

# INVESTING IN THE FUTURE: PRIORITIZING PRE-SERVICE TEACHER WELL-BEING IN TEACHER EDUCATION



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*This brief is intended for teacher educators, school administrators, and instructional coaches.*

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**Grounded in educational psychology, this work recognizes that supporting pre-service teachers' well-being enhances their self-efficacy, resilience, and long-term effectiveness in the classroom.**

## LAYING THE FOUNDATION: ADDRESSING WELL-BEING EARLY IN TEACHER PREPARATION

It is important for teacher education programs to support pre-service teacher well-being before they step into the classroom. When pre-service teachers are given meaningful, individualized support early in their training, they are more likely to thrive in their roles and stay in the profession long term. Traditional in-service training falls short of meeting their evolving needs, especially for those working in high-demand or high-need settings.<sup>16</sup> By proactively equipping future educators with tools to care for their mental health and advocate for their well-being, we can help build a stronger, more resilient teacher workforce.<sup>12</sup>

### IMPACT OF TEACHER WELL-BEING

Increased job satisfaction<sup>2</sup>

- Improved teacher-student relationships<sup>3</sup>
- Better classroom management<sup>4</sup>
- Reduced teacher burnout<sup>5</sup>
- Increased teacher retention<sup>6</sup>
- Improved academic achievement<sup>7</sup>

Because we know a lot about how full-time teachers are doing when it comes to well-being, we know what areas are important for preparation and development during teacher training. However, we oftentimes do not support future teachers in preparing them to support their own well-being.



**Many education programs that aim to support educator well-being tend to focus only on what's wrong, like stress or burnout, and often take a one-size-fits-all approach.**

**We need a more practical, whole-person view of well-being—one that addresses both stress and positive emotions. While some stress can be motivating, too much leads to burnout. Positive emotions help reduce stress and build resilience, making them essential for those who teach and care for children. As the field shifts institutions of Higher Education can leverage embedded and ongoing support for pre-service teachers by allowing exploration of tools and using their voice to establish what works for them long-term.<sup>1,16</sup>**



## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAMS

### **Include well-being practices in coursework and field experiences.**

Build time into field experiences for teacher voice, choice, and reflection.<sup>8</sup>

- In fieldwork, ask teacher candidates to reflect weekly on their emotional health and how they handle challenges using a variety of tools such as the [wellness wheel](#) or journaling to help promote learning experiences for learners who are at different education and ability levels.

Teach and practice essential professional skills in all courses, such as boundary setting, leadership, communication, and handling difficult conversations.<sup>9</sup>

- Model skills that include a combination of leadership + wellbeing strategies and give them time to practice having hard conversations and building trust through role-playing and real-life classroom scenarios.
- Use research-backed frameworks such as [Signature Strengths](#) to learn about how to leverage your strengths in teams, and build positive emotions such as self-compassion, and joy.

Use case studies and simulations to build real-world skills.<sup>10,11</sup>

- Ask pre-service teachers to create mock weekly schedules that include time for planning and self-care using techniques such as [block scheduling](#).
- Provide practice in resolving conflicts and giving supportive feedback to colleagues using boundary setting strategies such as “[I Statements](#).”

Create space for open conversations about teacher well-being.<sup>11</sup>

- Regularly discuss the real pressures and challenges teachers face such as work-life balance, challenging student behaviors, and how to communicate effectively with families by creating small consultation groups and mentorship programs throughout the preparation program.

### **Provide ongoing support for novice teachers’ well-being.**

Continue supporting teacher candidates after graduation.<sup>12</sup>

- Maintain connections with school districts to provide professional development and mentoring that focuses on well-being and essential teaching skills for new teachers.

Work with school districts to pair new teachers with experienced mentor teachers or wellbeing coaches.<sup>13,14,15</sup>

- Mentors should be trained in [trauma-informed care](#), which shifts the focus from “what is wrong with you?” to what has happened to you?” for a systems-focused approach. Additionally, [strategies](#) to support emotional well-being to guide new teachers through classroom challenges.

Create supportive cohorts for new teachers.<sup>13,14,15</sup>

- Provide new teachers with a safe space (i.e., cohort) and differentiated professional development based on their individual needs to discuss challenges, share ideas, and realize they’re not alone.

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