

Educator Wellbeing

Importance of Wellness for Educators

Healthy employees are vital for a successful school because they provide the stability essential for educational excellence. A healthy workplace is associated with employees who are more satisfied with their jobs, get better results, and model healthy behaviors. In addition, healthy school employees are absent fewer days and are more likely to stay in their roles. This document serves as a tip sheet for educator physical and mental wellbeing as well as provide additional resources for Tennessee schools.

Physical Well-being

Prioritize sleep

Sleep plays a vital role in our physical and emotional wellbeing, supporting a variety of complex functions such as memory, learning, brain development, appetite regulation, immune health, and the aging process. While we sleep, our brains actively process information from the day, forming new connections that strengthen and enhance our memories. We can even create solutions or insights into problems, all while we are sleeping.

In addition, the way you begin your day can set the tone for the rest of it. Establishing a morning routine that leaves you feeling centered and prepared can make a significant difference. This might involve a few minutes of meditation, gentle exercise, or simply savoring a quiet cup of coffee. The key is to approach the morning with intention, engaging in activities that soothe your mind and energize your body for the day ahead.

Exercise and movement

Physical activity is a powerful tool for managing stress and boosting energy levels. However, finding time to exercise can be challenging during the busy school year. Try integrating small moments of movement into your day, such as taking a brief walk during lunch, doing a quick stretch between classes, or standing while teaching. Even these small actions can have a significant impact on how you feel.

Nutrition and hydration

On a hectic day, it can be tempting to skip meals or opt for quick, unhealthy options. However, your food choices directly affect your energy levels and overall wellbeing. Prioritize nourishing your body with balanced meals that include plenty of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and lean proteins. Planning ahead by preparing meals and snacks in advance and keeping a refillable water bottle on hand can help you stay on track even during your busiest days.

Mental and Emotional Wellbeing

Mindfulness and stress reduction

Mindfulness involves being fully present in the moment and can be an effective tool for reducing stress and enhancing mental clarity. Simple techniques such as deep breathing, mindful eating, or pausing to observe your surroundings can help you feel more grounded, even on the busiest days. Try dedicating a few minutes each day to mindfulness—whether it is in the morning, during a break, or before bedtime—to stay centered and focused.

Time management

Teachers manage a wide range of tasks, including creative work like lesson planning, logistical tasks like making copies or organizing student work, and analytical work like grading. This variety often leads to frequent task-switching, which can reduce productivity. To manage your time more effectively, consider conducting a time audit to track how much time you spend on different activities. Once you have a clear picture, create a schedule that prioritizes tasks in a way that maximizes productivity while remaining realistic. It is easy to fall into the habit of staying late at school or bringing work home, but this can quickly lead to burnout. Establish clear working hours and commit to them as much as possible. Be sure to communicate these boundaries to colleagues, students, and parents so they know when you are available and when you are not.

Cultivate positive and supportive relationships

Creating a supportive community with your colleagues can be a great source of encouragement and connection. Whether you are exchanging wellness tips, venting about a challenging day, or sharing a laugh, connecting with others who understand the demands of teaching can be rejuvenating.

If you are feeling overwhelmed, it is important to recognize that it is okay to ask for help. Whether it's speaking with a counselor, seeking advice from a mentor, or talking to a trusted friend, reaching out for support can make a significant difference in how you handle stress. Remember, taking care of your mental health is just as important as taking care of your physical health.

Resources for Educator Wellness:

NIH Emotional Wellness Checklist:

<https://www.nih.gov/sites/default/files/health-info/wellness-toolkits/emotional-wellness-checklist.pdf>

Kaiser Permanente Thriving Schools

<https://www.in.gov/health/dnppa/files/Educator-Wellness-Toolkit-Final.pdf>

CDC Workplace Health Promotion

https://www.cdc.gov/workplace-health-promotion/php/?CDC_AAref_Val=https://www.cdc.gov/workplacehealthpromotion/index.html

Edutopia- Teacher Wellness

<https://www.edutopia.org/topic/teacher-wellness/>

Working for a Healthier Tennessee

<https://www.tn.gov/wfhtn.html>