IN BRIEF:

Creating a Culture of Care

A Summary of the Guide for Education Leaders to Develop Systems and Structures That Support Educator Well-Being

This summary document shares highlights from "Creating a Culture of Care: A Guide for Education Leaders to Develop Systems and Structures That Support Educator Well-Being." The full guide explains the rationale for investing not only in educator well-being activities but also in systemwide changes that contribute to an overall culture of care. The suggested practices represent singular moves that, taken together and with intention to contribute to systemwide shifts, can transform schools and school systems to be more humane, holistic, and community-oriented.

The following figure depicts a shift from traditional ways of addressing educator burnout toward more inclusive, sustainable approaches that are suggested in the guide.

Self-Care → Community Care	Programs → Paradigms
Technical → Adaptive	Individual Activities → Collective and Systems Change
Transactional → Transformational	Ways of Doing → Ways of Being

This summary document provides an overview of the key concepts and strategies contained in the full guide, with page numbers from the guide to consult for more detailed explanations.

KEY CONCEPTS AND CONSIDERATIONS

Apply an Ecological Systems Lens (page 3)

An ecological systems framework acknowledges that the personal, collective, and systems spheres are intertwined and influence each other.[1] Using this framework, education leaders must address all spheres to make real and lasting changes to how educator well-being is addressed.

> **Ask:** How might you focus on a comprehensive and integrated approach that addresses underlying issues associated with stress, burnout, and retention, as well as health and well-being, rather than trying solutions that often do not work in isolation?

## Become Aware of Perception and Bias (page 7)

Individual experiences shape each person's worldview and how they perceive and respond to any situation. When working to support a diverse group, making assumptions and jumping to solutions may cause more harm than good. Education leaders should carefully consider the contextual and systemic factors at play to determine how any wellness initiative will serve their educators effectively and equitably.

> **Ask:** How might one's biases and perceptions influence the approaches used?

Identify Root Causes and Conditions for Well-Being (page 4)

Many wellness initiatives act as "bandages," or stopgap measures, but do not have sustained impact because they do not address the underlying causes of educator stress and burnout. It is important that education leaders understand that well-being requires attention to a complex, interconnected web which includes biological and environmental factors.

> **Ask:** How might solutions build from the science about how people's brains and bodies respond to and influence their contexts?

BRAIN

BODY

BEHAVIOR

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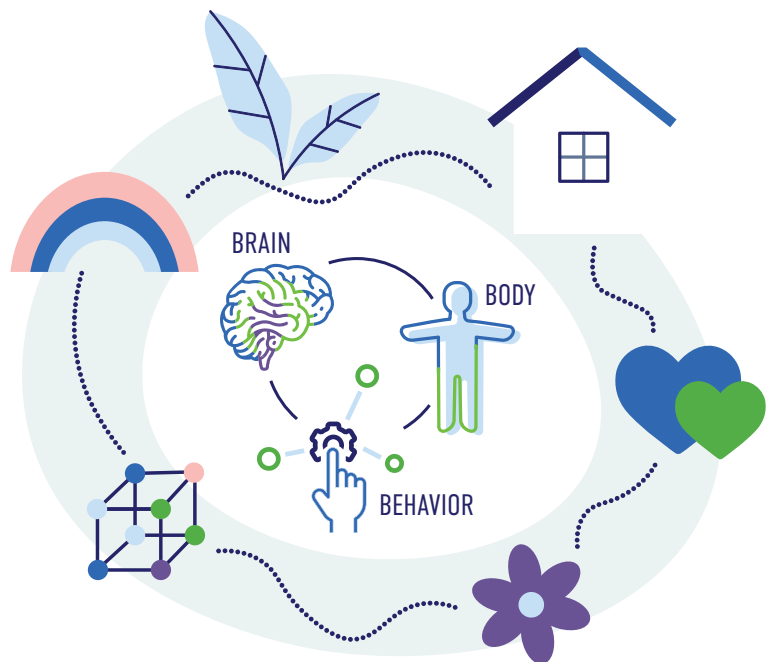
1   Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). *The ecology of human development*. Harvard University Press.

STRATEGIES

Safety and Security (page 13)

> *"...[A]ll of our counselors [are able] to see the adult staff.... [W]e also assigned a person half-time to only see adult staff.... I think that's been really important."*
>
> — *Scott Lindstrom,* "Post-Disaster Mobilization Toward Healing & Recovery" *audiocast*

- Adjust schedules and modify spaces to help staff meet their physical and psychological regulation needs.
- Improve your benefits to help staff access physical and mental health services.
- Model and promote work–life balance or harmony.
- Design for staff diversity and individuality.

Connectedness and Belonging (page 17)

> *"Oftentimes, we're moving at such a pace that there's a separation that happens between our commitment and our actual action or what we care about and our action, because we haven't taken that moment to actually see where am I in this moment? Am I here?"*
>
> — *Terna Tilley-Gyado,* "Connecting the Brain and Body to Support Equity Work: A Toolkit for Education Leaders"

- Create systems for responsiveness and attunement.
- Foster collaboration and teamwork.
- Cultivate "brave" spaces.
- Create structures for co-regulation.
- Create and reinforce shared commitment and purpose.

Meaning, Agency, and Growth (page 21)

> *"As leaders, remember that we are really setting the stage for success, and we define the expectations that allow our educators to excel at their craft.... [W]e're modeling what those expectations can be, and we're doing that self-care so that it becomes a climate and culture of norms."*
>
> — *Kaylene Case,* "Strategies for Districts to Support Self-Care for Educators During the COVID-19 Pandemic" webinar

- Establish systemwide commitments and policies centering equity, well-being, and care.
- Apply an asset frame.
- Create opportunities for bidirectional feedback and personal and professional growth.
- Collect human-centered data and engage in meaning-making with staff and leaders.
- View staff as experts and engage in organizational practices and processes prioritizing their choice and expertise.

KEEP IN MIND

The work of shifting systems is ongoing. It requires continuous monitoring and adaptation as people and systems change. Education leaders are encouraged to start where they can and to celebrate small, incremental successes.

> *"Small choices matter. One individual, one choice, or one shift at the micro level can have profound ripple effects at the macro level to influence larger systems change."*
>
> – Pate et al., "Creating a Culture of Care: A Guide for Education Leaders to Develop Systems and Structures That Support Educator Well-Being"