Missouri Schoolwide Positive Behavior Support

Positive Focus

Quarter 3

USING DATA TO IDENTIFY, TARGET, AND ADDRESS THE ROOT CAUSE OF EDUCATOR STRESS

The word "unprecedented" has become a cliché when referring to education during the COVID-19 pandemic, but education during COVID-19 really has placed educators under unprecedented amounts of stress. As a result, more educators are reporting increased levels of stress, depression and anxiety (Ozamiz-Etxebarria et al., Santabárbara, 2021), and more teachers report that they are considering leaving the profession (Zamarro et al., 2021).

Well-meaning administrators try to address educator stress by emphasizing the importance of self-care. While it is important for educators to take care of themselves and to take steps to mitigate the effects of stress, self-care practices alone only address the symptoms of stress, while leaving the cause of the stress in place! A recent survey comparing administrators' response to educator stress with teachers' identified needs shows that administrators most often responded by providing professional learning on self-care practices, while the teachers indicated that they needed more time to deal with the additional work resulting from the school's or district's response to Covid-19 (Ed Week Research Review, 2021).

So, while the root cause of stress may seem obvious (Covid, duh.), we really need to determine how the school's or district's response to the pandemic is impacting the work in ways that increase educator stress levels and address those factors.

It is in identifying and addressing the root cause that a data based decision-making (DBDM) process can help. A good DBDM process can help us to identify those factors most likely to impact our work in ways that cause stress and provides guidance so that we can address these factors in ways that turn down the volume while maintaining the high levels of instruction and learning our students need.

Any good DBDM process can work. However, to illustrate how DBDM can help reduce educator stress, we will use 4 questions identified by Tilly (2008) that must be addressed in any good DBDM process. These questions are,
1) "Is there a problem?"
2) "Why is the problem happening?"
3) "What can be done about the problem?" and
4) "Did the intervention work?"

(...to continue reading, click here)

Coaches Corner

Tier 1   Tier 2   Tier 3

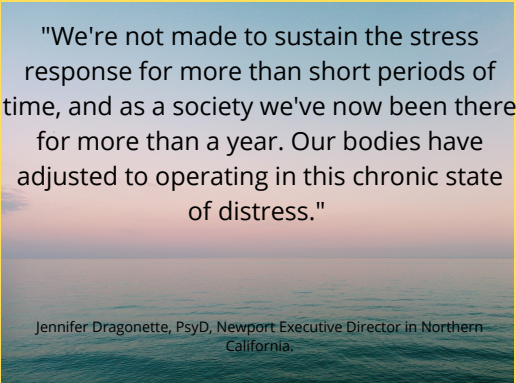# EDUCATOR STRESS: SYSTEMS FOR RESPONSE AND MITIGATION

The purpose of this article is to briefly acknowledge the current state of stress and burnout in educators today and to shift the focus from primarily a self-care response, to instead a systems level response. Included in this article are resources that are evidence-based and accessible online for use by individual educators as well as school and district leadership teams to help develop and refine their stress response toolkits. Schools are, at their heart, organizations focused on student learning; a process that is built on relationships between educators and students as well as between educators. How can learning organizations apply what they know works best to support students, in their planning for supporting educators?

Educator Stress

The human body is hardwired for responding to acute stress events by triggering neural electrical impulses and releasing various hormones. These neural and chemical responses result in specific behavioral responses that can be classified as either fight, flight, freeze, or fawn. From a survival perspective, having automatic stress reactions has served an evolutionary imperative. However, over the past almost 24 months most individuals have been in a chronic state of heightened alert and this has shifted their inner response systems into an allostatic overload.

The Science of Stress: How to Reduce Your Allostatic Load offers strategies for individuals to utilize to reduce their heightened stress response. In _Burnout: The Secret to Unlocking the Stress Cycle_, authors Emily and Amelia Nagoski offer an evidence-based process for all, particularly those in giving professions, to completing the stress cycle and managing their allostatic load.

"We're not made to sustain the stress response for more than short periods of time, and as a society we've now been there for more than a year. Our bodies have adjusted to operating in this chronic state of distress."

Jennifer Dragonette, PsyD, Newport Executive Director in Northern California.

Flight, fight, and freeze responses have been long understood. In recent years, the literature has recognized a fourth response classification: FAWNING. Fawning is when an individual responds to stress by trying to please whether it is to avoid any conflict or from a sense of duty. In this period of ongoing crisis, educators may be exhibiting fawning responses as they try to be a "team player", put students first, lend an extra hand to support colleagues, etc. Unfortunately, these pleasing responses are often at the detriment of educators as not honoring their personal boundaries can compound their own burnout. For more information on all 4 stress responses see _Fight, Flight Freeze or Fawn: What This Response Means_

Leadership and Organizational Systems for Response & Mitigation

Right now, educators across the United States are in various stages of fight, flight, freeze and fawning in response to impacts that the Covid-19 pandemic has set in motion in schools and districts. While it is important to engage in evidenced-based self-care practices, self-care alone is woefully inadequate in addressing what educators are currently experiencing. Further, only addressing self-care misses the critical roles and responsibilities that organizational leaders have in mitigating stressors.

In an article entitled _Teachers Are Not Okay But We Need Them to Be_, Chelsea Prax, a program director at the American Federation of Teachers, sums up the current status in many schools succinctly. "You can't deep-breathe your way out of a pandemic; you cannot stretch your way out of terrible class sizes; you cannot 'individual behavior' your way out of structural problems." Indeed, _School Leaders Take Note: Teacher Care is a Lot More Than Self-Care_ posits, "It is not teachers' responsibility to save and take care of themselves; it is our responsibility to help ensure and develop safe, supportive environments with them."

Where can leaders begin to develop or revisit their organizational stress response plans? What can organizations do to strategically respond to the ever changing challenges while prioritizing the physical and mental health of stakeholders? The Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports (2021) offers a resource for planning and implementing a multi-tiered support framework that focuses on support across all organizational levels, leveraging existing systems, and focusing on doing what works and making sure it is being done well.

CULTURE: HAVE YOU REFLECTED ON YOUR DATA CULTURE RECENTLY?

Oftentimes, schools and districts have data from all sorts of sources right at their fingertips. However, these same schools and districts feel they have no information. Does this sound familiar…data rich, information poor? This can be a result of a limited ability to organize, process and understand the data. Overcoming deeply-embedded practices where data is used superficially and/or inconsistently can be a challenge but one that needs to be faced head on if you truly want to close achievement gaps, both socially and academically. Reflecting on your district/school's data culture is a great place to start.

Reflecting on your Data Culture:		
	Defined as…	Questions to consider…
Beliefs	what the district/school and its stakeholders believe to be true about data	How might you collect feedback from your stakeholders regarding beliefs about data?
Values	the standards that are used to decide what is good and what is bad, what is right and what is wrong; the guidelines used for using data	How might you gain input from stakeholders on the standards/guidelines on what data will be collected and how it will be used?
Norms	the rules and expectations that guide data used for using data	How might you ensure all stakeholders have the same expectations for collecting and using data?
Resources	the data the district/school has chosen to collect and the tools available for accessing and using the data	Are all necessary stakeholders trained to collect and access the data?
Spaces	where data are used, stored, and shared	Do all the stakeholders that need access to the data have ready access?

To read more about assessing your data culture and for additional resources, check out the full article from Education Elements.

USING DATA TO DRIVE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Effective professional development should be data-driven, research-based, consistent and ongoing, relevant, and differentiated (Nobori, 2011). Additionally, quality professional development should include training, practice, and performance feedback (e.g., reinforcement for implementation fidelity to ensure accurate implementation occurs; Ismat, 1996).

So what happens when teachers are saying they are stressed, tired, and cannot handle "one more thing" like a professional development day? This might be a great opportunity to build on the idea of teaching teachers a self-management process to increase their ability to identify when they need additional support in their classrooms.

Through using student data (e.g., curriculum, assessments, grades, office discipline referrals, attendance) and teacher data (e.g., the use of Effective Teaching and Learning Practices, personnel attendance), staff may be able to identify what types of support and additional training they might need in order to increase their use of positive and proactive practices within their classrooms.

Individuals who assume the role of a "PBIS Coach" and / or "Instructional Coach" may be able to provide direct assistance to those staff members through prompts, team activities, and feedback cycles. Some coaches may even support the Professional Learning Communities (PLC) across schools to increase staff abilities to implement those identified Effective Teaching and Learning Practices and data-based decision making within their classrooms.

References:
Ismat, A. (1996). Making time for teacher professional development. ERIC Clearinghouse on Teaching and Teacher Education. Retrieved April 13, 2012, from http://www.ericdigests.org/1997-2/time.htm

Nobori, M. (2011). How principals can grow teacher excellence. Edutopia. Retrieved March 7, 2012, from http://www.edutopia.org/stw-school-turnaround-principal-teacher-developments-tips

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Applications due April 15
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We are so excited to bring our annual Summer Institute back to the Tan-Tar-A Conference Center in Osage Beach, Missouri! Make plans now to take off those superhero capes for a little while and recharge your super powers! SAVE THE DATE - **June 1-2, 2022 -** and join hundreds of educators from around the state who are ready to make a difference for students and staff!

We are pleased to announce our keynote speaker will be Mr. Darrion Cockrell, Missouri's 2021 Teacher of the Year and NEA's 2021 Horace Mann Friend of Education award winner. Mr. Cockrell, or Mr. DC, as he likes to be called, teaches physical education at Crestwood Elementary School in St. Louis, Missouri. He has nine years of teaching experience and has been at Crestwood since 2015. He has an inspiring story to tell of how teachers impacted his own life and how to foster relationships that create schools students want to attend.

Registration will open in March. Early Bird Rate is $200 prior to May 1st, and $250 after May 1st. Special room rates of $132.87 will be available.

SPREADING THE GOOD NEWS: PBIS CELEBRATIONS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The development of and focus on the school, family, and community partnerships are important for several reasons. Research shows that engaging these stakeholders improves school climate, supports families by providing services, and connects families to support within the school district and community; ensuring internal and external partnerships will assist students in becoming successful at school and in their community as they become adults (Epstein et., al, 2009).

As your team prepares to share its' SW-PBS celebrations and accomplishments from this school year, what key pieces of information will be shared with stakeholders such as the District Leadership Team, community and business partnerships, families, and student groups?

Use the chart below to help your team think about who, what, where, and how your accomplishments and celebrations will be shared with key stakeholders.

Who are your key stakeholders?	What information related to SW-PBS do these members want and need to know about?	Where will your team share SW-PBS celebrations and accomplishments?	How will your team share SW-PBS celebrations and accomplishments?