

CULTIVATING TEACHER RESILIENCE: LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE PANDEMIC

A practice brief for school leaders

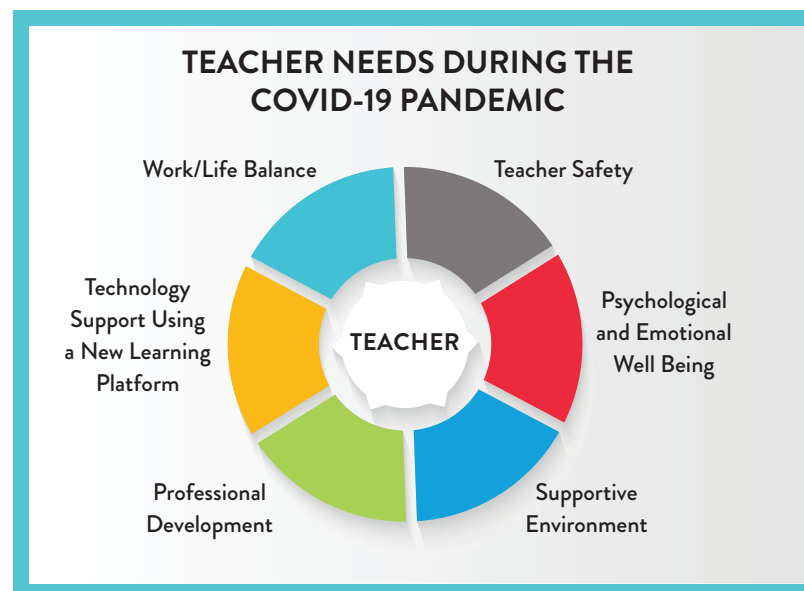
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THE CURRENT STATE OF TEACHING

Education is struggling to address several issues due to the pandemic, including:

- prioritizing the social and emotional needs of students and teachers, and
- addressing the increase in the number of teachers leaving the profession.¹⁰

The pandemic has magnified the struggles in education and is forcing school leaders across the US to look closely at these pressing issues. The place to start is to support teachers who can, in turn, address their students' needs.



THE IMPACT OF THE PANDEMIC ON TEACHING

- Up to 55% of teachers considered leaving teaching in 2021 due to increased stress.^{1,2}
- 44% of teachers reported planning to leave teaching in the next two years in 2022.¹⁶
- 75% of teachers reported increased workloads and duties leading to stress.¹

Research shows teachers had a decrease in



- teacher self-efficacy³ during the COVID-19 pandemic,
- support received from school,
- job satisfaction,¹⁷ and
- work/life balance during online instruction.^{8,9}

Research has found teachers had an increase in



- anxiety,⁴
- teacher burnout,⁵ and
- work hours.¹⁶

This was especially true for virtual and hybrid teachers who reported an increase in workloads.^{6,7}



CULTIVATING RESILIENCE IN TEACHERS

Resilience is defined by the American Psychological Association¹¹ as “the process and outcome of successfully adapting to difficult or challenging life experiences” (para. 1) by increasing flexibility to meet mental, emotional, and behavioral demands. School leaders can help teachers cultivate and practice resilience by improving school culture and climate in challenging times.¹² Leaders can provide time and supports for educators to:

- Build connections with others
- Find purpose in their work
- Foster wellness of mind and body
- Engage in healthy thoughts

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HOW CAN SCHOOL LEADERS BEGIN?

Psychologists have developed an intervention called psychological first aid, which attempts to strengthen basic coping skills.¹³ A basic principle of psychological first aid is building resilience in survivors of disasters and trauma and reducing post-traumatic stress disorder symptoms.¹³ Brymer et al. (2006) outlined the basic objectives of psychological first aid, which include:¹⁴

- Establishing a compassionate human connection
- Providing emotional comfort
- Offering practical assistance
- Providing information to help address needs and concerns
- Supporting and empowering coping efforts

HOW SCHOOL LEADERS CAN SUPPORT TEACHERS

- Take actionable steps to keep teachers in the classroom and focus on addressing pressing issues in education that affect teachers and students:
 - Recognize teacher burnout.
 - Set realistic teacher workloads and expectations.
 - Support teachers in addressing wider academic achievement gaps.
 - Cultivate resilience by improving school culture and school climate.
- Provide the necessary resources to support teachers' mental health:
 - Promote access to counseling services.
 - Allow and incorporate mental health days.
 - Provide school leaders with professional development on compassionate responses to crises.
- Encourage families to work with teachers:
 - Advocate that teachers are there to support student learning.
 - Strengthen the home-school-community connection.
 - Address parental concerns that are out of teachers' hands.



RESOURCES FOR SCHOOL LEADERS

The US Department of Education's National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments recommends the following operations guide (https://www.nctsn.org/sites/default/files/resources/pfa_schools.pdf) on Psychological First Aid for school leaders following the aftermath of any emergency or disaster. The following is the specific section of the guide for school leaders:

- The National Child Traumatic Stress Network: Psychological First Aid for Schools Field Operations Guide Recommendations for School Staff (https://www.nctsn.org/sites/default/files/resources/pfa_for_schools_appendix_a.pdf)

SELECTED REFERENCES

¹Pressley, T. & Ha, C. (2021). Teaching during a pandemic: United States teachers' self-efficacy during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 106, 1-9. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2021.103465>

³Pressley, T. (2021). Factors contributing to teacher burnout during COVID-19. *Educational Researcher*, 50(5), 325-327. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X211004138>

⁵Sokal, L., Trudel, L. E., & Babb, J. (2021) I've had it! Factors associated with burnout and low organizational commitment in Canadian teachers during the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic. *International Journal of Educational Research Open*, 2(2), 1-9. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedro.2020.100023>

For additional references see: <https://tinyurl.com/lessonslearnedfrompandemic>