



Strategies to Support a Positive School Climate Health and Well-Being

Health is “a state of physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity” (World Health Organization, n.d., section 1). The association between mental and physical health is well established: poor mental health is a risk factor for chronic physical conditions and suffering a chronic physical condition is a risk factor for poor mental health. Both physical and mental health affect a person’s well-being and life satisfaction is considered a key marker of well-being (Proctor et al., 2009).



Why is it important?

- Teachers who experience stress report feelings of exhaustion, tension, and frequent headaches (Dunham, 1984).
- Experiencing high stress levels is detrimental to teachers’ overall well-being, the quality of their teaching behaviour, and retention within the profession (Harmsen et al., 2018).
- Life satisfaction has a protective effect on mental health which mitigates the negative effects of stressful events and experiences (Suldo & Huebner, 2004).

In Practice

Given that health and well-being are impacted by the school environment, it is increasingly important that schools look out for their employees by providing them with sufficient training and resources to support own their personal health.



What can schools do?

- Facilitate regular check-ins with staff to ensure they feel supported in regard to their day-to-day responsibilities and general concerns.
- Promote a culture of acceptance and destigmatize mental health problems by organizing workshops and events aimed at mental health awareness.
- Remind employees to practice self-care by taking regular breaks and focusing on their overall health.
- Build partnerships with community health agencies to provide support for those at risk of mental health problems.

Through a combination of education and a supportive working environment, school staff can help improve health outcomes for all staff.



Leader Reflection

School leaders can foster an environment that supports open communication regarding staff health and well-being through the following actions:

- Model a climate of care by implementing an open-door policy or setting aside regular office hours to discuss staff concerns.
- Look out for your colleague's health and well-being and, where appropriate, reach out to inform them of support available.
- Practice self-care to ensure that you can be receptive to the needs of your staff.
- Enhance staff happiness and life satisfaction by incorporating positive psychology principles within regular staff meetings (e.g., gratitude exercises designed to remind attendees of what is going well).
- Encourage staff to find opportunities to stretch and walk around the school when appropriate.
- Share information and resources on health-related practices with staff (e.g., guidelines for sufficient sleep, regular exercise etc.).

References

Dunham, J. (1984). *Stress in teaching*. Croom Helm.

Harmsen, R., Helms-Lorenz, M., Maulana, R., & van Veen, K. (2018). The relationship between beginning teachers' stress causes, stress responses, teaching behaviour and attrition. *Teachers and Teaching, 24*(6), 626-643.

Proctor, C. L., Linley, P. A., & Maltby, J. (2009). Youth life satisfaction: A review of the literature. *Journal of Happiness Studies, 10*(5), 583-630.

Suldo, S. M., & Huebner, E. S. (2004). Does life satisfaction moderate the effects of stressful life events on psychopathological behavior during adolescence? *School Psychology Quarterly, 19*(2), 93-105.

World Health Organization. (n.d.). Frequently asked questions. Retrieved from <http://www.who.int/suggestions/faq/en/>