

(4/15/26) **This continuing education resource is from the national Center for MH in Schools & Student/Learning Supports at UCLA**

Featured

(1) *It's that time of year when burnout is widely observed at schools.*

(2) Excerpt from: *Healthy Educators Need Healthy Schools*

(3) *Repurposing closed schools to strengthen the school community*

And, as always, you will find

(4) *Links to more resources*

This community of practice Practitioner is designed for a screen bigger than an Iphone.

For discussion and interchange:

>It's that time of year when burnout is widely observed at schools.

National surveys indicate that educator burnout remains historically high despite modest post-pandemic declines. Approximately 53-60% of K-12 teachers report frequent burnout, compared with far lower rates among similarly educated working adults (Steiner et al., 2025; RAND Corporation, 2025).

For those who work in schools, burnout is a familiar reality. Staggering workloads, chronic challenges, and incessant hassles are commonplace. Over time, these ongoing frustrations – both large and small – undermine staff morale and mental health, with spillover effects that also impact students.

Scholars increasingly frame burnout not as a short-term crisis but as a chronic condition embedded in the structure of working at a school. And school working conditions are now widely recognized as inseparable from student learning conditions.

Recent discussions emphasize that *workload* is the primary contributor to burnout. Teachers report working an average of 49 hours per week—about ten hours beyond contractual expectations – with substantial time devoted to administrative documentation, grading, and compliance-related tasks (Steiner et al., 2025; Pew Research Center, 2024). Managing student behavior and mental health needs has become the single most frequently cited stressor (Reinke et al., 2025).

Current research reviews report that individual wellness interventions – such as mindfulness or resilience training—offer limited impact unless accompanied by changes to working conditions. Structural interventions that reduce workload, increase educator autonomy, and provide adequate mental health staffing demonstrate stronger associations with improved retention and well-being (Avola et al., 2025). Reviews converge on the conclusion that improving educator well-being requires systemic redesign of roles, supports, and expectations.

Note: The literature distinguishes between burnout and demoralization, noting that many teachers feel unable to meet ethical or instructional standards due to policy constraints and insufficient resources (Santoro & Price, 2021). Black teachers and women report higher intent to leave and greater financial strain, raising concerns about workforce diversity and stability (Steiner et al., 2025).

Technology and AI in the Burnout Conversation

A newer strand of discussion focuses on artificial intelligence and automation. Early evidence suggests that AI-supported grading, lesson planning, and communication tools can reduce administrative workload by 30-40%, with associated improvements in self-reported well-being (Canva, 2024). However, researchers caution that technology alleviates burnout only when it reduces demands rather than adds new accountability pressures (Stano, 2024).

The references cited in the preceding discussion are listed at the end of this “Practitioner.”

For discussion and interchange:

>Here’s an excerpt from: *Healthy Educators Need Healthy Schools*

“...we highlight the urgency for work-related well-being supports for educators, with a particular focus on system changes. Individual self-care is necessary, yet insufficient. To this end, we recommend the use of a multitiered system of support framework to promote a supportive and balanced work environment for all educators...”

Work-related well-being includes multiple dimensions such as

- >pleasure-displeasure (e.g., job satisfaction),
- >enthusiasm-depression (e.g., engagement),
- >anxiety-comfort (e.g., occupational stress), and
- >fatigue-vigor

The urgency to focus on improving educators’ work-related well-being cannot be overstated, as it directly impacts the quality of instruction and support educators provide their students, ultimately impacting students’ well-being and academic success. Therefore, creating work environments that prioritize educator well-being is key to student success....

We believe the Multi-Tiered System of Supports framework is an ideal framework for supporting educator work-related well-being for several reasons.

- >First, Multi-Tiered System of Supports enables a critical shift away from placing the responsibility for well-being on the individual. Educator well-being is a systems issue that requires broader system-level change, which may include traditional self-care practices at the individual level, but only in coordination with systems-level support.
- >Second, Multi-Tiered System of Supports is a familiar framework, as most states are recommending the implementation of tiered systems of support to promote and support student well-being, making it a good contextual fit as schools can build on existing initiatives.
- >Third, Multi-Tiered System of Supports allows for a continuum of support to meet a continuum of well-being needs. Well-being is a process rather than a state; hence, continuous improvement efforts have to be evident if schools are to respond to the needs of their staff with timely and coordinated efforts....

[The authors present examples at each level of intervention.]

Taking a comprehensive approach to promoting educator work-related well-being is essential for building effective and supportive schools for students. In order to create systems that support the mental health and well-being of our educators, students, schools, and communities, we need to lift the burden of self-care from the individual. While it is beneficial for educators to engage in self-care practices such as physical exercise, mindfulness, and stress-reducing activities, expecting individual educators to carry the sole responsibility for their own well-being is not sustainable or equitable, as the most salient sources of stress typically come from external and contextual influences. Instead, it is essential to take a larger ecological approach to understanding and addressing the factors that contribute to educator stress, burnout, and well-being at the organizational level.

A systemic approach undermines the tendency to blame individuals for problems generated from the larger system. The research has been clear for a while, both organizational variables and personality factors of individual educators are responsible for work-related stress and burnout....”

For discussion and interchange:

>Repurposing closed schools to strengthen the school community

Discussions about repurposing **closed schools** have become more prominent as districts across the U.S. face declining enrollment, budget pressures, and equity concerns. School closures aren't just budget decisions – they reshape neighborhoods and present challenges. Rather than leaving buildings vacant or selling them off with little regard for local impact, policymakers, educators, and community leaders are increasingly framing closed school sites as community assets that can be reimaged to support learning, wellbeing, and neighborhood stability.

This is a major shift in mindset: from closure as an ending to repurposing as a continuation of the school's role in community life. The dominant question is no longer “What do we do with an empty school?” but rather “How can this place continue to support children, families, and neighborhoods in new and equitable ways?”

From: *Denver asked for proposals for reusing vacant school buildings*

“After controversial school closures last year, Denver Public Schools wants to turn one of its shuttered elementary schools into a child care center....

That's according to two requests for proposals issued by the district last month. DPS would like Columbian Elementary, in northwest Denver, to become a child care center for babies and toddlers, as well as a training site for early childhood workers....

Meanwhile, DPS is working on developing requests related to teacher housing with the help of a company that specializes in turning municipal properties into homes for essential workers...

School closures are contentious, and parents often want to know how a district will re-purpose a building that many consider the heart of the community....

The district has in the past partnered with a nonprofit that helps teachers with down payments. And 26 DPS educators have gotten free rent in the past two years due to agreements with local developers, according to the Denver Public Schools Foundation, which brokered the giveaways....

In response to the request seeking “innovative proposals” for the empty schools, six organizations submitted ideas for community centers, the records show. The details varied, with one organization focusing on mental and physical health for the Black community, while another focused on the arts. Two proposals promised inter-generational programming....

Young Aspiring Americans for Social & Political Activism proposed replicating a project it did in Aurora, where it won a contract from the school district to turn shuttered Paris Elementary into the ABC Community Hub, which hosts several youth-serving organizations....

Even Denver school board members have floated ideas for the shuttered buildings....transforming part of a closed school into a space for school board meetings. The meetings are currently held in a small conference room at DPS headquarters, and some members are worried that the size constraint is discouraging people from showing up to give public comments....

Albion SC Denver, a soccer club founded in north Denver, proposed turning the former Remington Elementary into an indoor and outdoor sports complex with turf fields, a full gym, a cafeteria, and free access for youth until 4 p.m....

DPS is losing students due to lower birth rates and higher housing costs that push families out of the city. The school board closed or shrunk 10 small schools last year, five of which were in standalone buildings. DPS has already repurposed two of them.

The former Palmer Elementary is now a preschool. The former Castro Elementary is the new home of Summit Academy, a dropout prevention school run by the district.”

Is your district repurposing closed schools to strengthen student/family/community support? Let us know. Ltaylor@ucla.edu

>Links to a few other relevant shared resources

- >>Stories of Learning and Well-Being (podcast)
- >>Protecting our children from bullying (podcast)
- >>From Loose Coupling to Warm Embrace: Declining Enrollment & the Future of Urban Schools
- >>The impact of school closures on equity of access
- >>Effectiveness of Using Artificial Intelligence in Behavioral Disorders Management
- >>What Declining Student Enrollment Means for Schools — and What States Are Doing About It
- >>Strategies for Recruiting Youth for After-School Programs
- >>School-level data shows uneven progress since COVID

A Few Upcoming Webinars

For links to the following and for more webinars, go to the Center's Links to Upcoming/Archived Webcasts/Podcasts
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/webcast.htm>

- 4/15 Multi Tiered System of Support in Action
- 4/15 Communicating with your child's IEP team
- 4/15 Supporting Grief-Sensitive Classrooms
- 4/20 Successful advocacy and collaboration
- 4/20 Strengths based approach for autistic students
- 4/21 Students learn the critical skill of letting others know what you bring to the table
- 4/22 Talking to kids about mental health
- 4/22 How to de-escalate children in distress
- 4/27 Strengthening educator growth
- 4/29 Practical Considerations in the Ethics of AI
- 5/5 Understanding social anxiety
- 5/7 Support to military connected students
- 5/18 Understanding school avoidance
- 5/26 Understanding eating disorders

How Learning Happens (Edutopia's series of videos explores guiding all students, regardless of their developmental starting points, to become engaged learners).
Unpacking the Impacts of Structural Racism on Youth (Webinar recording)

You look demoralized.



It's just that school is making me feel burned up and burned out!

Moving Forward to Fill the Cracks

Fundamental, systemic redesign is urgently needed for how schools address factors interfering with learning and teaching. Immediate action is essential to move beyond crisis driven responses toward a cohesive, proactive, and equitable system of student/learning supports.

For guidance and resources on how to pursue this transformation, see the

>[*National Initiative for Transforming Student and Learning Supports.*](#)

Equity of opportunity is fundamental to enabling civil rights; transforming student and learning supports is fundamental to promoting whole child development, advancing social justice, and enhancing learning and a positive school climate.



Educator burnout happens when dedication is met with constant demands and little support.

References for Burnout

- Avola, P., Soini-Ikonen, T., Jyrkiäinen, A., & Pentikäinen, V. (2025). Interventions to teacher well-being and burnout: A scoping review. *Educational Psychology Review*, 37(11).
<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10648-025-09986-2>
- Canva. (2024). *How teachers are using AI to battle burnout.*
<https://www.canva.com/newsroom/news/teacher-survey/>
- Pew Research Center. (2024). *What's It Like To Be a Teacher in America Today?*
<https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2024/04/04/whats-it-like-to-be-a-teacher-in-america-today/>
- RAND Corporation. (2025). Teacher well-being, pay, and intentions to leave in 2025.
https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RRA1108-16.html
- Reinke, W.M., Herman, K.C., Stormont, M., & Ghasemi, F. (2025). Teacher stress, coping, burnout, and plans to leave the field. *School Mental Health*, 17, 32-44.
<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s12310-024-09738-7>
- Santoro, D.A., & Price, D. (2021). *Teacher demoralization and leadership ethics.* Harvard Education Press.
- Stano, E. (2024). AI and teacher burnout: Can technology really help? *eSchool News.*
<https://www.eschoolnews.com/digital-learning/2024/12/03/ai-burnout-teachers-help/>
- Steiner, E. D., Levine, P. R., Doan, S., & Woo, A. (2025). *Findings from the State of the American Teacher Survey.* RAND Corporation.
<https://www.rand.org/education-employment-infrastructure/projects/state-of-the-american-teacher-and-the-american-principal.html>

To Listserv Participants

- Please share this resource with others. (Everyone has a stake in the future of public education and this is a critical time for action.)
- Let us know what's going on to improve how schools address barriers to learning & teaching and reengage disconnected students and families. (We can share the info with the over 140,000 on our listserv.)

For those who have been forwarded this and want to receive resources directly, send an email to Ltaylor@ucla.edu

Looking for information? (We usually can help.)

Have a suggestion for improving our efforts? (We welcome your feedback.)

We look forward to hearing from you! Contact: Ltaylor@ucla.edu

THIS IS THE END OF THIS ISSUE OF THE PRACTITIONER*

THE MORE FOLKS SHARE, THE MORE USEFUL AND INTERESTING THIS RESOURCE BECOMES!

**Send resources ideas, requests, comments,
and experiences for sharing
Ltaylor@ucla.edu**

*Who Are We? Our national Center was established in 1995 under the auspices of the School Mental Health Project (which was established in 1986). We are part of the Department of Psychology at UCLA. The Center is co-directed by Howard Adelman and Linda Taylor.