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Healthy Educators Need Healthy Schools: Supporting Educator Work-Related Well-Being Through Multitiered Systems of Support

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The COVID-19 pandemic has amplified preexisting challenges for educators as manifested in high rates of work-related stress and burnout, and educators leaving the profession in higher numbers than ever before. In this article, we highlight the urgency for work-related well-being supports for educators, with a particular focus on system changes. Individual self-care is necessary, yet insufficient. To this end, we recommend the use of a multitiered system of support framework to promote a supportive and balanced work environment for all educators, tailored to local needs. We provide a rationale for the use of a tiered model and give specific recommendations for implementation and sustainability of a continuum of supports for school-wide educator well-being.

Impact and Implications

Educators are leaving the profession at alarming rates, resulting in critical and ongoing shortages, due in large part to high stress levels, high job demands, and underresourced schools. The present article presents a contextualized, school-wide, and multitiered approach to understanding and promoting educator work-related well-being. We provide examples of how to use a data-informed and team-based approach to identify and provide supports tailored to each school and educator.

Keywords: educator burnout, work-related well-being, multitiered system of supports

Supporting students' well-being has been a subject of great concern and the past decades have witnessed increased efforts to provide school-based comprehensive mental health services for students (e.g., O'Reilly et al., 2018; Weist et al., 2014). Similar advocacy and efforts have been limited for educators, which include school leaders, faculty, and support staff, despite their critical role in ensuring students' overall success. Educators have consistently reported higher levels of psychological stress and burnout compared to other professions (Kovess-Masféty et al., 2007). Various factors contribute to their work-related burnout such as student discipline problems (Stormont & Young-Walker, 2017), lack of support (Jeon & Ardeleanu, 2020; Schilling et al., 2018), work overload (Allen et al., 2021; Perryman & Calvert, 2020), inadequate pay (Haberman, 2005), fear of bullying (Woudstra et al., 2018), rejection from leadership (Friedman, 2002), and compassion fatigue and secondary trauma (Fleckman et al., 2022; Koenig et al., 2018). The pandemic has only worsened existing trends in job dissatisfaction (Goldring et al., 2014), increased turnover intentions (Kenneally, 2021; Zamarro et al., 2021), and contributed to even higher levels of reported anxiety during the COVID-19 pandemic compared to health care, office, and other workers (Kush et al., 2022).

Educators have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic to varying degrees, with remote educators reporting greater isolation and female teachers experiencing higher levels of anxiety (Kush et al., 2022). Racial disparities have also become more salient, with Black, Indigenous, people of color (BIPOC) educators from high poverty communities more likely to be affected by COVID-19 (Jin et al., 2021; Tan et al., 2022) but still reporting resilience and a lower impact on their ability to teach compared to White teachers (McCauley & Cooperstock, 2022). Therefore, it is vital to consider equity when addressing educators' work-related well-being.

Work-related well-being includes multiple dimensions such as pleasure-displeasure (e.g., job satisfaction), enthusiasm-depression (e.g., engagement), anxiety-comfort (e.g., occupational stress), and fatigue-vigor (e.g., burnout; Rothmann, 2008). The urgency to focus on improving educators' work-related well-being cannot be overstated, as it directly impacts the quality of instruction and support educators provide their students, ultimately impacting students' well-being and academic success (Cook et al., 2017; Eddy et al., 2020; Harding et al., 2019; Herman et al., 2018). Therefore, creating work environments that prioritize educator well-being is key to student success.

In the following sections, we propose a school-wide multitiered approach to promote and sustain educator work-related well-being. The proposed approach draws upon prevalent models and theories of well-being across professions (i.e., the job demands-resources [JD-R] model) and for teachers specifically (e.g., the coping-competence-context [3C] theory of teacher stress). The use of these models and theories helps to provide a contextualized understanding of educator well-being. We rely on the previous research (i.e., Ouellette et al., 2020) to emphasize the significance of organizational-level factors

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like culture and climate in promoting educator well-being, and to identify common intervention strategies for promoting well-being throughout the school. Finally, we describe a workable implementation framework, multitiered system of supports (MTSS), to assist schools in identifying, developing, implementing, and maintaining a continuum of supports designed to improve educator work-related well-being.

An Organizational Approach to Educator Work-Related Well-Being

The JD-R model of burnout, initially proposed by Demerouti et al. (2001) and recently updated by Bakker et al. (2023), explains how burnout symptoms, including emotional exhaustion and disengagement, develop when job demands are high and resources are low. For educators, job demands can include planning and delivery of instruction and intervention, completing paperwork, attending meetings, coordinating services, communicating with guardians, and managing the emotional demands of supporting students. Job demands can become a source of stress and burnout when they exceed an educator's ability to accomplish their job expectations within the allotted time and resources (i.e., role overload), when two or more job demands are in direct conflict with each other (i.e., role conflict), or when expectations are unclear (i.e., role ambiguity; Cordes & Dougherty, 1993). Job demands can also be experienced differently across educators within the same school, emphasizing the importance of organizational fairness, including consistency in job expectations across educators, and transparent, judicial, and equitable procedures for deciding expectations and allocating resources across staff (Hassard et al., 2017).

Job resources help educators meet their job demands and cope with stressors. Resources can be tangible (e.g., classroom materials), knowledge-based (e.g., professional development opportunities), emotion-based (e.g., personal coping skills), and social (e.g., social support networks); and they can be organized at the individual (e.g., stress management skills, self-efficacy, previous training), interpersonal (e.g., social support, positive relationships, leadership support), and/or organizational level (e.g., participative decision making, clear communication pathways, positive culture, and climate). It is critical to assess the primary job demands and necessary resources within each work environment (i.e., school) and for each individual, to identify and address existing imbalances.

The updated multilevel JD-R theory (Bakker et al., 2023) is an extension of the previous JD-R model and proposes that job demands and resources operate at multiple levels (i.e., individual, team, organization) and interact with each other to influence an employee's work-related well-being and performance. The updated theory highlights the importance of the work environment, led by an organization's leadership, in shaping employees' experiences; recognizes the necessity of analyzing and optimizing job demands and resources at multiple levels in an organization; and emphasizes the need for interventions that address both individual and organizational factors.

Other theories of educator stress help to elucidate salient demands and resources for teachers specifically. For example, the coping-competence-context (3C) theory of teacher stress (Herman et al., 2020) identifies three pathways by which teacher stress develops, including individual characteristics and coping skills that influence teachers' ability to cope effectively with stress; teachers' use of effective classroom practices including classroom management and

ability to form positive relationships with students; and contextual factors at the school and system level, including policies and practices. The coping pathway reflects most existing educator wellness interventions which focus on building educators' coping skills, particularly self-care, stress management, and mindfulness skills (e.g., de Jesus et al., 2014; Flook et al., 2013). The competence pathway aligns with Jennings and Greenberg (2009) model of the Prosocial Classroom, which highlights the importance of educator competence in building healthy teacher-student relationships, effective classroom management, and effective social-emotional learning toward promoting a healthy classroom climate which influences both student and teacher well-being. Jennings and Greenberg (2009) discussed the "burnout cascade" that can occur due to the bidirectional relationship between educator well-being and student behavior, by which increased educator stress and burnout can negatively impact their effectiveness in building a healthy classroom climate, which can result in increased disruptive student behavior and negative teacher-student relationships, in turn resulting in even greater stress and burnout. Resources (e.g., professional development opportunities) are therefore needed to increase educators' capacity to cope with and manage stress, as well as their competence promoting healthy and effective classroom relationships, management, and climate.

The context pathway focuses on factors at the school, system, and societal levels that influence educator stress. Societal factors include the overarching lack of value given to educators within broader societal beliefs, perpetuated by public stereotypes and being chronically underpaid (Price & McCallum, 2015). The system or policy level includes pressures resulting from decisions and expectations set by external agencies, including at the local, state, and national policy levels, that influence teachers' job demands, expectations, and available resources. These decisions include educator accountability policies and standards, hiring and retention policies, and mandated educational curricula (Shernoff et al., 2011) that remove educators' capacity to make their own choices, while increasing anxiety around job security, feelings of disempowerment, unworthiness, and being undervalued (Daniels & Strauss, 2010). School-level factors include effective and supportive leadership, and perceptions of organizational culture and climate. Across studies, organizational culture and climate are consistently associated with educator stress and burnout (e.g., Shernoff et al., 2011), serving as stronger predictors of stress than individual (e.g., self-efficacy) and classroom-level (e.g., student behaviors) factors (Ouellette et al., 2018). A positive school climate is a significant contributor to positive educator mental health; with opposite effects found for negative school climate (Gray et al., 2017; McLean et al., 2017). This highlights the importance of a school-wide approach to supporting educator work-related well-being that focuses on building a positive and supportive culture and climate, along with systems of support designed to increase job resources across individual, interpersonal, and organizational levels.

A recent systematic review by Ouellette et al. (2020) identified common measures and interventions designed to improve organizational culture and climate in youth-serving settings, including schools. The review found that organizational culture and climate have been defined and measured in many ways, with common components including: (a) organizational values and norms (e.g., school-level value placed on educator well-being, openness to change, emphasis on collaboration vs. individual responsibility); (b) interpersonal interactions and healthy relationships across educators

and between educators and students; (c) capacity to meet job demands, including individual and collective effectiveness and access to resources (i.e., Do educators have what they need, including time, support, and knowledge, to meet their job demands?); and (d) collective perceptions of burnout and ability to cope with stress. The most common components of organizational interventions targeting improved culture and climate included: (a) *Skill development* including professional development focused on the implementation of evidence-based interventions or services for youth and/or educator well-being; (b) *Continuous quality improvement* including a period of goal alignment (i.e., establishing school-level values around educator well-being) and creating an internal committee to collect school-level feedback and engage in ongoing data-informed team-based decision making; (c) *Organizational restructuring* including changes to job expectations, roles and responsibilities, and school-level rules and routines; and (d) *Staff social and emotional support* including organizational supports and interventions targeting improved relationships (e.g., trust, communication, and social support across staff and leadership) and collective capacity to manage stress (e.g., school-wide provision of and/or access to mindfulness, counseling, or social-emotional health and well-being supports).

MTSS for Educator Work-Related Well-Being

MTSS is a comprehensive, tiered, data-informed framework that focuses on the alignment of the entire system of initiatives, supports, and resources in a school to ensure all students' academic, social-emotional, and behavioral success (Weist et al., 2018). We believe the MTSS framework is an ideal framework for supporting educator work-related well-being for several reasons. First, MTSS enables a critical shift away from placing the responsibility for well-being on the individual. Educator well-being is a systems issue that requires broader system-level change, which may include traditional self-care practices at the individual level, but only in coordination with systems-level support. Second, MTSS is a familiar framework, as most states are recommending the implementation of tiered systems of support to promote and support student well-being (Bailey, 2019), making it a good contextual fit as schools can build on existing initiatives. Third, MTSS allows for a continuum of support to meet a continuum of well-being needs. Well-being is a process rather than a state; hence, continuous improvement efforts have to be evident if schools are to respond to the needs of their staff with timely and coordinated efforts.

In sum, we propose that the MTSS framework offers a flexible, familiar, and feasible evidence-based framework for creating system-level changes for educator well-being, using the JD-R models and the intervention categories identified by Ouellette and colleagues as guides for recommended supports. See Figure 1, for an overview of the proposed model. See Figure 2 for a flowchart of the implementation process. Details on model components and recommendations for implementation are presented below.

Foundations

Our proposed MTSS framework for educator work-related well-being aligns with existing MTSS for promoting positive student outcomes, such as positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS; Sugai & Horner, 2009), which is itself associated with

improved organizational health outcomes (Bradshaw et al., 2008). PBIS and similar MTSS approaches targeting improved student outcomes share many of the foundational elements for promoting educator well-being, including creating a team, identifying a common purpose and goal, promoting positive and change-oriented leadership, building a positive culture and climate that encourages idea sharing across rightsholders, and developing systems for ongoing data-based decision making. Similar to using MTSS to create student-driven supports (see Lane et al., 2016, for a practical guide to implementing tiered frameworks), there are certain foundational prerequisites that need to be in place for successful implementation of MTSS for educator well-being, briefly described below.

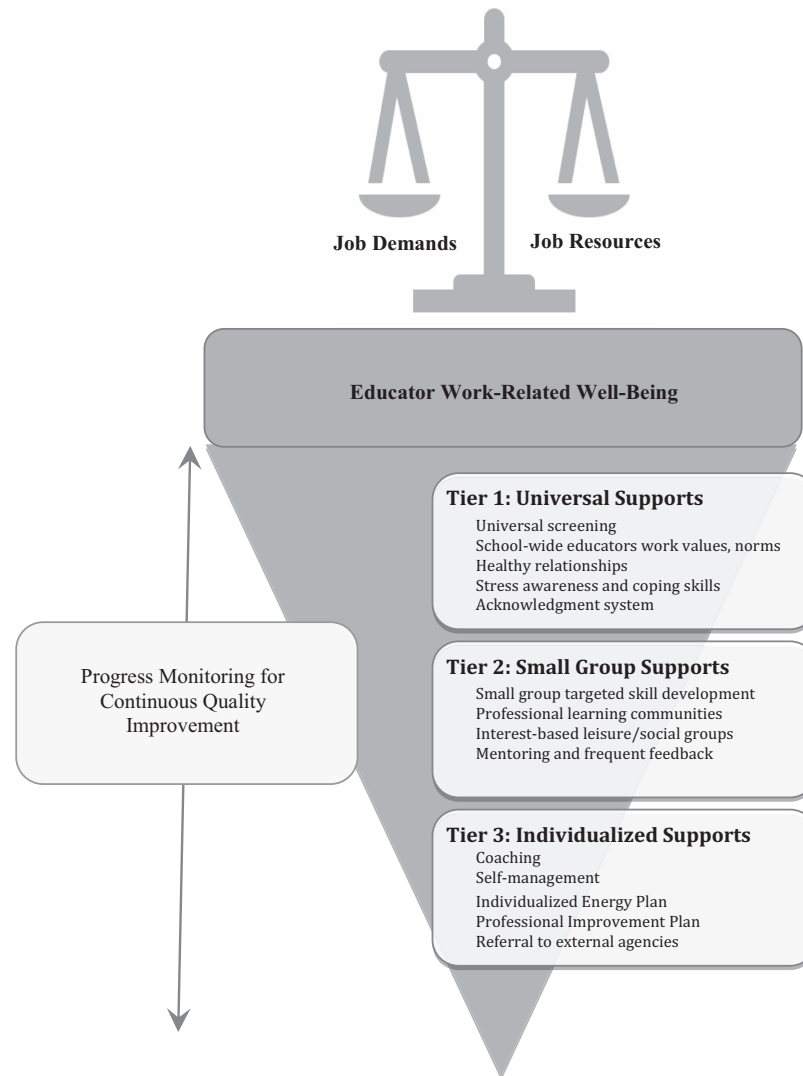
Establish Need and Collective Buy-In

First, in the preimplementation exploration phase, it is critical to ensure there is an *agreed upon need* (e.g., school-wide listening sessions are held and/or surveys are distributed to all staff and results indicate stress and burnout are prevalent), *buy-in* (e.g., administration emphasizes during staff meetings the connection between adult and student wellness, and clearly communicates the necessity and priority for educator wellness), and *readiness for change* (e.g., map existing resources) among the whole school community before MTSS is initiated. Incorporating the perspectives, experiences, and feedback of people directly involved in the implementation of MTSS framework increases buy-in and engagement as people feel heard and valued. It is important to solicit feedback and incorporate it throughout the development, implementation, and refinement process to ensure the framework remains relevant and effective for its intended purpose.

Establish a Team

Second, a district-level and/or school-level *educator well-being team* needs to be established with members that reflect the diversity of roles, expertise, responsibilities, ethnic, and racial make-up within the school. A team-based leadership model enables the shift from traditional top-down hierarchies of school administrators largely leading initiatives, to a collaborative and representative model of leadership that includes a broader set of rightsholders. This team-based approach has been recommended for successful implementation and sustainability of various tiered initiatives, because: (a) teams help distribute tasks across multiple people, (b) expertise is distributed across a group, (c) teams can offer an avenue for all rightsholders to be represented and play an active role in identifying needs and cocreating supports, and (d) teams make feasible essential tasks such as data collection and data-based decision making. The team will engage in activities such as program development (across tiers), data collection and data-based decision making, and provision of technical support for implementation of identified supports. Given the complexities often present in schools such as high and competing demands, budget constraints, mental health stigma, lack of awareness of mental health needs and supports, and equity concerns, one of the most important tasks for the team is to problem-solve collaboratively with administration for solutions to barriers and facilitators of engagement (see Gearhart et al., 2022). Examples could be flexible scheduling options and job sharing to allow educators to participate in wellness activities, seeking alternative funding sources such as grants and community partnerships, normalizing help-seeking behaviors through public awareness

Figure 1
Framework for Addressing Educator Work-Related Well-Being



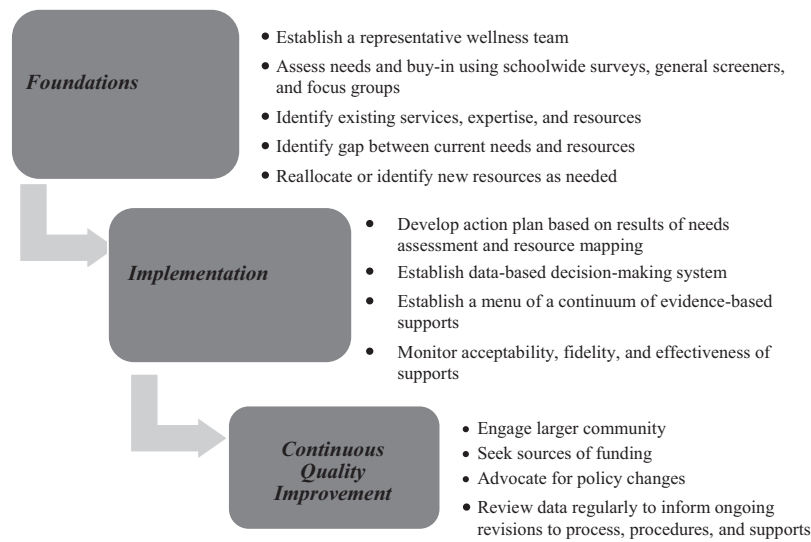
campaigns (e.g., wellness educator week), providing confidential and easily accessible resources (e.g., colocated mental health clinic, postings on school's website, in teacher handbooks, through regular communication from administrators), targeting resources to underserved populations and communities, offering translation services, and promoting culturally relevant programs. Educator well-being teams can and should be integrated into existing MTSS school-based mental health teams rather than creating a separate team, unless absolutely necessary. See Table 1 for a detailed guide to further assist wellness teams throughout the different phases of implementation.

Establish a System for Data Collection, Use, and Analysis

Third, *data collection systems* and *data-based decision making* play a key role in all activities, including needs assessment and resource mapping, screening and benchmarking, and continuous quality improvement through progress monitoring of effectiveness, implementation fidelity and social validity. Assessing the gap

between current *needs* and *resources* is a necessary prerequisite for planning future steps. *Collaborative needs assessment* should involve all school personnel to ensure all voices are heard, to determine which specific local needs exist for promoting educator wellness within each school, if they are met with current resources, and what additional resources are necessary to meet identified needs. Needs assessment can be conducted by looking at existing data (e.g., staff attrition and retention rates, time-off patterns, absences, sick leave, exit interviews) and/or collecting new data (e.g., informal screenings such as surveys on satisfaction with work environment or formal screening for mental health concerns). It can include an assessment of job demands and responsibilities across school roles (e.g., general and special education teachers, school mental health professionals, paraprofessionals, office staff), the extent to which educators feel capable of meeting their responsibilities, and which responsibilities they perceive as positive (i.e., motivators) versus negative (i.e., stressors) sources of well-being. It can also include assessment of leadership-driven predictors of well-being such as

Figure 2
 MTSS for Educator Work-Related Well-Being: Implementation Flowchart



Note. MTSS = multitiered systems of support.

perceived choice and recognition received for their work, which in turn can become concrete intervention targets for the wellness team. For example, if staff reports low rates of recognition, the team can organize monthly appreciation breakfasts for educators or do public “shout-outs” for educators who reach fidelity criteria during schoolwide meetings. In parallel, the team needs to engage in *resource-mapping*, a structured process designed to understand where current supports are placed and if they are sufficient to meet identified needs. The identified gaps between needs and resources can provide teams with a starting place to reorganize existing resources and/or identify the most important resources needed to address the team’s priority concerns and unmet needs.

Once strategies and supports are being implemented, the team should regularly collect and analyze data to monitor progress toward desired goals, integrity of implementation, and acceptability of supports. Data collection and analysis can include universal screening tools for well-being and mental health needs, team-based examination of screening data, evaluation of changes-over-time in data aligned with initiative goals, monitoring implementation fidelity, as well as feasibility and acceptability data. Sample screening and progress monitoring tools are described in Table 2. In choosing measures among these and other available tools, attention should be paid to brevity, sensitivity, and specificity in screening identification, and sensitivity to change over time (e.g., Dowdy et al., 2010; Eddy et al., 2019). Pros and cons should be evaluated as a team when making decisions about measurement, such as the choice between using single item measures targeting educator stress versus longer measures that take more time to complete but may offer more nuanced information about the presence and predictors of well-being across different domains.

It is important for the team to consider equity and privacy issues. For example, outcome measures aggregated at the school level may not translate equitably across all subgroups and individuals in a school, especially for BIPOC educators. As such, we recommend that data should be disaggregated by group membership (e.g., gender,

racial groups, grade levels) to investigate (in)equity in workplace well-being and stressors, while maintaining anonymity, so individuals cannot be further targeted or marginalized using the data. Examining for outliers or differences based on characteristics (e.g., job role, race, age) can help to identify potential injustices occurring at the organizational level that could differentially impact the well-being of particular groups or individuals. For example, teachers of color have reported increased negative impacts on their well-being and retention in urban schools, resulting from experiencing racism from their White colleagues (Pizarro & Kohli, 2020). Examining collective subjective experiences, as well as variations within the collective, can help inform multilevel interventions that are most likely to meet the needs of all individuals within each school.

Regarding privacy issues, collected data may involve sensitive information such as feedback on current work conditions and mental health status, which highlights the importance of preserving anonymity and maintaining confidentiality of data. To increase transparency and educator agency in the data collection process, educators should be allowed to opt out of data collection at any time with stated and enforced protections from repercussions or punitive action, as individuals may feel hesitant to share personal information in the workplace (Marshall et al., 2021), due to either fear of retaliation by supervisors or personal preferences. Workplace privacy concerns and business ethics indicate that schools should be mindful of maintaining anonymity when appropriate and ensure individuals without evaluative roles are responsible for data analysis and storage, with transparent procedures for maintaining confidentiality (Coulombe, 2015). Given the disproportionate effect of stressors on certain minoritized or marginalized groups (e.g., black women educators), data need to be disaggregated to design meaningful supports, with strict measures to preserve anonymity and decrease the potential for performance-related judgments. For example, anonymity can be preserved by asking individuals to select an age group (e.g., 25–30 years old) instead of reporting individual age. Once these prerequisite foundations are in place, well-being

Table 1*MTSS for Educator Work-Related Well-Being: Implementation Guide for Wellness Teams*

Implementation phase	Steps	Central questions	Action items
1. Exploration	Create a representative staff wellness team	To what extent is our team multidisciplinary (reflecting different expertise and competencies) and diverse (job role, age, gender identity, ethnic, linguistic background)? To what extent are team members committed (e.g., shared values and mission) and able to meaningfully participate (e.g., have release time, receive compensation if after hours work is required)?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At least one team member selected from following groups: teachers, administrators, school health/behavioral health staff, families, community health providers Administrators ensure release time and compensation required for team members to participate
	Establish buy-in	To what extent do both educators and school administration identify burnout/stress as a problem? To what extent is staff wellness a priority?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Disseminate school-wide brief survey with Likert scale response options to assess staff perceptions of problem and interest in solution Organize focus groups to ask for rightsholders' input to ensure specific needs are met Share results with school community and establish need/importance
	Assess staff wellness needs and strengths	What existing data should we review and what new data should we collect to identify needs and strengths? Are our assessment tools brief but also psychometrically sound and culturally relevant? How can we collect broad enough demographic characteristics (e.g., age group, gender identity, race, disability status) to allow for data disaggregation while preserving anonymity/confidentiality? How will we ensure safety and anonymity of data use?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review existing data on needs and strengths (e.g., sick days, tardies, staff to student ratio, number of required meetings, important deadlines to identify times of year where stress is high, retention, turnover, exit interviews) Identify and collect additional data as needed (e.g., staff burnout, school climate and safety, mood monitoring, leadership assessments, coping skills) Summarize data, identify most pressing needs, evaluate for patterns, disaggregate to identify inequities and disparities for BIPOC and other marginalized groups
	Map resources	What other initiatives do we have in the school that align with this new initiative? How well are current services and supports meeting our staff needs? What data do we collect to understand their effectiveness?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify current services, supports, programs targeting staff mental health and wellness Identify professionals who deliver mental health supports (including community providers) and create detailed map with names, position, expertise, location, availability Conduct needs/resources gap analysis Move resources, add new resources, remove resources that do not align with goals or serve need A physical map of all existing resources, made available to all staff
2. Installation	Acquire resources	What additional resources, including assessments, services, and supports, do we need to meet the identified needs across tiers? What resources are needed immediately and what can wait?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Team to make feasibility decisions with administration for identified resource gaps and identify funding sources to approve necessary purchases
	Reassess commitment of wellness team members	To what extent team members are still willing and able to engage in the process?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Renew commitment of team members and recruit additional members as needed
	Get organized	To what extent do we have a clear communication system between team and school staff? To what extent did we disseminate school-wide messaging on wellness as a priority?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decide how school-wide messages will be disseminated (e.g., emails, flyers, meeting updates) Send regular correspondence to staff members to update on progress (e.g., team created, needs assessment and resource mapping completed) and disseminate findings
	Prepare for implementation	To what extent are team members trained and have access to required resources? What data do we need to collect to facilitate progress monitoring? How frequently? Who will summarize and report the data?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide meaningful professional development opportunities for team members and access to coaching and required resources as needed Ensure data collection system is ready for use

(table continues)

Table 1 (continued)

Implementation phase	Steps	Central questions	Action items
3. Pilot implementation	Pilot initiative and collect access, fidelity, acceptability, and effectiveness data	How well can the team deliver the support designed (fidelity)? Can staff actually access the supports as designed (access)? Do staff find supports helpful (acceptability)? How have measured outcomes (e.g., stress/burnout, targeted mechanisms) changed over time (effectiveness)? What suggestions for improvement do staff have and how do we use the feedback to improve our processes and procedures?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement initiative on a small scale (e.g., start with teachers from a specific grade level) and monitor effectiveness • Collect regular brief feedback from staff on assessments used, acceptability of supports, fidelity of delivery, and suggestions for improvement • Revise assessments and supports based on consumer feedback • Report results to school community
4. School-wide implementation	Implement initiative school-wide	To what extent are team members still committed to initiative? To what extent do staff still consider the initiative worthwhile? What (if any) changes should be made to the team’s goals and support plan based on pilot implementation and data feedback?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruit new team members if needed and ensure team continues to share mission and purpose • Announce start date to school community and share overall action plan • Ensure team meets at least monthly and shares brief progress report with administration and rest of school community
	Continuous quality improvement	What data do we collect and how do we use them to improve our efforts?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collect universal screeners and brief progress monitoring measures • Collect treatment fidelity (including adherence and quality) and social validity data • Review data regularly and problem-solve to improve processes and procedures
	Seek funding and continue advocacy efforts	How will we financially sustain our efforts and engage the larger community?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek sources of funding • Disseminate progress with larger community • Administrators and district leaders advocate for necessary policy changes to local and state governing bodies

Note. BIPOC = Black, Indigenous, people of color; MTSS = multitiered system of supports.

teams can turn their attention to building a continuum of support at each tier to promote educator well-being (see Table 3, for sample tiered strategies).

Tier 1: Universal Supports

Universal screening data and feedback collected from school staff will guide the selection of appropriate universal supports. Tier 1 focuses on cultivating a positive school culture and climate and can include: (a) streamlining job demands and ensuring educators have necessary resources; (b) increasing individual and shared capacity to cope with stress and promote well-being; (c) developing school values and norms emphasizing educator well-being; and (d) increasing opportunities for building healthy and supportive relationships.

As stated earlier, organizational restructuring is a critical strategy for addressing work-related stress resulting from excessive demands and insufficient resources. Information from the needs assessment and resource mapping can help the wellness team identify gaps and new programs or supports to address these gaps. This information can further be used to identify what current initiatives, strategies, and supports can be deimplemented to free up resources and unburden staff (Farmer et al., 2022). Deimplementation includes reducing unnecessary workload (e.g., paperwork and meetings that do not meet an explicit purpose), eliminating practices that staff agree are no longer effective in meeting student needs, or replacing ineffective practices (low-value practices) with evidenced based ones (van Bodegom-Vos et al., 2017).

Gaps in resources can also include gaps in skills across educators and school leadership that are required to meet job demands and manage stress in healthy ways. Examples can include the need for professional development at the leadership level on how to promote a positive culture and climate, optimize communication with and across educators, and implement shared decision making. Self-efficacy, or self-perceived capacity to meet job demands, is a longstanding positive predictor of job engagement and negative predictor of burnout (e.g., Schwarzer & Hallum, 2008). The development of self-efficacy requires professional development with ongoing feedback and support (Richter & Idelman, 2017). Positive feedback and support from school leadership is particularly influential toward increasing educators’ perceptions of feeling valued and appreciated in their work (Mireles-Rios & Becchio, 2018), thus it should be regularly embedded into existing observation and feedback opportunities.

While decreasing job demands and increasing staff capacity to meet these demands are two critical pathways for mitigating job stress, it is impossible to eliminate all sources of stress. To that end, it is important for educators to have effective coping strategies for handling stress. Offering school-wide professional development opportunities to increase stress management skills, including mindfulness, behavioral strategies, cognitive behavioral approaches, and stress reduction interventions, reinforces that leadership recognizes the significance of educator work-related well-being (for sample interventions and systematic reviews of interventions, see Ansley & Wander, 2021; Beames et al., 2023; Eddy et al., 2022; Hagermoser Sanetti et al., 2021; von der Embse et al., 2019; Zarate et al., 2019).

School values and norms around educator well-being should be developed and communicated through explicit conversations, as they

Table 2
Sample Screening Tools for Educator Work-Related Well-Being

Screening tool	Citation	Items	Sample item	Considerations for use
Maslach Burnout Inventory–Educators Survey	Maslach et al. (1996)	22 items; three scales: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, personal accomplishment	“I feel used up at the end of the workday”	Significant existing body of literature; frequently the basis for content and convergent validity for new tools
Perceived Stress Scale	Cohen (1988)	14 items	“In the last month, how often have you felt nervous and ‘stressed’?”	Not specific to education sector; extensive use over time in other workplace environments
Single Item Scales–Stress and Coping	Eddy et al. (2019)	two items; one stress item, one coping item	“How well are you coping with the stress of your job right now?”	Brief; evidence for sensitivity to change over time for individual (Tier 2/3) interventions
Teacher’s Sense of Efficacy Scale–Short Form	Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy (2001)	12 items; three subscales: Instructional Strategies, Classroom Management, and Student Engagement	“How well can you implement alternative teaching strategies in your classroom?”	Evidence for predictive validity regarding teacher classroom performance (Heneman et al., 2006)
Teacher Subjective Well-Being Questionnaire	Renshaw et al. (2015)	eight items; two subscales: School Connectedness and Teaching Efficacy	“I feel like I belong at this school”	Evidence for differentiation between varied school environments and individual teacher stressors
Teacher Well-Being Scale	Collie et al. (2015)	16 items; three well-being factors: workload, organizational, student interaction	“Support offered by school leadership”	Evidence for construct validity in the areas of teacher stress, job satisfaction, and general well-being

relate to other shared goals, such as student academic, social–emotional, and behavioral success. These values should be embedded and encouraged throughout school routines and day-to-day interactions (e.g., regular well-being checks at the start of faculty meetings), as values and norms are institutionalized through repetition and consistency. Acknowledging educators who practice these values is essential. For example, “I caught you being kind to yourself” tickets can be distributed and exchanged for reinforcers (e.g., preferred parking spots, passes to skip meetings, shout-outs, and awards). The well-being team, with input from the rest of staff, has an essential role in: (a) *identifying* shared well-being values; (b) *finding opportunities* to regularly communicate and reinforce these values; and (c) *reassessing* educators’ perceptions of these values over time.

Similar to establishing school-wide staff and wellness values, effective, and supportive professional relationships are built and sustained through routines and everyday interactions. These can include regular opportunities for social bonding (e.g., connecting with other staff during breaks and social gatherings) and opportunities for building social support (i.e., informational, instrumental, and emotional). Opportunities for increasing *informational support* include opportunities for mentorship and knowledge sharing, including group discussions during grade-level and/or faculty meetings; peer mentorship opportunities offered to all educators; and clarification about communication pathways regarding who educators should go to with questions about meeting their own and their students’ needs. Opportunities for increasing *instrumental support* include clarifying roles and responsibilities for all staff and developing “on-call” lists specifying who people should call for hands-on support in a specific area. Opportunities for increasing *emotional support* include creating “check-in” partners, where each staff member has a designated partner that they check-in with every day or week, as well as group check-ins at the start of routine meetings. Perceptions of social support, similar to school values, are built through repeated interactions and access to resources over time, emphasizing the importance of embedding opportunities to connect into daily, weekly, and monthly routines across the school.

Tier 2: Small Group Supports

Tier 2 offers an opportunity for data-based differentiation of strategies to provide targeted, small group, more intensive support for selected educators. An example of Tier 2 support designed to strengthen specific skills could involve a targeted training for a group of educators identified as struggling with classroom management. An example designed to strengthen group dynamics could involve organizing small group social or leisure activities offered during or after school. Shared interest groups (e.g., book club, walking lunch, yoga sessions, paint night, Bingo evening) can be offered for interested educators. Other group activities may specifically be created to address equity in well-being, such as creating a counterspace for BIPOC faculty, a safe space to offer momentary relief and allow for community building through regular get-togethers for BIPOC educators in a given school (Sabnis & Proctor, 2022). Finally, skill building and social/emotional support groups in the form of professional learning communities or small group mentoring can provide opportunities for technical support and peer-to-peer problem-solving, while fostering supportive relationships between peers.

Table 3
Sample Tiered Strategies for Educator Work-Related Wellness

Targeted areas	Sample strategies per tier
	Tier 1 examples
Streamline job demands and provide necessary resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce unnecessary workload by eliminating paperwork and meetings that do not meet an explicit purpose • Provide flexible hours and scheduling to meet diverse needs • Discontinue practices staff agree are no longer effective and replace with evidenced based practices • Survey educators about professional development topics for increasing effectiveness in role • Apply to grants and additional funding opportunities, when possible, to increase physical and educational resources
Increase individual and shared capacity to cope with stress and promote well-being	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership commits to promote a positive culture and climate, optimize communication with and across educators, and implement shared decision making • Leadership commits to provide positive feedback and support to staff • Leadership offers school-wide professional development opportunities to increase stress management skills such as mindfulness, behavioral strategies, cognitive behavioral approaches, and stress reduction interventions (e.g., Self-Care Options for Resilient Educators program can be implemented school-wide) • Leadership creates physical spaces in schools where such skills can be practiced (e.g., yoga or meditation room), and provides the time for staff to engage in practicing the skills (e.g., mindfulness hour) • Create group spaces and opportunities to normalize talking about well-being and to problem-solve solutions to shared problems when appropriate
Develop and support school values and norms that emphasize educator well-being	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and/or incorporate school-wide wellness values (e.g., “Be kind to yourself and others,” “Clear communication, strong connection,” “Together we strive”) • Reinforce staff for demonstrating shared values with preferred rewards (“I caught you being kind to yourself” tickets distributed and exchanged for reinforcers such as special parking spot, pass to skip a meeting, educator of the week award) • Encourage regular well-being checks at the start of faculty meetings (e.g., “Share the emotion of the day”) • Encourage positive peer reporting (e.g., public board where staff can leave positive comments or express gratitude for peers)
Increase opportunities for building healthy and supportive relationships between staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership provides opportunities for social bonding and social support • Examples could be coffee break time; structured group discussions during grade-level and/or faculty meetings; peer mentoring opportunities; “on-call” lists specifying who people should call for hands-on support in a specific area; “check-in” partners where each staff member has a designated partner that they check-in with regularly
	Tier 2 examples
Targeted, small group trainings to strengthen specific skills as identified by assessments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunities to socialize by creating shared interest small groups (e.g., book club, walking lunch, yoga sessions, paint night, Bingo evening) • Create counterpaces for BIPOC faculty or other opportunities to get together • Create PLC that provide technical support or peer-to-peer problem-solving opportunities • Encourage PLCs to cocreate wellness plans, implement them, and keep each other accountable
	Tier 3 examples
Individualized services and supports provided in supportive and confidential one-to-one mentoring and coaching relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use coaches as needed to guide and support educators who need to further strengthen their instructional and behavioral management strategies • Encourage the use of self-management strategies such as self-monitoring, goal setting, goal evaluation, self-reinforcement • Individualized Energy Plan (Kelly-Vance, 2019) • Self-Directed Stress Management Plan (Ansley et al., 2016; Blinder et al., 2018) • Professional Improvement Plan developed to optimize strengths and problem-solve barriers

Note. BIPOC = Black, Indigenous, people of color; PLC = professional learning communities.

Small group or team approaches would encourage participation, remove worries of stigma and data being used for evaluative purposes. Instead of having a single individual responsible for their self-care plan, small teams will be encouraged to form and cocreate wellness plans. Teams can be grade-level teams, content area teams, or simply neighboring teachers, sharing classrooms or being in proximity. The teams could then develop self-care plans, cocreate goals, identify strategies to be used, and hold each other accountable. Beyond these examples, the specifics of which strategies should be offered at Tier 2 are dependent on educators’ identified needs.

Progress monitoring data can inform the menu of Tier 2 offerings for educators, who can then self-select interventions based on their needs. Once a staff member opts into a Tier 2 intervention, progress

should be monitored relative to anticipated outcomes. For example, if a teacher works with a mentor on achieving work–life balance, their perspectives about their workplace connectedness, work–life balance, and the feasibility and acceptability of the mentoring activities should be assessed. Progress monitoring data will inform modifications necessary to increase the acceptability and effectiveness of interventions, need for additional support, or discontinuation of supports. Progress monitoring tools and procedures should be aligned with student-serving Tier 2 processes (for an example, see Bruhn et al., 2018).

Intervention fidelity data, or the extent to which the intervention has been implemented consistently and as intended, should be collected alongside individual progress monitoring, to ensure that

progress or stagnation are related to intervention effectiveness rather than failure to implement (Rojas-Andrade & Bahamondes, 2019). When progress monitoring data indicate Tier 2 interventions are insufficient, Tier 3 individualized supports need to be developed and made available.

Tier 3: Individualized Supports

Individualized services and supports might be necessary for educators who experience significant distress, burnout, or are reporting difficulties with performing their professional duties. Tier 3 supports should be personalized as they are dependent on the specific challenges experienced by the individual. Progress monitoring and diagnostic data will help identify the nature and seriousness of the specific struggles and concerns educators experience. To increase acceptability and use of individualized support, they should be developed collaboratively, following a problem-solving model targeting concerns, available supports, commitment to action, and continuous monitoring for improvement. Such individualized support could be effectively delivered using self-management strategies and coaching.

Self-management is an umbrella term for strategies where an individual manages their own behaviors by learning and monitoring new behaviors and rearranging antecedents and consequences to increase or decrease those behaviors (Cooper et al., 2007). Coaching is employing the use of another professional (e.g., outside consultant, administrator, content area expert, mentor, peer) to deliver individualized, intensive, and sustained supports (e.g., prompts, encouragement, reminders; collection and use of data to monitor performance; data-based feedback to problem-solve barriers and acknowledge success), to develop specific skills/behaviors (Freeman et al., 2017). Self-management strategies (e.g., self-monitoring, goal setting, self-evaluation) and coaching can increase educator desired behaviors, such as the implementation of classroom management strategies (Reinke et al., 2014). Given the effectiveness of self-management and coaching, they are viable interventions and supports for educators who need to focus and sustain their attention on well-being related behaviors and/or cognitions. Coaches could come from various backgrounds and professions, depending on the specific needs and goals of the educator they assist. For example, trained mental health professionals (e.g., counselors, psychologists, therapists) could provide support for mental health challenges; retired teachers, experienced peers, or expert consultants could support educators with instructional and classroom management skills; certified physical education teachers or personal trainers who could assist with nutrition and physical fitness.

Individually tailored supports can be documented, implemented, and monitored following a similar format as individualized planning used for students. Despite lack of current empirical evidence, the following examples can guide individualized planning at Tier 3. An *Individualized Energy Plan* (IEP; Kelly-Vance, 2019) can serve as a tool to support development and implementation of a personalized self-care plan for engaging in systematic self-care activities that lead to improved subjective well-being. The following steps have been recommended in developing an IEP: (a) select self-care activities from recommended sources or personal experiences, (b) identify barriers to implementing and/or accessing the selected activities, (c) identify assets and supports for the plan, (d) progress monitor the activities, (e) develop an accountability plan, and (f) celebrate

successes. Another example is the *Self-Directed Stress Management Plan* (Ansley et al., 2016; Blinder et al., 2018), a personalized stress management plan designed to engage educators in the creation of their own self-care plan by creating personalized goals targeting basic self-care, mindful habits, interpersonal relationships at work, and deescalation strategies. A *Professional Improvement Plan* may need to be developed to optimize the strengths of an educator; identify areas in need of focused attention and improvement; identify practices/strategies to implement; monitor progress with continuous feedback; and problem-solve barriers. For those teachers who experience significant and longlasting markers of burnout or mental health symptoms, referrals to employee assistance programs or formal mental health evaluation and support may be necessary.

In sum, Tier 3 support should be delivered in a one-to-one format, ideally within the context of mentoring and coaching. Self-monitoring may serve as both a method of assessment, as well as an intervention in itself. A trustworthy coach who invests time, effort, and expertise to develop a nurturing relationship with the educator will be key to successful and sustained implementation of Tier 3 interventions. The well-being team should be intentional about ensuring that the most vulnerable educators are connected with relatable and supportive mentors.

Future Directions

Taking a comprehensive approach to promoting educator work-related well-being is essential for building effective and supportive schools for students. In order to create systems that support the mental health and well-being of our educators, students, schools, and communities, we need to lift the burden of self-care from the individual. While it is beneficial for educators to engage in self-care practices such as physical exercise, mindfulness, and stress-reducing activities, expecting individual educators to carry the sole responsibility for their own well-being is not sustainable or equitable, as the most salient sources of stress typically come from external and contextual influences. Instead, it is essential to take a larger ecological approach to understanding and addressing the factors that contribute to educator stress, burnout, and well-being at the organizational level.

A systemic approach undermines the tendency to blame individuals for problems generated from the larger system. The research has been clear for a while, both organizational variables and personality factors of individual educators are responsible for work-related stress and burnout (Dorman, 2003). The organizational health of a school is associated with favorable staff and student outcomes and both school-level and staff-level characteristics need to be targeted for assessment and intervention (Bevans et al., 2007). As such, educator work-related well-being is a complex problem that will require complex solutions.

While our proposed framework focuses on the school context, educator work-related well-being is a shared responsibility of policymakers, school leadership, teacher preparation programs, and educators themselves. A sustainable and equitable well-being initiative in a school or district requires leadership advocacy and government participation. Local, state, and federal agencies need to support policy changes that increase funding for schools, provide for higher teacher salaries, and ensure greater support for mental health services in schools for students and educators. School administrators and district leaders need to take necessary steps to cultivate supportive working environments by modeling and reinforcing practices that

address inadequate working conditions identified in their schools and promote class size reduction, adequate support staff, reasonable workload expectations, fair compensation, and reduced paperwork and documentation. Teacher preparation programs need to adequately prepare future educators with the range of skills required by their jobs, including classroom management, coping and stress management, as well as advocacy and conflict resolution.

There is much work to be done in the field of educator well-being, including a more consistent understanding of well-being, development and scientific study of interventions that allow for replication, testing of feasibility and efficacy, and developing and examining intervention adaptations to digital format (Dreer & Gouache, 2022). Despite the recent creation of assessments of teacher well-being (e.g., Eddy et al., 2019; Renshaw et al., 2015), more research is needed on validity and reliability of measures, sensitivity to change over time, and treatment utility. Implementing MTSS for educators and students alike is also an extensive process that often requires incremental changes over time. As more schools apply these models to promote educator well-being, it is critical to create opportunities for schools to share their knowledge and experiences implementing these models and how they addressed barriers along the way. While research advances are conducted, it is critical schools initiate and promote well-being supports for educators using comprehensive, data-based approaches that help schools identify their local needs and required resources.

Conclusions

In the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, concerning numbers of educators report increased stress, burnout, job dissatisfaction, and turnover intentions. Alongside reports of significant negative impacts from the pandemic on student well-being and academic performance, a perfect storm is brewing in our schools. As major events are usually a catalyst for change, as school communities, we should not miss the opportunity to strategically respond to educators' challenges that have been persistent, frequently reported, steadily increasing, yet still unaddressed in a systematic way. The purpose of this article was to briefly highlight those challenges and propose a system-based model to identify and provide a continuum of supports targeting educator work-related well-being. Encouraging educators who feel burned out to participate in wellness programs and engage in self-care activities is a beneficial, yet insufficient step (Lever et al., 2017). Our educators need work environments that are equally supportive of their well-being. MTSS frameworks are uniquely positioned to allow for organizational restructuring and building of equitable systems of support for all educators.

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