

Research Brief: Promoting the Wellbeing of Teachers and School Staff

What are the most effective approaches in promoting the wellbeing of teachers and school staff?

Overview of the Research

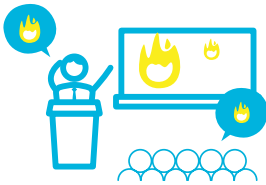
In May 2018, Dr. Nancy Heath's team at McGill University's Faculty of Education completed a review of the evidence on effective approaches in promoting teacher and school staff wellbeing (TSWB). The search returned many articles focusing on the impact of school-level interventions for teachers. The search returned limited research on organization-level interventions to promote TSWB, and the impact or implications of these interventions for non-teaching staff.

Process

- We searched academic databases for research on effective approaches in promoting the wellbeing of teacher and school staff
- Our initial research returned 1700+ articles
- We excluded: articles where teacher wellbeing was not an outcome measure, student-focused articles, book chapters, dissertations.
- We reviewed 5 literature reviews and 26 research articles in depth

The Big Reveals

Some of the insights that came from the research were surprising. Here's a summary of some of these 'big reveals':



1 Venting can do more harm than good

Research shows providing opportunities for teachers to 'vent' and share their concerns can lead to increased negative emotions and higher risk of burnout. Wellbeing is cultivated better by community-building events that are positive, fun, and related to teachers' interests beyond the school environment.



2 Stigma plays a role in teacher participation

Research shows that teachers are often reluctant to engage in wellbeing initiatives for fear of judgement and being seen as 'not coping well'.



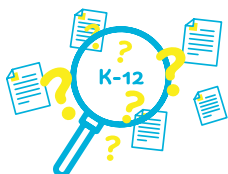
3 More isn't always better

Too many wellbeing initiatives, or initiatives that are not seen as relevant, add to teachers' workloads and can lead to additional stress, job dissatisfaction, and burnout.



4 Increasing positive emotions just as, or more important than decreasing negative ones

While building teachers' skillsets in dealing with negative emotions (e.g. stress, burnout) is important, research shows that increasing teachers' experience of positive emotions (e.g. gratitude, fun) is equally or more important in promoting their wellbeing.



5 Organizational interventions are promising in other settings, but have limited research in K-12 education.

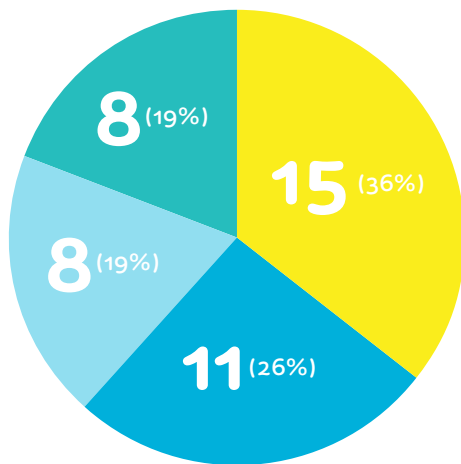
Our review demonstrated that the majority of the research in this area focuses on the impact of specific programs. While broader, organizational interventions have shown to be best practices in other settings (e.g. private sector workplaces), limited evidence was available on organizational interventions in K-12 education.

What can I do to Advance TSWB?

Most of the studies looked at the impact of individual interventions on TSWB. The elements of the approaches studied that showed effectiveness were:

Number of total studies of top elements

* (% in brackets)



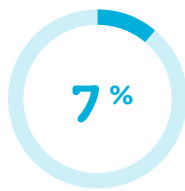
- Mindfulness** - for example breathing exercises, focused meditation as well as sessions for teachers on topics related to stress, mental health and meditation.
- Stress management approaches** - for example Cognitive Behavioural Therapy and stress inoculation methods, as well as sessions that elaborate on topics such as physiological/mental effects of stress, effective coping strategies and resilience
- Emotion regulation activities** - for example the exploration of bodily awareness of emotions, individual differences in emotional experiences, or emotional intelligence training.
- Gratitude activities** - for example keeping a gratitude journal or grateful contemplation.
- Others** - elements that have been studied less, including movement/ yoga, physical activities, classroom management, relationship-building, and reflective practices regarding a teacher's role.

Implementation Considerations

Of the approaches studied:



were delivered Face-to-Face



were offered exclusively online.



Programs are provided equally for elementary or secondary teachers or a mix of elementary and secondary teachers.



Length varied from a single workshop to a year-long program. Individual sessions ranged from a couple of minutes to 8-hours.

! While longer programs do have a stronger impact, shorter sessions can have a significant and lasting impact. Online interventions and supports can have lasting positive effects on teacher wellbeing.

Take Home Messages

1 To promote a comprehensive approach to improving TSWB, offer a complement of proven approaches.

2 More research is needed to understand the contribution of school staff (beyond teachers) to the culture of wellbeing in the school, and how to lead effective organization-level approaches to TSWB.

Reviews:

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