



K-12 STAFF WELL-BEING CHECK-IN TOOLKIT

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INTRODUCTION

Each day, teachers diligently create meaningful learning experiences in schools and shape how students see themselves personally and professionally. However, staffing shortages, budget shortfalls, policy shifts, student behavioral issues, and academic recovery challenges all leave teachers working longer hours, responding to greater student needs, and navigating political debates, all while earning limited wages.

In recent years, educators have reported more workplace stress, anxiety, and burnout than other working adults. Ultimately, when educators' needs are not met, student well-being and success suffer.

Over time, if teacher and staff stress is not addressed, it leads to a cascade of challenges.

Some of these challenges can include:

- Lower performance
- Decreased physical and mental health
- Increased absenteeism
- High turnover and staffing shortages
- Larger class sizes
- Lower student outcomes
- Reduced consistency for students and families

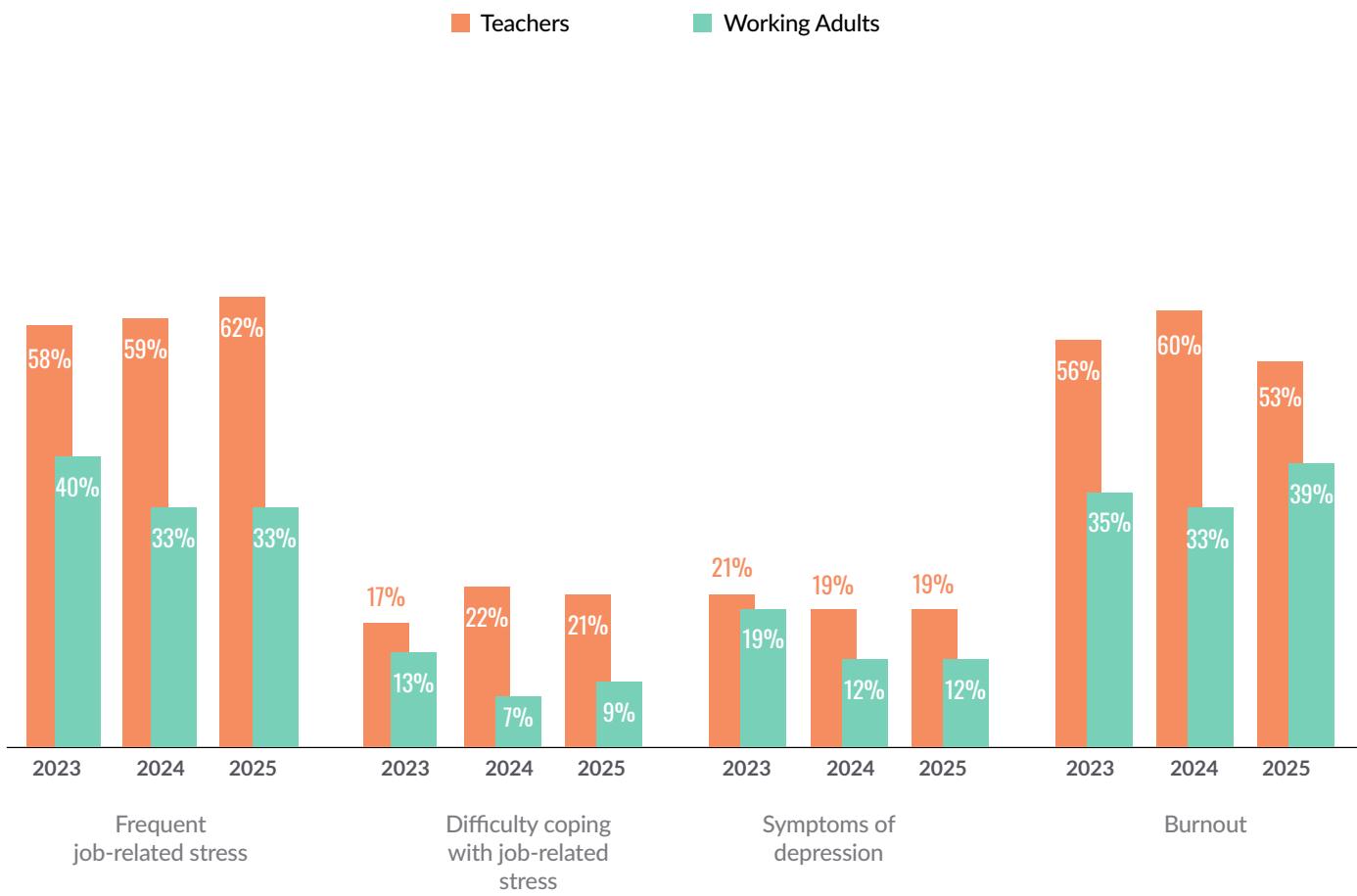
To mitigate this problem, K-12 organizations must recognize what nurtures educator well-being and implement multiple tiers of support to address employee efficacy, agency, and satisfaction. Adopting multiple care strategies can help teachers and staff feel more respected and valued, which will, in turn, fuel their resolve to remain in the profession.



THE STATE OF TEACHER AND STAFF WELL-BEING

According to a **2025 State of the American Teacher Survey**, K-12 teachers have consistently reported poorer well-being indicators compared to the general population of working adults since 2021.

WELL-BEING OF TEACHERS AND WORKING ADULTS 2023-2025



Source: RAND Corporation



TIP: Supported Teachers Perform Better and Stay Longer

Teachers influence student achievement more than any other school-based factor. To effectively support students, teachers need to feel physically, mentally, and emotionally well. Improving teachers' well-being enables them to be more effective in the classroom and form more positive relationships with students and colleagues. As stress levels decrease and morale improves, teachers also typically have fewer absences and less turnover.

MONITORING STAFF WELL-BEING

Regular check-ins help K-12 leaders identify stress and burnout in teachers and staff

Administrators should check in with employees on a regular basis to monitor their well-being, either directly or through the establishment of a "buddy system." During and after a crisis or emergency, administrators should check in with all employees more frequently, such as once a week, to address any acute concerns. Recommendations for the content of these conversations are shared below.



Ask how they are doing and feeling, and ask how their families are doing. Make sure they feel heard and understood.



Find small ways to show your support and care. Help them identify solutions to problems and find support services.



Learn who is in their support network and how they access their network during times of social isolation.



Check that they are taking care of themselves: eating, sleeping, taking breaks, finding time for hobbies, etc.

Source: American Health Care Association (AHCA) and the National Center for Assisted Living (NCAL)



Looking for more strategies to retain high-quality educators? Watch our on-demand webinar, **Teacher & Staff Retention Playbook: Strategies for District Success.**

MONITORING STAFF WELL-BEING

Signs of Burnout and Stress

Administrators and other managers should also use check-ins to identify signs of burnout and secondary traumatic stress:



BURNOUT

Feelings of exhaustion and reduced efficacy resulting from chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed



SECONDARY TRAUMATIC STRESS

Stress resulting from exposure to another individual's traumatic experiences, rather than from direct exposure to a traumatic event

Three Categories of Warning Signs for Burnout



PHYSICAL

Can include chronic fatigue and exhaustion. However, other signs may also be evident, such as trouble paying attention, confusion, constantly being on the "lookout" for danger, or startling easily. Sleeping and eating problems, headaches, stomachaches, or muscle tension may also be experienced.



EMOTIONAL

Can include excessive worry or anxiety about the crisis victims, disconnection or numbing, extreme anger at the situation, or feelings of compassion fatigue, demoralization, or resignation. Individuals may also find they have recurrent crisis thoughts or distressing dreams, experience a constant replaying of the events, or even have some confusion and difficulty making everyday decisions.



SOCIAL OR INTERPERSONAL

Can include serious difficulties in relationships at home or work. Irritability, outbursts of anger, social withdrawal, or isolation can sometimes be seen as extreme stress reactions. Other signs can include attempts to over-control at work or compulsions to be a "rescuer" or part of every crisis situation.

Source: The National Association of School Psychologists, World Health Organization

INCREASING EFFICACY AND TIERED SUPPORT

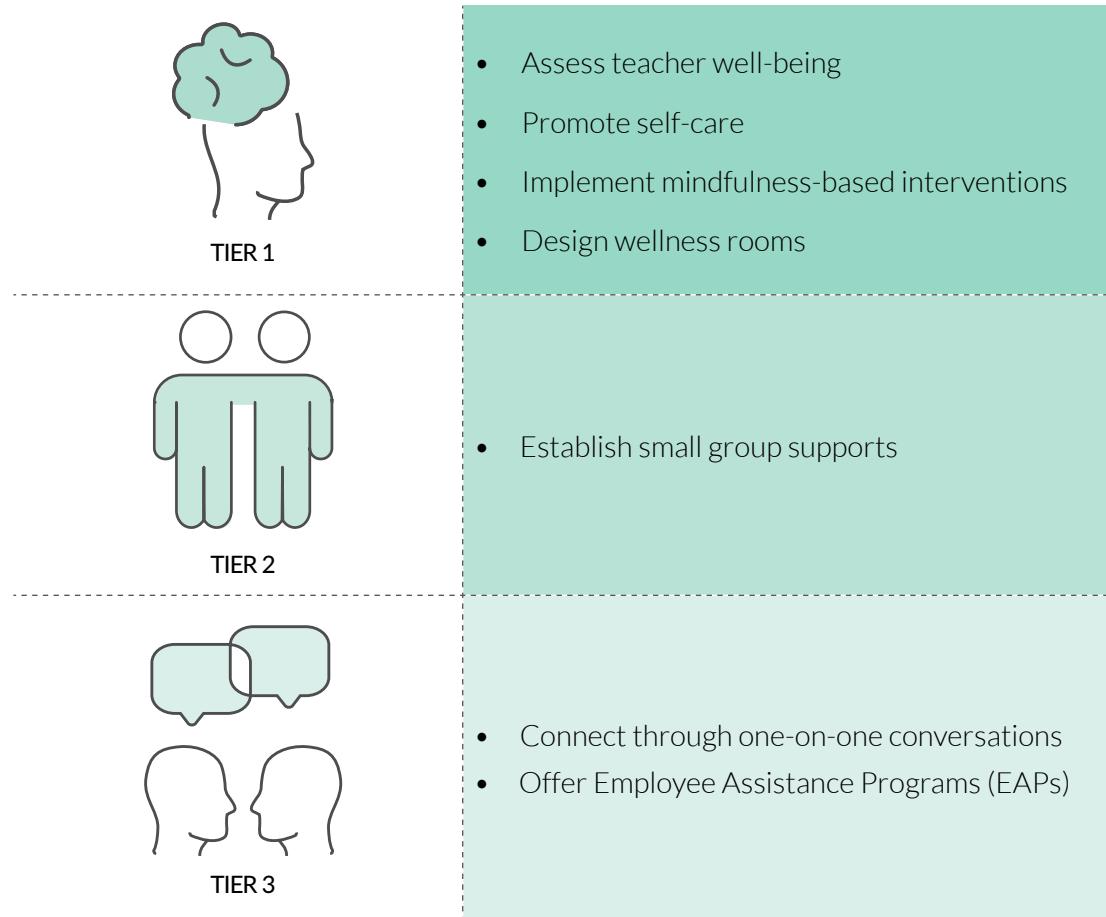
The Connection Between Efficacy, Retention, and Achievement

Teacher and staff self-efficacy is a critical component of well-being, both for employees and students. When educators believe they can positively affect students, they are more likely to remain in their position and find ways to manage their stress. In addition, as educators' sense of purpose increases, so too does student achievement. This means that supporting a sense of agency and self-efficacy in teachers and staff leads to better outcomes for all.

Schools with a collaborative culture in which teachers freely share instructional strategies and assume joint responsibility for student achievement have higher levels of individual and collective teacher efficacy than schools with isolating or competitive cultures.

A MULTI-TIERED SYSTEM OF SUPPORT FOR TEACHERS AND STAFF

Through an MTSS framework and implementation process, K-12 organizations can support employees with varying challenges and needs. Here are some examples of a tiered-approach:



BUILDING A SUPPORTIVE STAFF CULTURE

District and school administrators should adopt best practices for creating a supportive culture in which staff feel comfortable asking for and getting help:



Lead with empathy



Set expectations and establish work goals based on output



Ask how team members are doing on a personal level



Be authentic



Make sure employees feel in the loop



Encourage periodic check-ins, and give employees the choice of attending in-person, by phone, or video call



Be alert in case some employees are feeling isolated

SPOTLIGHT: MADISON METROPOLITAN SCHOOL DISTRICT TIER 1 EMPLOYEE SUPPORTS



Madison Metropolitan School District (MMSD) offers a range of mindfulness interventions, professional development opportunities, and resources for any teacher or staff member who wishes to participate, including:

- Introduction to Mindfulness, a four-week course
- Foundations in Mindfulness for Beginners, a 10-hour course
- A Day of Mindfulness, a four-to-six-hour session
- Classroom Action Research (CAR), a year-long course on Mindfulness in Education
- Group Drop-In Practice, weekly guided sessions
- MMSD Teacher Community of Care, a monthly group for employees to practice mindful awareness and share well-being practices



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ABOUT HANOVER RESEARCH

Hanover guides K-12 leaders in tackling academic and administrative challenges to ensure that students, parents, and staff have the tools they need to ensure all students succeed.

OUR K-12 EDUCATION SOLUTIONS

CURRICULUM & INSTRUCTION

Provide high-quality, research-based curriculum and instructional practices.

STUDENT SUPPORTS

Design and implement effective student support and success strategies.

ACADEMIC PROGRAM PLANNING & IMPACT

Thoughtfully plan for and evaluate your district's instructional practices, policy, and programming.

ENROLLMENT & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Build effective K-12 enrollment, marketing, and engagement strategies.

TEACHER RECRUITMENT & RETENTION

Support your students by ensuring you recruit, engage, and retain great teachers.

OPERATIONAL PLANNING

Discover how effective your district operations truly are and identify opportunities to improve.

CULTURE, CLIMATE & FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

Data-backed insights to create a positive learning environment where students thrive.

DISTRICT STRATEGIC PLANNING

Take clear steps to build and monitor your district's strategic plan.

OUR BENEFITS



EXPERT

200+ analysts with advanced multiple methodology research expertise



FLEXIBLE

Ongoing custom research agenda adapts with organizations' needs



DEDICATED

Exclusive account and research teams ensure strategic partnership



EFFICIENT

Annual, fixed-fee model shares costs and benefits



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