

Wellbeing for schoolteachers

Research summary

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Introduction

This foundational literature review provides an overview of the latest research into teacher well-being and its importance for teachers themselves, students and the school community.¹ From a global perspective, teachers have been experiencing high levels of stress, depression, anxiety and burnout, and low teacher well-being is having a detrimental effect on schools. Therefore, improving teacher well-being is an important task for schools and policymakers.

The report focuses on subjective well-being—how people feel about their own lives. However, due to the limited nature of the literature, the report also includes research on teacher well-being and occupational well-being for adults more broadly. The report is intended to give the International Baccalaureate, policymakers and educational leaders an understanding of the definitions of adult well-being, what influences teacher well-being and what evidence-based interventions might be used to improve teacher well-being.



Definitions and framework

Defining teacher well-being

There are three components of **subjective well-being** that influence how an individual assesses their own level of well-being: life satisfaction, affect and eudaimonia.² Schools can create their own definition of teacher well-being that is specific to their school community.³

For example, a school-specific definition of teacher well-being could be:

“This school promotes the well-being of our staff. We define well-being as our staff being satisfied with their school lives, having positive experiences at, and feelings about school, and believing that what they do at school gives them some purpose and meaning.”

The teacher well-being framework

The following framework (figure 1) indicates the drivers of teacher well-being. The framework should be used primarily as a discussion point among school stakeholders because each school is a unique ecosystem and some of the drivers will be more relevant in certain contexts than in others. It is important to use staff voice to identify drivers of well-being that are relevant in their school context.

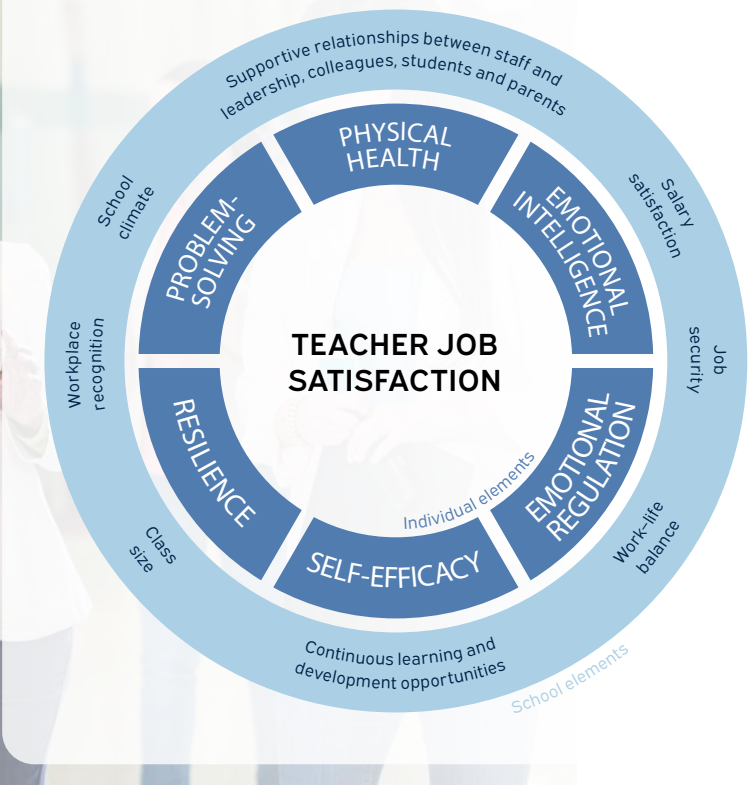
¹ This report is a companion report to the student well-being report, [Well-being in education in childhood and adolescence](#).

² Life satisfaction captures people’s satisfaction with their lives through their perceptions and experiences. Affect refers to the feelings, emotions and states of a person at a particular timepoint. Eudaimonia relates to whether people feel their life is worthwhile or has purpose and meaning.

³ Although there is a growing consensus around this definition of subjective well-being, the research is largely conducted by Western academics, using Western samples, and therefore the research has a Western bias. As research progresses, this definition should adapt to encompass more global perspectives.



Figure 1: The teacher well-being framework



Key findings from the literature review

1. Research shows that **teachers report one of the highest levels of occupational stress and burnout on the job**, compared with other professions. Workload is one of the most prominent factors leading teachers to leave the profession.
2. **The physical, organizational and social aspects of the workplace are important** for staff well-being. When teachers feel positive about the school in which they work, research indicates they suffer from less burnout, establish stronger parent-school bonds and have lower rates of attrition.
3. Research shows that **relationships and feeling socially supported** are the most important drivers of workplace well-being and job satisfaction.
4. An increasing body of research evidence indicates that **teacher-related factors are the most essential elements impacting learning in schools**. Importantly, **teacher well-being has a significant impact on the well-being and academic success of students**.
5. **Emotional intelligence, emotional regulation, self-efficacy and resilience** have all been associated with higher teacher well-being. School stakeholders should consider exploring these drivers with their school staff, as they could be effective pathways for improving teacher well-being.
6. **Workload** is a crucial element of teacher well-being and should be explored as a factor for improvement. When teachers do not have sufficient resources to meet the demands of the job, exhaustion and high levels of stress result, potentially leading to negative emotions and ill-health.
7. **School climate** is important for teacher well-being. Some supportive school climate factors include: participation in school decision-making and work autonomy; good teacher-student relationships; feelings of belonging and affiliation with the school; school openness to change, development and innovation; and having sufficient resources to carry out teaching duties.
8. Teacher well-being is higher when **leaders create a positive environment** within the school, for example, by prioritizing well-being policies and encouraging positive relationships among students and staff.
9. **Teacher voice** is an important aspect of their well-being. Research suggests that involving teachers in the decision-making process regarding their work environment and how their work is performed has positive outcomes for well-being.

Considerations for schools

1. Schools can create their own **definition of teacher well-being that is specific to their school community**.
2. The research highlights the **importance of investing in teacher well-being** not only for the sake of teachers themselves but also for the benefit of students and the school system. Schools should consider the impact that low teacher well-being has on not only teaching and students, but also the cost of attrition, recruitment and absenteeism. Improving teacher well-being could free up vital resources that could then be spent on learning and teaching.
3. The **well-being of teachers should not be overlooked or underestimated**; it can have wide ranging impact, for example, on student well-being, student sense of belonging, student academic attainment, student non-cognitive skills, teacher absenteeism, teacher productivity, teacher recruitment and teacher retention. It could be argued that **the impact of teacher well-being is so important to the functioning of a school** that it should be one of the first factors that is considered when looking to improve well-being across the school community.
4. **Individual-level factors**, such as gender and age, **should not be considered as determinants of teacher well-being**, and tailored support can benefit teachers at various career stages with different levels of experience. School stakeholders should look beyond these individual factors and use staff voice to identify areas that could be considered for impact.
5. Recognizing the importance of **salary satisfaction, job security and workload management** is crucial for enhancing teacher well-being.
6. Fostering **positive relationships** among colleagues, students, parents and leadership, cultivating a positive school climate and providing effective leadership support are key factors that contribute to teacher well-being.
7. As schools are unique ecosystems, **there is no one intervention that will be effective in all school settings**. Schools should consider each intervention's potential within their own context and community.
8. When considering **interventions to enhance teacher well-being**, it is advantageous to employ a combination of universal and targeted strategies. Care should also be taken when offering interventions to individuals who may be experiencing mental or physical illness.
9. **Teachers should be supported with rapid advances in technology**. Research shows that a lack of training and low confidence can have negative impacts on well-being-related factors such as workload and stress.
10. **Successful implementation** relies on several key factors, including the provision of clear guidelines, adequate resources, active employee participation and robust leadership support. It is critical to ensure that teachers have a voice and can actively participate in decision-making processes.

Conclusions

While there is much less scientific research in the field of teacher well-being than student well-being, a consensus among researchers underscores its paramount importance for schools. Teacher well-being has an unequivocal impact on both teacher professional performance and the well-being of students and thus demands close attention. The findings from this study provide practical avenues for schools to develop targeted initiatives that not only support teacher well-being but also contribute to a positive and thriving learning environment for students.

This summary was developed by Emily VanderKamp. A copy of the full report is available at: www.ibo.org/en/research/. For more information on this study or other IB research, please email research@ibo.org.

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