (2020, November). *Addressing trauma in educational settings: Module 2: Implementation of practices and strategies to support students and educators* [Presentation]. https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/appalachia/events/event_12-21-20_addressing-trauma-in-educational-settings_module-2.asp

⁵ These evidence-based practices can be found in REL Midwest. (2020, April). *Research-based resources, considerations, and strategies for remote learning* [Slide 18]. <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/midwest/pdf/eventslides/remote-learning-slides-508.pdf>

2. Explore evidence-based practices for supporting teacher well-being from the practices listed above. With your small group, choose one or two evidence-based practices that might work for you. Be explicit about how they would help to address the concerns you have about your own social and emotional needs (9 minutes).