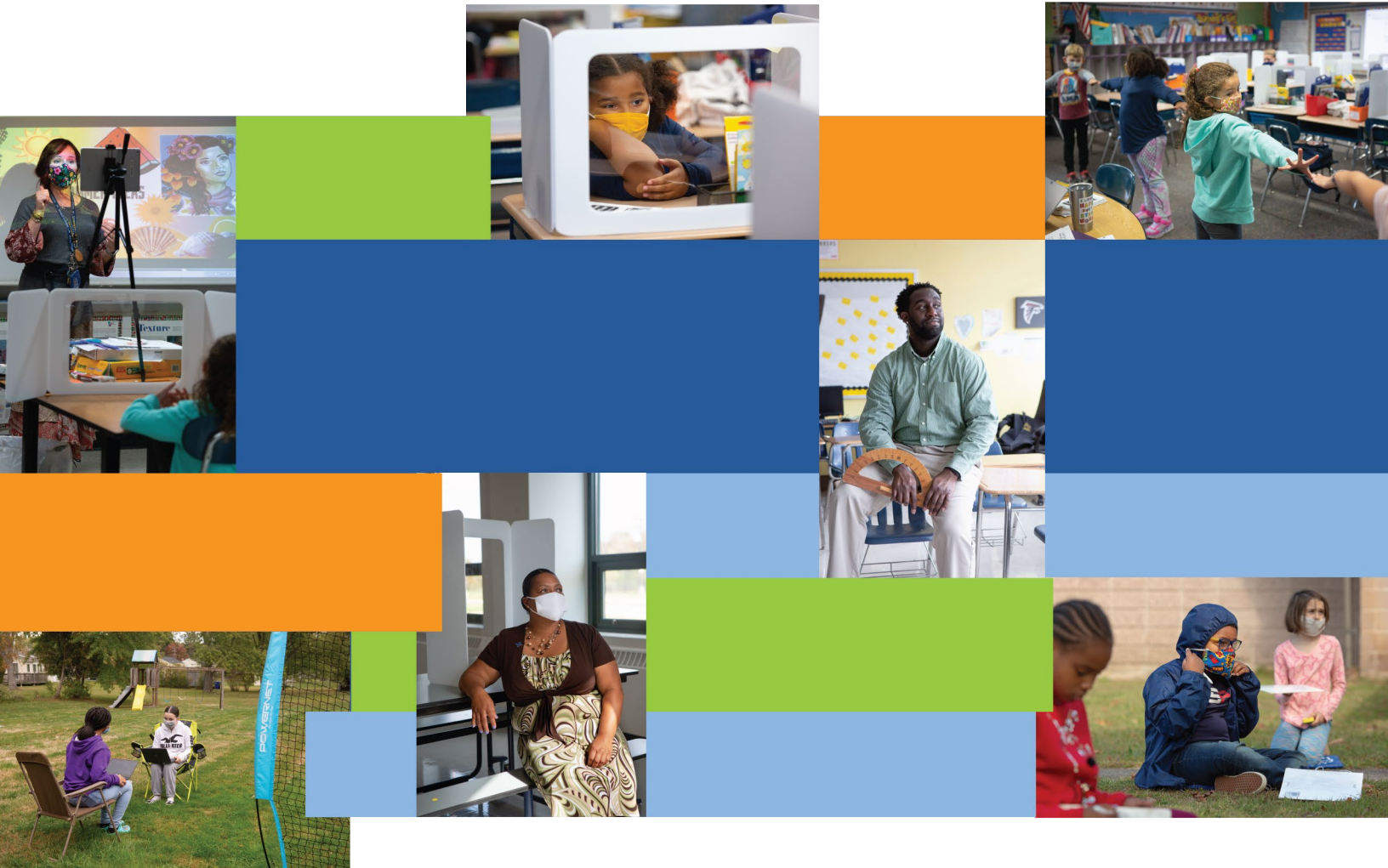


Prioritizing People:

Purposeful investments to better support student and teacher mental health



TEACH
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 **FuelEd**

“Teacher and student mental health is paramount and frequently overlooked. Addressing these needs would be a great way to help begin to close the achievement gap; often the battles we fight are with ourselves.” —Teacher

“Over the course of this year, we have been told how unprecedented and surreal the experience has been, yet there have been almost no moments where someone has asked me how I’m doing. It would be so helpful if schools did more than just acknowledge the collective stress and actually prioritized supporting.” —Teacher

INTRODUCTION

In the time since COVID-19 forced schools to shut down in March 2020, the educational challenges arising from the pandemic have been well-documented.¹ The pandemic has impacted every aspect of teaching and learning and has put an especially strong spotlight on the social and emotional well-being of students and teachers.² This crisis now promises to extend into a third school year.³ To address the widespread needs of students, teachers, schools, and communities, the Biden administration is making available an unprecedented amount of resources through the “Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief” funds (ESSER) in the “American Rescue Plan” (ARP) and previous stimulus packages.⁴ Educators across the nation, including [FuelEd](#) alumni educators and [Teach Plus](#) teacher leaders, have made clear that one key pathway to addressing the challenges that surfaced during the pandemic, as well as the conditions that have persisted long before, is to strengthen the mental health and social and emotional supports available in schools.⁵ To better understand the specific supports teachers believe will address the mental health needs of both students and teachers and to provide educational leaders with ideas on how to use the available funding to support their educators and students, Teach Plus and FuelEd partnered to survey educators nationwide and elevate their voices. This report outlines the priorities identified by teachers for addressing student and teacher mental health, and includes a brief questionnaire available to the public that can be tailored to identify local needs in schools and districts.

Why student and teacher mental health?

The COVID-19 pandemic not only brought about new complications to providing quality education but compounded existing inequities and challenges across the K-12 system and exacerbated negative mental health outcomes among both teachers and students. Teachers recognized the stressors that the pandemic placed on their students early on and remain deeply concerned about their students’ well-being—a 2020 Teach Plus report on teaching during the pandemic showed that 89 percent of teachers reported feeling more concerned about their students’ mental health when compared to a typical year.⁶ Students experienced poor mental health outcomes—reporting increased anxiety, stress, and loneliness as a result of COVID-19’s impact on schooling, their everyday lives, and the health and financial well-being of their families.⁷ Mental health concerns were not limited to just students—teachers experienced increased burnout symptoms, with studies finding three-quarters of educators reporting frequent job-related stress and a quarter reporting symptoms associated with clinical depression.⁸ ESSER funds provide states

and districts with the opportunity to do more to promote positive mental health outcomes, thus investing in more positive educational outcomes overall. As school and district leaders consider how to better support the mental health of their students and teachers, this is a pivotal moment to promote the development of strong mental health practices among educators, students, and their families.

A framework for mental health: Regulation, reflection, and relationships.

Given these challenges, the central question for all K-12 stakeholders is how to best promote student and teacher well-being in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. The many voices of teachers represented in this report, along with the science of learning and development, point to three potent pathways that can restore mental health and emotional well-being and build resilience for students and educators alike. They are: regulation, reflection, and relationships.⁹

Regulation is the capacity or opportunity to stay in or return to a state of feeling safe and calm when stressed. While solitary activities can promote self-regulation, the experience of being calmed and cared for *through relationships*—also known as co-regulation—is what enables humans to develop the brain structures and skills for self-regulation, self-care, and resilience in the face of stress.

Reflection is taking time to notice, name, and understand one's own emotions, sensations, thoughts, values, needs, and experiences. Especially after experiencing trauma, students and teachers need time for reflection to make sense of, process, and move through difficult experiences. Because sense-making with the help of a trusted relationship is a powerful way to manage stress and heal trauma, reflection should take place *in relationships* where one can receive validation and empathy, in addition to independent self-reflection.

Relationships are foundational to both well-being and resilience. Through ongoing experiences of feeling safe and seen inside relationships, students and teachers develop increasing capacity to regulate, reflect, engage in empathy, and solve problems.

Utilizing ESSER funds to create opportunities to promote these three R's—regulation, reflection, and relationships—can buttress students' and teachers' mental health needs, promote positive practices, and help restore the social and emotional well-being of our educators and learners.

METHODOLOGY

For this report, Teach Plus and FuelEd administered a survey to educators throughout their respective networks, with 509 current teachers from 29 states and the District of Columbia participating. Of these teachers, five percent had less than four years of teaching experience, 27 percent had four to nine years, 23 percent had 10 to 14 years, and 45 percent had 15 or more years.¹⁰ Five percent of the respondents taught in pre-kindergarten, 29 percent in kindergarten to grade 5, 26 percent in grades 6 to 8, 35 percent in grades 9 to 12, and six percent in other grades.¹¹

FINDINGS

1. Teachers believe that schools can do more to support the mental health and well-being of both students and teachers, with 60 percent saying that not enough is being done to support students and an overwhelming 72 percent saying that not enough is being done to support teachers.
2. Teachers say that student mental health can be improved with more school-based professional therapeutic resources, experiences, and staff; for students to have access to mental health programming, materials, and learning opportunities; and for more opportunities for students to have non-academic experiences and activities.
3. To support their own mental health, teachers are asking for more mental health training and resources; access to on-site therapeutic resources; and more time to both fulfill their professional responsibilities and to focus explicitly on their own mental health.
4. Collectively, teachers feel that their schools can do more to support regulation, reflection, and relationships, three pathways to promote positive mental health outcomes.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Authentically engage, include, and listen to teachers when considering how to serve the mental health needs of educators and students.
2. Promote initiatives and practices that support and strengthen regulation, reflection, and relationships for students and teachers alike.
3. Normalize mental health supports and resources by promoting them, subsidizing them, and embedding them in schools and school systems.

“What I feel will better support the mental health of students and teachers is a change in perception about education. Policy needs to be shaped and adjusted by using the voice of those that it impacts the most, students and teachers ... ” —Teacher

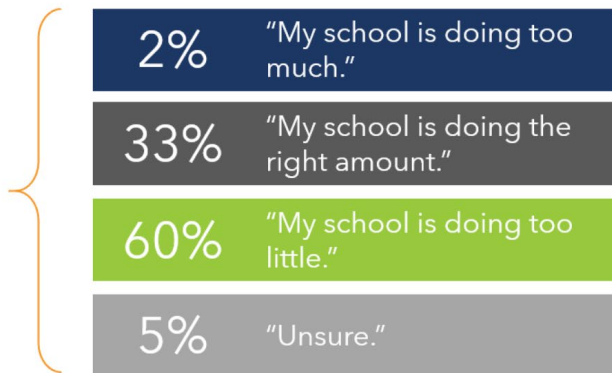
FINDINGS

- 1. Teachers believe that schools can do more to support the mental health and well-being of both students and teachers, with 60 percent saying that not enough is being done to support students and an overwhelming 72 percent saying that not enough is being done to support teachers.**

“This needs to be a priority. Without purposeful design and intentionality, the mental health needs of students and teachers will continue to be ignored. That, I am afraid, will create a true mental health crisis in our schools and communities.” —Teacher

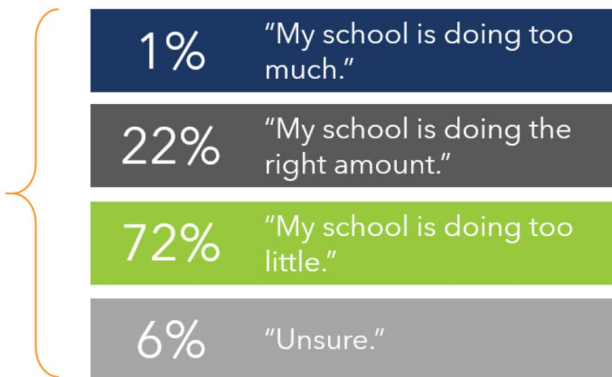
When asked about how their schools were doing in supporting the mental health needs of their students, one out of three teachers (33 percent) said that their school was doing enough but more than half (60 percent) said that school was doing too little.¹²

When it comes to supporting student mental health, generally speaking, do you feel your school is doing too much, the right amount, or too little?



Moreover, when it comes to supporting teacher mental health, 72 percent of teachers said that their school was doing too little with less than a quarter believing their school was doing enough.¹³

When it comes to supporting teacher mental health, generally speaking, do you feel your school is doing too much, the right amount, or too little?



- 2. Teachers say that student mental health can be improved with more school-based professional therapeutic resources, experiences, and staff; for students to have access to mental health programming, materials, and learning opportunities; and for more opportunities for students to have non-academic experiences and activities.**

"I would ... invest in student activities and extracurriculars. We know that when students have a connection to something outside of academics, it improves their overall achievement and usually their happiness/mood as well, so the funds should be used to support more clubs and activities so that there is a wide enough variety for everyone as well as funding to actually follow through with the mission/vision of each activity." —Teacher

When asked how they would use additional funds or resources to support student mental health, teachers asked for:¹⁴

- 52%** **On-site professional therapeutic resources, experiences, and professionals.** Examples: Access to professional therapy (individual and group) and therapeutic resources; hire additional on-site mental health staff for students; additional staff to build relationships with students or to supervise after-school and recreational spaces.
- 43%** **Mental health training, programming, and materials for students.** Examples: Programs, training, and resources (e.g. sensory or calm-down tools) to help students support their own mental health needs; self-regulation retreats for students; yoga or meditation classes for students; implementing a mental health curriculum for all students.
- 28%** **Non-academic experiences and activities.** Examples: Student opportunities to engage in non-academic activities inside and outside of school; field trips or outdoor events for students; increased frequency of social events and retreats.
- 13%** **Mental health spaces for students.** Examples: Giving students their own spaces to calm down, relax, play, etc.; a “cool down” space where students can retreat; self-regulation spaces for students to exercise, dance, or do yoga.
- 10%** **Student learning supports, (e.g. additional academic supports and resources and meeting basic needs).** Examples: Meeting students’ academic and physiological needs; collection of resources to meet basic needs (e.g. snacks, clothing); increased access to tutoring support; scholarships for students to participate in sports.
- 8%** **Opportunities to build safe, secure relationships on campus.** Examples: School activities that focus on getting to know one another, forming relationships, or building community; collective healing spaces for students; mentorship programs between educators and students so that each student has at least one safe person on campus.
- 8%** **Mental health training and resources for teachers.** Examples: Training for embedding student mental health supports into the classroom; trauma-informed professional development in providing high-quality mental health support to students; professional development for educators to improve relationship building with students.
- 7%** **Mental health training and resources for parents.** Examples: Offering caretakers the skills and tools to support student mental health; parent training about social-emotional development; home visits to families; family counseling sessions with mental health providers; series of family days to promote school-family connections.
- 4%** **Student choice and voice.** Examples: Giving students a say in what they need, such as through a survey or student liaison; incentives for students to participate in mental health training or activities.

As one educator explained, supporting student mental health can be beneficial for educators as well. *“Students need resources and services available during the school day. People whose only job is to connect with and build relationships with kids are an important part of the puzzle. Having someone focused on that aspect of student mental health frees teachers up to focus on curriculum delivery.”*

3. To support their own mental health, teachers are asking for more mental health training and resources; access to on-site therapeutic resources; and more time to both fulfill their professional responsibilities and to focus explicitly on their own mental health.

As for how teachers would use additional funds or resources to support teacher mental health, teachers asked for:¹⁵

- 43%** **Mental health training and resources for teachers.** Examples: Professional development or retreat days to address educator mental health and well-being; professional development time focused on deepening connections between teachers; stipends or funding for accessing online mental health supports and training.
- 31%** **On-site professional therapeutic resources and experiences.** Examples: On-site meditation, massage, or yoga classes; access to mental health check-ins with a therapist or coach; hiring school-based mental health providers.
- 28%** **Time-off or breaks, e.g. mental health time.** Examples: Short mental health breaks built into teacher's daily schedule; giving teachers paid time off to focus specifically on mental health.
- 26%** **Additional support including time, space, or resources.** Examples: Additional instructional resources; additional substitute teachers or stipends to create time to catch up on administrative or instructional work; increased support from teacher assistants or support personnel; increased length of planning periods; increased time for teacher collaboration.
- 17%** **Wellness stipends for activities or services.** Examples: Gift certificates or memberships to support teachers' engagement in wellness activities such as exercise, massage, meditation, or yoga.
- 15%** **Teacher choice and voice by giving teachers a choice to share and select what they need or want.** Examples: Directly providing gift cards or money to be applied toward teacher self-care; administer surveys to find out what teachers need and want most; give stipends or bonuses directly to educators to use as they please; ask for teacher input to design a wellness spending plan.
- 14%** **Opportunities to build safe, secure relationships on campus.** Examples: Staff activities that focus on getting to know one another, forming relationships, or building community; set up lunch or dinner for "pods" of teachers to connect with one another.
- 12%** **Demonstrated appreciation for work done.** Examples: Increased pay or a financial bonus; tokens of appreciation such as awards or recognition; amenities such as snacks, treats, or drinks.
- 9%** **Mental health spaces for teachers.** Examples: Creating spaces for teachers in schools to unwind or to engage in self-care; upgrade teacher lounges into "safe havens"; create restorative and restful spaces for teachers to retreat to during school day; creating a fitness room for educators.

As this teacher explained, educators are interested in ongoing investment in their mental health and wellness. *“I think allowing teachers time off, or time to attend social emotional learning professional development on how to better cope and deal with what they are going through would be helpful. Also having access to free mental health resources, materials, and someone to talk to I think is super important. We can’t just support mental health short-term; it needs to evolve and become a long term investment in community care.”*

4. Collectively, teachers feel that their schools can do more to support regulation, reflection and relationships, three key pathways for promoting positive mental health outcomes.

As one educator suggested, *“I would hire a full-time adult mental health specialist whose job it would be to coordinate days, activities, and opportunities for teachers to build relationships, self-regulate, and self-reflect.”*

The teachers' responses reflect an overall need and desire to restore a state of regulation; for reflective practices and the training and spaces to engage; and for school cultures to support or enhance secure relationships, which underpin all aspects of restoring safety and well-being in schools. When asked about how their schools were supporting these three pathways, teachers largely shared how their schools could be doing more.

- + **Regulation: 25 percent** say their schools are doing the right amount while **69 percent** are saying schools are doing too little.¹⁶
 - Supporting *regulation* can include giving teachers the time and space to support their well-being, whether that be during the school day with scheduled mental health breaks and quiet spaces in school or outside of school via paid mental health days, time off, and wellness stipends.
- + **Reflection: 24 percent** say their schools are doing the right amount while **71 percent** are saying schools are doing too little.¹⁷
 - Supporting *reflection* can include not only giving teachers the time and space to reflect on their well-being, but also providing mental health tools and resources and professional guidance that help them explore their own emotions, thoughts, and experiences independently or the collective stories and experiences shared among their teaching and school community.
- + **Relationships: 39 percent** say their schools are doing the right amount while **58 percent** are saying schools are doing too little.¹⁸
 - Supporting *relationships* can include staff activities that center people and not just practice, including community-building activities that bring together staff, students, and the larger school community, and collective engagement in mental health training and group therapy.

RECOMMENDATIONS

“Students’ mental health is being ignored or falling on teachers who already have so much on their plates. I have had to help a student but stopped a lesson to do so which resulted in my district’s pacing policy to fall behind ...” —Teacher

We asked the teachers in our survey what advice they had for policymakers and educational leaders. Based on their perspectives, we suggest the following recommendations for school, district, and state leaders:¹⁹

1. Authentically engage, include, and listen to teachers when considering how to serve the mental health needs of educators and students.

As a multitude of pandemic stressors have strained educators and students alike, educators, who are closest to students, have a clear sense of the types of support they need to address their students’ and their own mental health. We urge school, district, and state leaders to engage educators and other stakeholders in thinking about how to allocate resources, including time and money, to address the significant mental health needs in schools. Additionally, we emphasize that educational leaders should hear from a diverse group of teachers, students, and caregivers—that these voices and perspectives are inclusive of race, ethnicity, role, geography, and other demographics and are intentionally considered. *“I think the best advice I have to offer is to LISTEN to what people are telling you they need. If teachers are saying they need greater support, giving them donuts for breakfast does not adequately meet that need. Listen to teachers and be proactive in response.” —Teacher*

- + **State and district leaders:** We recommend that teachers are included in committees or learning communities responsible for vetting new programs and researching best practices to support mental health.
- + **District and school leaders:** District and school leaders can start by asking teachers and students alike what they need. Teach Plus and FuelEd encourage educational leadership to use the “Listening Tool” questionnaire that we developed as a starting point to understand what teachers in their schools need to address mental health needs. Additionally, we encourage school leaders to take the time to authentically listen and take seriously the perspectives and ideas of their students through formal and informal channels. This can help create a culture of inclusiveness within schools and provide a starting point for school systems to meet students where they are.

2. Promote initiatives and practices that support and strengthen regulation, reflection, and relationships for students and teachers alike.

Teachers indicated the need for schools to do more to support regulation, reflection, and relationships in order to promote positive mental health.

“Long-range impacts of COVID are going to be huge. Kids need quarterly check-ins with a counselor to see how things are going. They also need time in school to build relationships and connections with each other. This is non-academic time but it is crucial! Kids have been lonely and isolated. They don’t know how to build relationships or make connections with each other.” —Teacher

While the acute stressors of the COVID-19 pandemic have drawn attention to the need to address mental health in schools, the social and emotional needs of educators and students have always been present.

- + **State and district leaders:** State and district leaders should work to enact policies that normalize focusing on the development of the whole child *and* the whole educator. This includes ensuring that federal and state funds can be used to support initiatives that promote and sustain student and teacher mental health and social and emotional well-being.
- + **District and school leaders:** Because well-supported educators have a positive and cascading impact on students, families, and school culture, when district and school leaders take care of teachers, they are also taking care of students.²⁰ District and school leaders should invest in educator well-being via professional development and other resources devoted to supporting educators' social-emotional skills through regulation, reflection, and relationships.

3. **Normalize mental health supports and resources by promoting them, subsidizing them, and embedding them in schools and school systems.**

Educators indicated a need not only for specific mental health support and resources, but also for the time and space to be able to utilize those resources in their schools. As one educator suggested, *“Provide meaningful professional development by mental health professionals. Hire full-time mental health providers at school sites. Implement social-emotional learning, mindfulness, and therapeutic practices into the curriculum. Allow adequate time and space for students and staff to engage in reflection and meditative practices.”*

- + **District and school leaders:** District and school leaders should provide mental health supports for educators, such as counseling. FuelEd has provided over 12,000 counseling sessions to teachers since 2012 and has found that when school districts actively promote, normalize, and create pathways for attending therapy, many teachers engage, and experience a powerful impact on their well-being and careers.

In addition to promoting and subsidizing mental health supports, school and district leaders should directly embed mental health supports in schools and school systems in order to create an atmosphere of greater relational and emotional safety for educators. Long before COVID-19, many educators shared the emotional challenges of working in schools: the stress of loneliness, overall toxic adult cultures, insufficient time or space to grow, and the weight of absorbing the trauma that students carry. Creating, incentivizing, and embedding systems where educators both give and receive care, as a routine part of the profession, would help to address teacher stress and burnout overall. Examples of schoolwide practices where educators can intentionally tend to their emotional well-being include “Stewardship,” a peer support model implemented by FuelEd, where educator pairs meet weekly to provide care while challenging growth, as well as FuelEd’s “Empathy Circles,” which are facilitated, small groups where educators reflect on their emotional needs while experiencing feeling seen and valued. In order for staff to experience a sense of emotional safety in relationships in schools, greater capacity and skill-building for school and district leadership in interpersonal skills such as empathic communication are also strongly recommended.²¹

School and district leaders should additionally consider:

- + Using resources to support teacher mental health, such as adding counselors and other mental health experts;
- + Expanding the definition of trauma-informed education to include, account for, and attune to educator trauma and healing;
- + Providing additional faculty or volunteers to give teachers more time and alleviate the work burden that has increased as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic;
- + Devoting time in the school day to focus on emotional and social well-being;
- + Engaging teacher input on decisions such as educational mandates, material adoptions, professional development, with an eye toward the impact of these decisions on social and emotional learning.

For more information and resources on how policymakers and educational leaders can do this, we suggest starting with the following resources and organizations:

- a. [National Commission on Social, Emotional, & Academic Development](#)
- b. [Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning \(CASEL\)](#)
- c. [FuelEd Schools](#)
- d. [Transforming Education](#)
- e. [The Science of Learning & Development Alliance](#)

CONCLUSION

As we enter a third school year amidst an evolving global pandemic, K-12 systems, communities, and parents will ask educators and students to teach and learn in challenging contexts. Two steps to alleviating some of these challenges must involve, first, listening to them and second, acting on their recommendations by allocating ESSER funds to support positive mental health outcomes. These teacher-driven recommendations provide actionable steps that can be taken now to support mental health through three pathways: regulation, reflection, and relationships. We believe that these short-term shifts in addressing mental health can generate immediate and long-term positive systemic changes to working and learning environments as prioritizing teacher and student mental health becomes normalized within education policy, spending discussions, and district and school programs and practices.

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The mission of Teach Plus is to empower excellent, experienced, and diverse teachers to take leadership over key policy and practice issues that advance equity, opportunity, and student success.

In pursuing its mission, Teach Plus is guided by its Student Opportunity Mandate: All students should have the opportunity to achieve their potential in an education system defined by its commitment to equity, its responsiveness to individual needs, and its ability to prepare students for postsecondary success.

teachplus.org

FuelEd is a non-profit organization whose mission is to grow emotionally intelligent educators who build relationship-driven schools. We partner with schools to develop educators' interpersonal skills, self-awareness, and emotional well-being so that every educator can build secure relationships that provide the conditions for optimal learning and development. Our vision is a world where educator training and support—and the very definition of an educator—is reimagined to prioritize educators' emotional intelligence, emotional health, and interpersonal skills.

fueledschools.org

ENDNOTES

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³ Jones, S. and Tinubu Ali, T. (2021) "Teacher Stress & Burnout: The High Cost of Low Social and Emotional Development." Southern Education Foundation. Retrieved from: <https://www.southerneducation.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/SEF-Teacher-Stress-Brief-ps7-072121-FINweb.pdf>

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⁶ See endnote #1.

⁷ Common Sense Media. (2020) "Common Sense Media | SurveyMonkey Poll: How Teens Are Coping and Connecting in the Time of the Coronavirus" Retrieved from: https://www.common sense media.org/sites/default/files/uploads/pdfs/2020_survey monkey-key-findings-toplines-teens-and-coronavirus.pdf

⁸ Steiner, E. and Woo, A. (2021) "Job-Related Stress Threatens the Teacher Supply: Key Findings from the 2021 State of the U.S. Teacher Survey." Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation. Retrieved from https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RRA1108-1.html; CDC Foundation. (2021, May) "Mental Health Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Teachers and Parents of K-12 Students: Monitoring School COVID-19 Prevention Strategies Project: Triangulated Report . Retrieved from: <https://www.cdcfoundation.org/mental-health-triangulated-report?inline>; Boudreau, E. (2019, December 3) "Safeguarding the Mental Health of Teachers: Why it's important for teachers — and their schools — to create space to acknowledge and respond to the stress of the job. Usable Knowledge Harvard Graduate School of Education. Retrieved from: <https://www.gse.harvard.edu/news/uk/19/12/safeguarding-mental-health-teachers>

⁹ National Scientific Council on the Developing Child (2015). Supportive Relationships and Active Skill-Building Strengthen the Foundations of Resilience: Working Paper No. 13. Retrieved from www.developingchild.harvard.edu; Cozolino, L. (2006). *The Neuroscience of Human Relationships: Attachment And the Developing Social Brain*. New York: Norton.; Cozolino, L. (2013). *The Social Neuroscience of Education: Optimizing Attachment and Learning in the Classroom*. New York: Norton.

¹⁰ Question: "Including the 2021-2022 school year, how many years of teaching experience do you have?" (Open response question) (n = 505) Responses were grouped into the following categories: "Less than 4 years" (5.2%); "4 to 9 years" (27.3%); "10 to 14 years" (22.8%); "15 or more years" (44.8%). Results may not sum to 100 percent due to rounding.

¹¹ Question: "Which grades are you currently teaching? (Please select all that apply)" (Open response question) (n = 508) Responses were grouped into the following categories: "Pre-kindergarten" (4.5%); "Kindergarten to grade 5" (28.7%); "Grades 6 to 8" (26.0%); "Grades 9 to 12" (35.2%); "Other" (5.5%). Respondents could select multiple responses and results may not sum to 100 percent.

¹² Question: "When it comes to supporting student mental health, generally speaking, do you feel your school is doing too much, the right amount, or too little?" Responses: (n = 507) "My school is doing too much." (1.6%); "My school is doing the right amount." (33.3%); "My school is doing too little." (60.2%), "Unsure." (4.9%). Results may not sum to 100 percent due to rounding.

¹³ Question: "When it comes to supporting teacher mental health, generally speaking, do you feel your school is doing too much, the right amount, or too little?" Responses: (n = 508) "My school is doing too much." (0.8%); "My school is doing the right amount." (21.7%); "My school is doing too little." (72.1%); "Unsure." (5.5%). Results may not sum to 100 percent due to rounding.

¹⁴ Question: "What if your school had \$1,000 per student, how would you recommend spending it to better support student mental health and why would it improve student mental health?" (Open response question) Responses were coded and results were aggregated into nine categories. Responses do not sum to 100 percent because individual responses could be coded into more than one category. Teachers were also asked how they would spend \$100 per student with results very similar to the responses to the \$1,000 question.

¹⁵ Question: "What if your school had \$1,000 per teacher, how would you recommend spending it to better support teacher mental health and why would it improve teacher mental health?" (Open response question) Responses were coded and results were aggregated into nine categories plus an "other" category. Responses do not sum to 100 percent because individual responses could be coded into more than one category. Teachers were also asked how they would spend \$100 per teacher with results very similar to the responses to the \$1,000 question.

¹⁶ Question: “Self-regulation can be described as the capacity or opportunity to stay in or return to a state of feeling safe and calm when stressed. When it comes to promoting teacher self-regulation, do you feel your school is doing too much, the right amount, or too little?” Responses: (n = 508) “My school is doing too much.” (0.8%); “My school is doing the right amount.” (25.2%); “My school is doing too little.” (68.9%), “Unsure.” (5.1%). Results may not sum to 100 percent due to rounding.

¹⁷ Question: “Self-reflection can be described as taking time to notice, name, and understand one’s own emotions, sensations, thoughts, values, needs, and experiences. When it comes to promoting teacher self-reflection, do you feel your school is doing too much, the right amount, or too little?” Responses: (n = 508) “My school is doing too much.” (1.4%); “My school is doing the right amount.” (23.8%); “My school is doing too little.” (70.7%), “Unsure.” (4.1%). Results may not sum to 100 percent due to rounding.

¹⁸ Question: “Secure relationships can be described as having dependable connections with others where we feel safe and seen. When it comes to promoting teachers developing secure relationships, do you feel your school is doing too much, the right amount, or too little?” Responses: (n = 504) “My school is doing too much.” (0.4%); “My school is doing the right amount.” (38.9%); “My school is doing too little.” (57.5%), “Unsure.” (3.2%). Results may not sum to 100 percent due to rounding.

¹⁹ Question: “What advice do you have for policymakers and education leaders on how to better support the mental health of students and teachers?” (Open response question)

²⁰ Quin, D. (2017). *Longitudinal and Contextual Associations Between Teacher–Student Relationships and Student Engagement: A Systematic Review*. *Review of Educational Research*, 87(2), 345–387. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654316669434>

²¹ For more information on “Stewardship” and “Empathy Circles” and other FuelEd programs, please visit: <https://www.fueledschools.org/our-programs> or <https://www.fueledschools.org/events>

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Supporting Student and Teacher Mental Health

“Listening Tool” Survey Template for Schools and Districts

As schools and districts consider how best to support student and teacher mental health through the use of additional resources, funding, and programs, we encourage educational leaders to listen to the perspectives of teachers and other stakeholders. We invite educational leaders to copy, edit, and administer this survey tool across their schools and districts to gather the perspectives and advice of teachers and other stakeholders. If you choose to use this survey template, we'd appreciate hearing how you've used it and what you learned by contacting us at research@teachplus.org.

Thank you!

1. To ensure that this survey is being taken by members of our community, we ask that you share your contact and role information. Your responses will remain confidential.
 - a. First name
 - b. Last name
 - c. Email
 - d. School
 - e. District
 - f. Role
 - i. Teacher
 - ii. School Administrator
 - iii. District Administrator
 - iv. Other:
2. If you are a teacher, what grade(s) do you teach?
 - a. Pre-Kindergarten
 - b. Kindergarten
 - c. Grade 1
 - d. Grade 2
 - e. Grade 3
 - f. Grade 4
 - g. Grade 5
 - h. Grade 6
 - i. Grade 7
 - j. Grade 8
 - k. Grade 9
 - l. Grade 10
 - m. Grade 11
 - n. Grade 12
 - o. Other:

3. Including the 2021-2022 school year, how many years of teaching experience do you have?
 - a. Open response
4. When it comes to supporting student mental health, generally speaking, do you feel your school is doing too much, the right amount, or too little?
 - a. My school is doing too much.
 - b. My school is doing the right amount.
 - c. My school is doing too little.
 - d. Unsure.
5. When it comes to supporting teacher mental health, generally speaking, do you feel your school is doing too much, the right amount, or too little?
 - a. My school is doing too much.
 - b. My school is doing the right amount.
 - c. My school is doing too little.
 - d. Unsure.
6. When it comes to supporting student and teacher mental health, what is your school or district doing particularly well?
 - a. Open response
7. What do you think your school or district could be doing differently to address the mental health needs of students and teachers?
 - a. Open response

In the following questions, we ask for your perspectives on how additional resources, supports, or funding can be used to better support student and teacher mental health. For these questions, we include teacher-developed examples that could help illustrate specific supports in a school or district context.

8. To better support student mental health in our schools, which of the following items would you prioritize? (Select up to three items.)
 - a. **On-site professional therapeutic resources, experiences, and professionals.** Examples: Access to professional therapy (individual and group) and therapeutic resources; hire additional on-site mental health staff for students; additional staff to build relationships with students or to supervise after-school and recreational spaces.
 - b. **Mental health training, programming, and materials for students.** Examples: Programs, training, and resources (e.g. sensory or calm-down tools) to help students support their own mental health needs; self-regulation retreats for students; yoga or meditation classes for students; implementing a mental health curriculum for all students.
 - c. **Non-academic experiences and activities.** Examples: Student opportunities to engage in non-academic activities inside and outside of school; field trips or outdoor events for students; increased frequency of social events and retreats.
 - d. **Opportunities to build safe, secure relationships on campus.** Examples: School activities that focus on getting to know one another, forming relationships, or building community; collective healing spaces for students; mentorship programs between educators and students so that each student has at least one safe person on campus.

- e. **Student choice and voice.** Examples: Giving students a say in what they need, such as through a survey or student liaison; incentives for students to participate in mental health training or activities.
 - f. **Student learning supports, (e.g. additional academic supports and resources and meeting basic needs).** Examples: Meeting students' academic and physiological needs; collection of resources to meet basic needs (e.g. snacks, clothing); increased access to tutoring support; scholarships for students to participate in sports.
 - g. **Mental health spaces for students.** Examples: Giving students their own spaces to calm down, relax, play, etc.; a "cool down" space where students can retreat; self-regulation spaces for students to exercise, dance, or do yoga.
 - h. **Mental health training and resources for parents.** Examples: Offering caretakers the skills and tools to support student mental health; parent training about social-emotional development; home visits to families; family counseling sessions with mental health providers; series of family days to promote school-family connections.
 - i. **Mental health training and resources for teachers.** Examples: Training for embedding student mental health supports into the classroom; trauma-informed professional development in providing high-quality mental health support to students; professional development for educators to improve relationship building with students.
9. In addition to ideas listed above, do you have other suggestions on how your school can improve student mental health?
- a. Open response
10. To better support teacher mental health in our schools, which of the following items would you prioritize? (Select up to three items.)
- a. **On-site professional therapeutic resources and experiences.** Examples: On-site meditation, massage, or yoga classes; access to mental health check-ins with a therapist or coach; hiring school-based mental health providers.
 - b. **Mental health training and resources for teachers.** Examples: Professional development or retreat days to address educator mental health and well-being; professional development time focused on deepening connections between teachers; stipends or funding for accessing online mental health supports and training.
 - c. **Wellness stipends for activities or services.** Examples: Gift certificates or memberships to support teachers' engagement in wellness activities such as exercise, massage, meditation, or yoga.
 - d. **Opportunities to build safe, secure relationships on campus.** Examples: Staff activities that focus on getting to know one another, forming relationships, or building community; set up lunch or dinner for "pods" of teachers to connect with one another.
 - e. **Demonstrated appreciation for work done.** Examples: Increased pay or a financial bonus; tokens of appreciation such as awards or recognition; amenities such as snacks, treats, or drinks.
 - f. **Additional support including time, space, or resources.** Examples: Additional instructional resources; additional substitute teachers or stipends to create time to catch up on administrative or instructional work; increased support from teacher assistants or support personnel; increased length of planning periods; increased time for teacher collaboration.

- g. Teacher choice and voice by giving teachers a choice to share and select what they need or want.** Examples: Directly providing gift cards or money to be applied toward teacher self-care; administer surveys to find out what teachers need and want most; give stipends or bonuses directly to educators to use as they please; ask for teacher input to design a wellness spending plan.
 - h. Mental health spaces for teachers.** Examples: Creating spaces for teachers in schools to unwind or to engage in self-care; upgrade teacher lounges into “safe havens”; create restorative and restful spaces for teachers to retreat to during school day; creating a fitness room for educators.
 - i. Time-off or breaks, e.g. mental health time.** Examples: Short mental health breaks built into teacher's daily schedule; giving teachers paid time-off to focus specifically on mental health.
- 11.** In addition to ideas listed above, do you have other suggestions on how your school can improve teacher mental health?
- a.** Open response
- 12.** What advice do you have for district leaders and policymakers as they consider how best to support student and teacher mental health?
- a.** Open response