



Addressing Educator Burnout and Demoralization: ACTIONS FOR ADMINISTRATORS

Educators and school administrators have met the COVID-19 pandemic with tremendous resilience. That resilience, however, has come with challenges, including **burnout** (exhaustion from high demands and insufficient bandwidth) and **demoralization** (dissatisfaction due to moral and ethical challenges). Educators must often address their own hardships, and administrators struggle to find guidance on alleviating burden and improving morale among staff. We interviewed new and experienced educators and administrators in rural and urban settings to gather examples of effective efforts to address such challenges. This resource provides administrators with **strategy-based actions** to support the well-being of educators.

STRATEGIES



RESPOND TO THE NEEDS OF STAFF

Listen to educators because they want to be **heard and supported**. Ask educators what they need and **develop a system for response and follow-up**. Responses may include sending emails or creating a Google form to capture educators' concerns. Follow up in-person with educators. Attentive and responsive administrators will make a difference for staff.

Example from the Field

Utilize **quick check-ins** to improve morale among educators and pay attention to the school community. Check-in questions could include

- How did the conversation go,
- Are you feeling better about the situation,
- Are you feeling any differently today, or
- Did the situation improve?

*NOTE: Make sure these check-ins occur within **24–48 hours** of the initial response.*



MAKE STAFF WELL-BEING A PRIORITY

Recognize and address educators who are feeling demoralized and overworked. Advocate for the well-being of educators by setting **policies that create boundaries between school and home**. Such policies can help educators balance work and life.

Policy Example

Encourage educators to set times when they are not available. For example, educators are not expected to respond to communication from parents or guardians after 5 pm on weekdays and during weekends. Encourage educators to "log off" during these time frames.

Effectively **communicate and reinforce** these boundaries to students and their families. Administrators should model the policy themselves: If educators are not expected to respond to students and their families on weekends, they should not be expected to respond to administrators on weekends either. *NOTE: Educators may feel stressed to leave emails or calls unanswered. **Work with staff to set boundaries** that work for them.*



ASSESS AND ADJUST PRIORITIES ACCORDING TO THE BANDWIDTH OF STAFF

Educators have taken on additional roles in the school system because of pandemic-related stressors. As a result, they have lost time previously dedicated to lesson planning and grading. Establish policies to **increase planning capacity during school hours. Such policies will** help to prevent educators from working too much after school and on weekends. The additional time will also give staff the **opportunity to reset or regulate.**

Policy Example

Educators get 1 day off per week for such duties as recess, bus, or lunch monitor. Instead, staff can use the time gained as planning and grading time. Even these smaller moments can support well-being.



TAKE OPPORTUNITIES TO SHOW GRATITUDE

Create opportunities to celebrate the successes of staff. These moments boosts morale and can contribute to a positive school culture, for example:

- **Interpersonal Gratitude:** Create gratitude or celebration bulletin boards in a staff lounge or common space where educators can write small wins or show appreciation to other staff.
- **Intrapersonal Gratitude (Example from the Field):** Provide gratitude journals for staff to use during meetings and provide time during meetings for staff to pause and reflect on their positive experiences and feelings.

Administrators can check the websites of education and health agencies in their state to find out if the state has any mental health or wellness initiatives to support educators, for example:

- North Carolina's Hope4Healers Helpline Initiative offers a 24/7 helpline where teachers, school personnel, and family members can speak to a trained mental health professional. [Read more here.](#)
- Ohio is developing a Staff Wellness Framework—including best practices, recommendations for Human Resources policies, and mental health guidelines—to promote wellness among administrators and staff. [Read more here.](#)



IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS

- Recognize that educators have different needs in a diverse workforce. Addressing distinctive challenges is vital to foster a community of well-being for all identities.
 - The COVID-19 pandemic has had a **disproportionate impact** on Black, Latino, and Native American communities; women; individuals with disabilities; and other groups.
 - Acknowledge levels of experience—the needs of new educators may vary from those of more experienced staff.
- Take a **trauma-informed** approach in understanding how the hardships faced by students, staff, and families throughout the pandemic affect behavior. Promote resilience in your school community and lead with compassion.



Resources

- American Institutes for Research. (n.d.). [Webinar series: Teaching and leading with trauma-informed care](#). Center on Great Teachers & Leaders.
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