

ESTABLISHING SUPPORT

Establishing Support for School Employee Wellness Programs



For a school employee wellness program to be successful and sustainable, it needs the support of the:

- District superintendent.
- Local school board.
- School principal.
- Assistant/Vice principals.
- Finance director.
- Human resources administrator.
- Staff who represent the interests of various employee groups (i.e., union leaders, employee assistance programs, PTA, etc.).

These leaders are important decision-makers and need to see the value of investing in school employee wellness programs. To establish support for school employee wellness with leaders,

- Explain the benefits.
- Share actual data, including the return on investment (ROI)* and available employee data that demonstrates need (→ *Engaging Key Partners for School Employee Wellness*).
- Show how school employee wellness aligns with district goals, mission, values, and initiatives.
- Tell success stories.
- Invite leaders (e.g., PTA president, superintendents, principals) to be part of the wellness team.

This fact sheet contains information and tools to help establish support for school employee wellness programs. It highlights both the benefits of investing in school employee wellness and the impact COVID-19 has had on schools and school employees. It also provides three tools to use to establish support with school leaders and administrators:

- A Stairway Speech: Investing in School Employee Wellness
- A PowerPoint: Investing in School Employee Wellness
- The Wellsteps ROI Calculator



*Wellsteps has created a calculator to help you estimate the effect of well-designed wellness programs on health care costs, absenteeism, and presenteeism.

→ Visit the document with this title in this series of fact sheets.

The Benefits of School Employee Wellness

School districts must pay for employee absenteeism, health care costs, workers' compensation, lost productivity, and disability. School districts are also struggling to attract and retain employees. Employee wellness programs can directly affect each of these employee-related costs.

Benefits of investing in school employee wellness include:

- Improved student health and academic outcomes.
- Decreased employee absenteeism, presenteeism,[♦] and the cost of substitutes.
- Increased employee retention/reduced employee turnover.
- Enhanced recruitment of prospective employees.
- Lower health care costs, insurance premiums, and worker compensation and disability claims.
- Improved employee health, including reduced stress and substance use.
- Improved employee engagement, morale, and resilience.
- Increased employee energy, productivity, and performance.

Employee wellness efforts have clear benefits for school employees, students, the school climate, the school budget, and the health care system.

THE COST OF SCHOOL EMPLOYEE ABSENTEEISM



The cost of having an absent employee in schools is often double the cost of absenteeism experienced in other workplaces. When a school employee is absent, a replacement or substitute must be hired—someone must drive the buses, and someone must teach the students. The responsibilities cannot be postponed as in other workplaces. Schools must pay both the salary of the absent employee *and* the substitute or replacement. Surveys show that one in four teachers miss 10 or more school days per year.²

Researchers at Harvard University looked at the ROI of 22 employee wellness programs related to absenteeism and demonstrated that for every dollar spent on employee wellness, an employer can save \$2.73 and reduce absenteeism.³

Calculate your school or district's ROI on absenteeism, presenteeism, and/or health care costs [here](#).

[♦]Employees' being on the job but not fully functioning due to illness or other medical conditions.

A Stairway Speech: Investing in School Employee Wellness

A stairway speech or pitch is a summary statement used to quickly and simply explain an important idea in the time span of an elevator ride, a few flights of stairs, or about 30 to 90 seconds. This statement typically explains the idea, shows why it is important (including its benefits), and closes with an ask.

Below is a sample stairway speech that can be used with your school's or district's leadership, board members, community partners, etc. (See → *Engaging Key Partners for School Employee Wellness*). Though most often a stairway speech[•] is delivered verbally, it can be used in a presentation (See [A PowerPoint: Investing in School Employee Wellness](#)) or an e-mail.

STAIRWAY SPEECH: SCHOOL EMPLOYEE WELLNESS

The health and well-being of our school employees is *important*, and not just because they nurture and shape every generation of children in our community.

National studies tell us that half of our employees have one or more chronic diseases, and many report health risk behaviors such as substance use, depression, stress, poor nutrition, and inadequate exercise. In our school district, **{insert district-specific info about employee health conditions and behaviors, absences, health care costs, and other relevant data, if available}**. (See → *Engaging Key Partners for School Employee Wellness Programs* to learn where to access this data.) And we know that COVID-19 has not only exacerbated the health conditions of our employees with lower morale and increased stress and anxiety but also has played a role in the declining school employee workforce.

These health conditions and behaviors are linked with higher rates of staff absences as well as reduced productivity and performance. In fact, the health-related lost productive time costs districts an estimated \$1,685 per employee each year.

Our school employees can only *give their best* if they are *feeling their best*.

A school employee wellness initiative is an effective strategy to address the health of our employees. It can **{pick those that will resonate most with your audience; suggest three}**

- Improve student health and academic outcomes.
- Decrease employee absenteeism and the cost of substitutes.
- Increase employee retention and reduce employee turnover.
- Lower health care costs, insurance premiums, and worker compensation and disability claims.
- Improve employee engagement and morale.
- Increase employee energy, productivity, and performance.

To continue to improve the quality and academic achievement of our students, our school/district must also improve the quality of life, health, and productivity of our school employees.

{End with your ask. What would you like the recipient to do? Gather a group to discuss, appoint someone to spearhead employee wellness, etc.}

Thank you for your time!

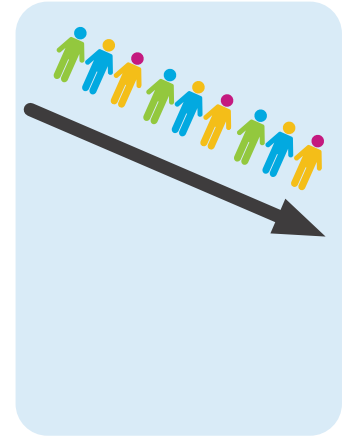
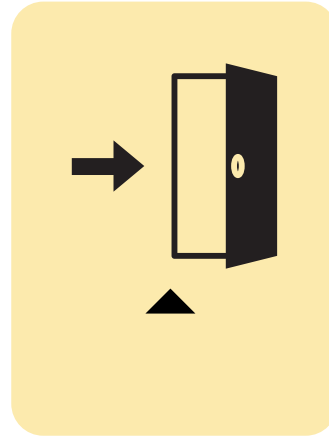
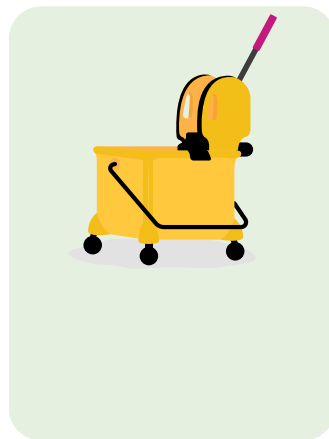
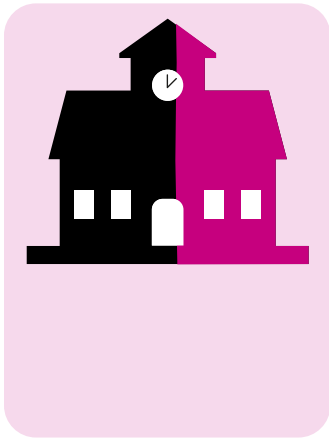


[•]Engage your district's interpreter to ensure equitable access (culturally and linguistically) to this stairway speech, whether in written or verbal form.

The Impact of COVID-19 on Schools

The COVID-19 pandemic ignited an ongoing problem within the U.S. educational system, which has included a declining labor force, increased stress and anxiety among school staff, and low morale among employees within K-12 public school settings.

A Declining Workforce



Stress and Burnout

- In fall 2020, 80% of teachers reported feeling burned out and identified it as a moderate or major concern during the school year, and about one quarter of teachers indicated they were likely to leave the profession.⁹
- RAND corporation surveyed 1,000 teachers who left during the first year of the pandemic. The most common reason teachers cited for leaving was stress.¹⁰
- A survey in February 2022 found that 55% of educators are thinking of leaving the profession earlier than planned. This represents a significant increase from 37% in August 2021 and is true for all school employees despite age or years teaching, driving buses, or serving meals to students.¹¹
- In a survey of K-12 teachers across the United States in October 2020, teachers reported lack of administrative support as one of the top four variables that significantly predicted teacher burnout.¹² Other sources of teacher stress and burnout include a lack of strong leadership, healthy school climate, and collegial, supportive systems; job demands; a limited sense of autonomy and decision-making power; and a lack of social and emotional competencies to manage stress and nurture a healthy classroom.¹³
- Studies have also found that teacher stress and burnout can contribute to lower-quality instruction, lower student achievement, and lower levels of student motivation, and it appears to affect the stress levels of the students they teach.¹⁴

Several interventions can help reduce school employee stress. In addition to employee wellness programs, other interventions include changing the school culture (See [→ Creating a Culture and Climate of Wellness for School Employees](#)), cultivating supportive workplace relationships, mentoring programs for new teachers, social-emotional skill building, and mindfulness and stress management programs. (See [→ Taking Action to Improve School Employee Wellness](#)).

A PowerPoint Presentation: Investing in School Employee Wellness

This presentation can be used with school leaders and administrators to help establish support for school employee wellness. This presentation provides

- A brief introduction to the Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child (WSCC) model.
- An overview of the benefits of school employee wellness.
- The ROI of an employee wellness program on employee absenteeism.
- An opportunity for each school/district to share their own ROI or cost savings related to obesity, smoking, and wellness programs using the Wellsteps ROI Calculator.
- An opportunity for each school/district to share data about the health of their school employees, including employee-absence data, health care costs, workers' compensation, and employee health conditions/behaviors. (See → Engaging Key Partners for School Employee Wellness to learn where to access this data.)
- Data about the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the school workforce.
- An opportunity to engage in a conversation about employee wellness at your school/district.

Talking points are included with the PowerPoint, accessed [here](#).

¹Employees' National Association of Chronic Disease Directors, *Healthy School, Healthy Staff, Healthy Students: A Guide to Improving School Employee Wellness* (Decatur, GA: National Association of Chronic Disease Directors, 2018), https://www.chronicdisease.org/resource/resmgr/school_health/school_employee_wellness/nacdd_schoolemployeewellness.pdf.

²Sarah D. Sparks, "1 in 4 Teachers Miss 10 or More School Days, Analysis Finds," *Education Week*, June 27, 2016, <https://www.edweek.org/leadership/1-in-4-teachers-miss-10-or-more-school-days-analysis-finds/2016/06>.

³Katherine Baicker, David Cutler, and Zirui Song, "Workplace Wellness Programs Can Generate Savings," *Health Affairs* 29, no. 2 (February 2010): 304–11, <https://doi.org/10.1377/hlthaff.2009.0626>.

⁴Unpublished thesis survey with anonymous responses, Wayne State University, August 2022.

⁵National Center for Education Statistics, "U.S. Schools Report Increased Teacher Vacancies Due to COVID-19 Pandemic, New NCES Data Show," March 3, 2022, https://nces.ed.gov/whatsnew/press_releases/3_3_2022.asp.

⁶National Center for Education Statistics, "U.S. Schools Report Increased Teacher Vacancies."

⁷National Center for Education Statistics, "U.S. Schools Report Increased Teacher Vacancies."

⁸"Job Openings and Labor Turnover Survey," U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, September 8, 2022, <https://www.bls.gov/jlt/>.

⁹Joseph Hedger and the National Association of State Boards of Education, "Five Questions to Ask about School Staff Wellness in the Wake of COVID-19," *Power of the Question* 5, no. 2 (June 2021), <https://www.nasbe.org/five-questions-to-ask-about-school-staff-wellness-in-the-wake-of-covid-19/>.

¹⁰GBAO and the National Education Association, *Poll Results: Stress and Burnout Pose Threat of Education Shortage* (Washington, DC: National Education Association, January 31, 2022), <https://www.nea.org/sites/default/files/2022-02/NEA%20Member%20COVID-19%20Survey%20Summary.pdf>.

¹¹GBAO and the National Education Association, *Poll Results: Stress and Burnout Pose Threat of Education Shortage*.

¹²Doris A. Santoro and Olga Acosta Price, *Structural Supports to Promote Teacher Well-Being* (Providence, RI: EdResearch for Recovery, October 2021), https://annenberg.brown.edu/sites/default/files/EdResearch_for_Recovery_Brief_19.pdf.

¹³Mark T. Greenberg, Joshua L. Brown, and Rachel Abenavoli, *Teacher Stress and Health: Effects on Teachers, Students, and Schools*, Edna Bennett Pierce Prevention Research Center, Pennsylvania State University, September 2016, <https://www.prevention.psu.edu/uploads/files/rwjf430428-TeacherStress.pdf>.

¹⁴Daniel J. Madigan and Lisa E. Kim, "Does Teacher Burnout Affect Students? A Systematic Review of Its Association with Academic Achievement and Student-Reported Outcomes," *International Journal of Educational Research* 105, (2021): 101714, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijer.2020.101714>.