

## Supporting Educator Well-being Using Evidence-Based Supports

Educators play a vital role in supporting students' well-being and mental health.<sup>1</sup> But how can teachers and school staff support their students if they are struggling with stress, burnout, and mental health challenges themselves? This fact sheet describes the importance of prioritizing educator well-being—as well as practical tips for how to do so—so that both educators and students can thrive.

### Background

Recent survey data show that teachers are struggling with stress and other mental health challenges. Consider the following:

- A 2021 survey of 1,006 educators found that 78% of teachers experienced frequent job-related stress, compared to 40% of working adults. The same study also found a higher proportion of teachers reported symptoms of depression compared to the general population.<sup>2</sup>
- A 2022 survey of 1,800 educators found that about a third of them planned to leave their role before the beginning of the next school year. Their top three reasons cited were compensation, unreasonable expectations, and the inability to protect their well-being.<sup>3</sup>
- In 2022, 64% of all teachers who left teaching did so voluntarily—that is, they resigned rather than being laid off or let go for other reasons—which is an increase of more than 10 percentage points from the average in the prior 10 years.<sup>4</sup>

**Educators are facing pressures that can lead to negative effects on their well-being, including:** <sup>5,6,7,8,9</sup>

**Increased Workload**



**Work-Related Stress**



**Lack of Support from Administrators and Families**



**Concern Over Students' Well-Being/Compassion Fatigue**



**Economic Pressures**



All these findings point to the need to support, strengthen, and protect educator and staff well-being. Doing so may not only reduce the number of teachers experiencing burnout and leaving the profession, but it can also help educators manage classrooms more productively, improve relationships with students, and create and sustain a positive school climate. In addition, teachers who feel supported may better demonstrate and apply social-emotional learning practices in their classrooms and schools.<sup>10</sup>

# Socio-Ecological Approach to Promoting Wellness

One method schools and districts can use to support staff well-being is to implement a socio-ecological approach, in which health is understood to be “affected by the interaction between the individual, the group/community, and the physical, social, and political environments.”<sup>11</sup>

The socio-ecological approach advocates for the examination of root causes of educator stress. While self-care practices such as meditation, sleep, and exercise may help reduce the symptoms of educator stress, they may not be as effective if educators do not also have the external support they need. Creating an environment that fosters supportive relationships with colleagues and provides time, resources, and assistance for educators to take care of themselves may improve teacher well-being.<sup>12</sup>

A socio-ecological approach to promoting well-being considers the individual, their relationship with others, and their environment. Implementing strategies at each of these levels can build the support school and district staff need.



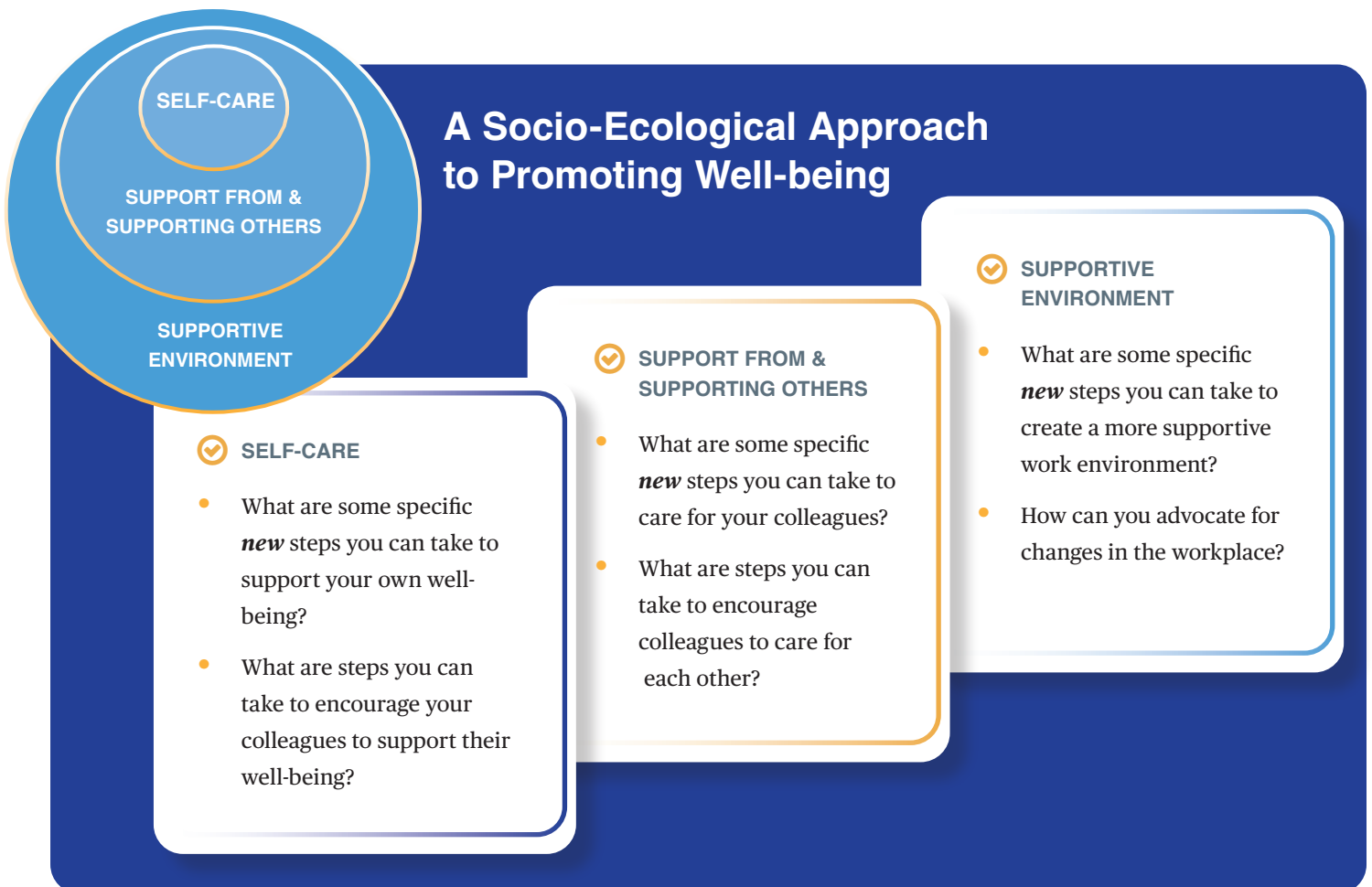
**Self-care:** Self-care practices such as mindfulness, deep breathing, and intention-setting can improve teachers’ occupational, physical, emotional, and psychological well-being. Mindfulness skills are related to lower levels of burnout, stress, and depression/anxiety symptoms.<sup>13</sup>



**Support from and Supporting Others:** Positive relationships between school staff are associated with positive school climate, which in turn contributes to academic achievement.<sup>14</sup>



**Supportive Environment:** Principal leadership, communication among staff, and classroom management strategies are all factors that influence the school environment.<sup>15</sup>



Source: Social, Emotional, and Behavioral Academy, EDC.

## Ways to Support Educator Well-being in Your School or District

Before you implement any practices or policies, gather data to make sure your planned activities are the right ones. Assessment tools may include surveys, focus groups, and one-on-one interviews to investigate which issues concern staff the most.

Professional issues to ask about:



**Workload**



**Teacher effectiveness**



**Job satisfaction**



**Organizational support**



**Student relationships**



**Physical health**



**School connectedness**



**Stress**



**Life satisfaction<sup>16</sup>**

Once you have collected your data, you can use it to identify specific areas in which educators need support and then select the right strategies using these three types of supports: self-care, support from and supporting others, and a supportive environment.

Type of Support	Definition	Examples of Strategies
<b>Self-care</b>	Actions an individual completes on their own to improve their own health.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mindfulness, in which an individual is aware of their feelings, thoughts, and body</li> <li>• Exercise</li> <li>• Journaling</li> </ul>
<b>Support from &amp; supporting others</b>	Supports colleagues can provide to one another. Just as the MTSS framework emphasizes the importance of students developing meaningful relationships with peers and trusted adults, educators also need to develop and maintain meaningful and productive relationships with each other to create a sense of belonging.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mentoring</li> <li>• Developing and maintaining relationships</li> <li>• Giving supportive feedback</li> </ul>
<b>Supportive environment</b>	Structures, policies, and systems education leaders can put in place to create a work environment that is safe, supportive, and conducive to growth and that addresses the root causes of stress for teachers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leadership is sensitive to mental health concerns and promotes mental health resources for educators</li> <li>• Leadership clearly communicates and encourages staff to ask for help</li> <li>• Work/life balance is encouraged and supported</li> </ul>

Implementing new strategies takes time and careful monitoring. Make sure you check back with educators to determine if your chosen strategies are having the desired effect. Ensuring that successful strategies are in place at each level—individually, within peer relationships, and within the school environment—can improve job satisfaction and well-being, allowing educators to better support students and help them succeed.

**Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS)** is a three-tiered framework for helping schools implement evidence-based interventions that promote the development of social and emotional competencies.

See this [MTSS fact sheet](#) to learn more.

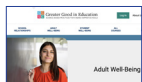
## Additional Resources



[How to Grow Teacher Wellbeing in Your Schools](#), REL Pacific



[A Toolkit for School Systems to Advance Comprehensive School Employee Wellness](#), ChildTrends



[Adult Well-Being, Greater Good in Education](#)



[Educator Resilience and Trauma-Informed Self-Care](#), Center on Great Teachers & Leaders at the American Institutes for Research



[Strengthen Adult SEL](#), Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning

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