23 Teacher wellbeing

Rebecca J. Collie

How to use this policy

Teacher wellbeing is an important outcome in its own right, and it also has significant carryover effects for positive student and school outcomes. This policy is intentionally broad and school policy creators are encouraged to delete and build upon suggestions below to create a policy that best represents their school. For a policy on teacher wellbeing, it is ideal if teaching staff have a role in developing the policy. Practices that promote teacher wellbeing should not only be pursued by individual teachers but should also be embedded across the whole school. This policy could be consulted in advance of major reforms or changes to procedures in the school. Policy consultation will help to ensure that teacher wellbeing is considered and respected during the development and implementation of any changes. This policy could also be used at the beginning of the school year to ensure that teacher wellbeing is considered in decision-making. For example, the policy might guide the scheduling of events across the school calendar so that undue burdens on teachers are avoided.

[To adapt and use this policy, delete or modify the text as indicated]

[INSERT name of school] Teacher wellbeing policy

Rationale

Wellbeing has been considered by humans for millennia and there are many ways to define this concept (Ryan & Deci, 2001). Teacher wellbeing refers to positive and effective functioning at work (Collie et al., 2016). Researchers use many different approaches to measure and examine teacher wellbeing. For example, researchers may ask teachers about their satisfaction with their job or their level of engagement at work (Collie et al., 2012). Teachers who are satisfied and engaged at work are functioning in positive and effective ways. Teacher wellbeing may also be measured by asking teachers about their experiences of various positive emotions (e.g., joy) and negative emotions (e.g., sadness) at work—and then weighing the prevalence of these different emotions across the course of a school week (e.g., Eldor & Shoshani, 2016).

When teachers experience more positive emotions than negative ones, they are considered to be faring well at work. Yet another way to examine teacher wellbeing is to check that teachers are not experiencing undue levels of stress and emotional exhaustion at work (e.g., Arens & Morin, 2016). Stress occurs when teachers feel overwhelmed and unable to manage their work demands, and emotional exhaustion occurs when teachers feel emotionally drained and worn out (Maslach et al., 2001).

The importance of student wellbeing has been known for some time. Nowadays, schools are becoming increasingly aware of the importance of teacher wellbeing. Promoting teacher wellbeing is a worthy and important aim in itself. Teacher wellbeing is linked with a range of positive psychological, physical and occupational outcomes among teachers (e.g., greater commitment to work, greater work motivation, lower work-family conflict and greater mental health; e.g., Collie et al., 2016).

Teacher wellbeing also has many positive carry-on effects for students and schools. Teachers experiencing greater wellbeing are able to form stronger connections with students, are less likely to quit the profession or change their job, and have students who are more likely to attain improved learning and achievement outcomes (e.g., Arens & Morin, 2016). Teacher wellbeing is, then, essential for individual teachers, and it also plays an important part in fostering healthy and effective schools.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to outline the roles played by school leadership and teaching staff to support teacher wellbeing. It is essential that teacher wellbeing is promoted across the entire school, alongside efforts for and by individual teachers.

Scope

This policy applies to school leadership and teaching staff of **[INSERT name of school]**.

[INSERT specific roles and responsibilities of individuals or teams]

Policy statement

School management

[INSERT name of school] has multiple avenues for promoting teacher wellbeing.

Positive relationships are an essential foundation for wellbeing (Ryan & Deci, 2017). **[INSERT name of school]** prioritises the importance of positive relationships among all school community members (Hamre & Pianta, 2001; Martin & Collie, 2019). Our school provides teaching staff with time

to build positive relationships with students and opportunities to develop effective collaborative practices with colleagues (Pianta et al., 2008; Sharrocks, 2014).

Our school provides teachers with access to teaching resources and professional learning, which are essential for promoting confidence in teaching and, in turn, healthy and effective functioning at work (Collie et al., 2020; Mattern & Bauer, 2014).

Our school has put strategies in place to reduce extraneous workload during busy times of the year (e.g., meeting free weeks, relief from supervision duties during peak marking periods; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2018).

Supportive leadership practices are well-known to be linked with teacher wellbeing (Collie et al., 2016) and are embedded across different levels of leadership in our school. For example, our school leaders aim to:

- seek input from teaching staff in school-level and department-level decision-making;
- listen to teachers' perspectives;
- provide teaching staff with clear directions and guidance regarding their roles/positions (e.g., outlining expectations for different roles, ensuring that all teaching staff understand what is expected of them);
- meet with teachers individually at least once per year in a formal annual review meeting and, where possible, at other opportunities throughout the year to "check-in" and support teachers' professional development and mental health;
- provide choice and options about work and related tasks where feasible (e.g., allowing teachers to leave early once they have finished teaching for the day; e.g., Collie et al., 2012; Lee & Nie, 2014).

[INSERT name of school] implements a whole-school approach to building a positive and supportive school culture for all members of the school community (Collie et al., 2012). Social and emotional learning (SEL) curriculum is also implemented to promote social and emotional development and wellbeing at our school (e.g., using published programs or resources; Weissberg et al., 2015).

[INSERT name of school] provides all staff with mental health support (e.g., access to an Employee Access Program for confidential counselling). In addition, we provide recommendations and access to mental health programs (e.g., mindfulness apps) that teachers can use in their classroom and for their personal wellbeing at home (Jennings et al., 2017; Klingbeil & Renshaw, 2018).

Early career teachers at our school are provided with additional support to thrive as they build experience and capacity in the profession (e.g., reduced face-to-face teaching load; assigned mentor; Kelly et al., 2019).

Teachers

Teachers at **[INSERT name of school]** are encouraged to build positive relationships with students. We embed curriculum dedicated to social and emotional development and wellbeing in our scope and sequence (e.g., SEL, curriculum; Weissberg et al., 2015).

Our teachers are encouraged to develop their confidence in teaching, which is important for wellbeing at work (e.g., Granziera & Perera, 2019). For example, teachers are able to select the areas of professional learning they would like to focus on. In addition, our school provides opportunities and time for professional learning communities and peer observations among teaching staff.

Teachers at **[INSERT name of school]** are supported to navigate the common challenges that can occur in the teaching profession (e.g., competing deadlines, challenging student behaviour; Martin & Marsh, 2008). Supports include access to professional learning, school-wide policies for behaviour support and a collaborative teaching environment.

Teacher adaptability is a valuable capacity for effectively managing the changing and novel situations that occur in the teaching profession (Collie & Martin, 2016). Teachers at **[INSERT name of school]** are supported to be adaptable in their work (e.g., by providing them with workload support during busy times; Collie et al., 2020).

Teachers at **[INSERT name of school]** are supported to take time off on weekends to recharge and nurture their own wellbeing (e.g., no emails are sent from school leadership between 6pm Fridays and 4pm Sundays; e.g., Sonnentag & Fritz, 2015).

Authorship

Associate Professor Rebecca J. Collie, University of New South Wales
[INSERT RELEVANT STAFF MEMBERS]

Related policy and documents

[INSERT RELEVANT POLICY AND DOCUMENTS]

Student wellbeing policy

Anti-bullying and discrimination policy

Date of ratification

This policy was ratified on the **[INSERT DATE]**.

Date of review

This policy will be reviewed by **[INSERT DATE]**.

Rating of evidence base

Figure 23.1. Teacher Wellbeing Rating of Evidence.

Author Note. This policy is built from a solid body of work spanning many countries across the globe. It is also important to note that much of the research cited in this policy is correlational in nature and so impact cannot be ascertained. However, a growing number of intervention studies are showing that teacher wellbeing can be positively impacted and these studies indicate moderate levels of impact (Jennings et al., 2017; Klingbeil & Renshaw, 2018).

Further reading

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