

Supporting the Whole Child: Connecting Brain Health, Systems, and Practice

Supporting the Whole Child by Supporting the Whole Team

July 8th, 2026
Session 7



What This Series Is

- An ongoing, twice-monthly learning series
- Grounded in the Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child (WSCC) framework
- Interactive and case-based (not just presentations)
- Designed for multiple disciplines and perspectives
- Focused on real-world practice and collaboration

A space to learn, share, and problem-solve together in support of the whole child



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Today's Session

- A high-level overview of recommended practices in school staff wellness, including a snapshot of historical trends.
- Ideas to strengthen and evolve current school staff wellness activities in your local context.
- An overview of current staff well-being offerings at Park Hill School District, and the impact of the expanded program within the first school year.

WSCC component(s): Employee wellness & Community Involvement



Learning Objectives

1. Explore how employee wellness has evolved and why it matters for staff and student success.
2. Discover the key ingredients of effective workplace wellness strategies.
3. Take away one practical strategy you can use to support staff well-being in your own setting.



Why Adult Wellness Matters in Schools

Foundation for School Success

Adult wellness supports staff retention, morale, and creates positive school climates that benefit students.

Link to Student Outcomes

Well-supported adults build strong relationships and manage classrooms effectively, enhancing student learning.

Workforce Strategy Importance

Supporting adult wellness addresses staffing challenges beyond pay, improving recruitment and retention.

Sustainable System Approach

Framing wellness as essential infrastructure encourages long-term, system-level support for staff and students.



Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child (WSCC) Framework



A Decade of School Staff Wellness

Early Wellness Initiatives

Initial efforts focused on individual self-care like fitness challenges, stress workshops, one-time wellness fairs.

Shift to Organizational Focus

Recognition grew that burnout and systemic stressors affect educator well-being beyond individual actions.

Incorporating Psychological Safety

Districts began emphasizing psychological safety, staff voice, and leadership roles in wellness.

Pandemic-Driven Awareness

COVID-19 highlighted chronic stress and emotional exhaustion, accelerating comprehensive wellness approaches.

- Healthy teachers support healthy & successful students
- Staff wellness impacts overall organizational functioning... workforce shortages & the bottom line \$\$\$
- “Trauma-informed” efforts include everyone in the school community
 - ◆ Lessons learned from rural schools & communities



Let's Talk Covid-19



Pandemic Impact on Staff Wellness

COVID-19 increased workload, emotional labor, and stress, making staff wellness a higher priority in schools.

**learning from healthcare settings*

Ongoing Wellness Challenges

Post-pandemic, job-related stress and burnout remain high due to staffing shortages & many interrelated contextual challenges.

**funding, politics, natural disasters, AI, social media...*

Organizational Responsibility Shift

Districts are shifting focus to policies reducing chronic stress and promoting healthy working conditions.

**our children, our schools, our people, our communities*



Recommended Practices for Staff Wellness

Leadership Commitment

Visible leadership prioritizes wellness by allocating time and modeling healthy practices, ensuring sustainability and legitimacy.

Staff Engagement

Involving staff through surveys and committees ensures wellness efforts meet actual needs and increase buy-in.

Mental Health Support

Providing access to counseling and crisis resources normalizes mental health care and reduces help-seeking barriers.

Organizational Conditions

Recognizing contributions and managing workload with flexible scheduling reduces stress and integrates wellness into daily work.



A Whole-School Approach to Adult Wellness

Integrated Wellness Framework

Adult wellness is aligned with school health, climate, and community partnerships for comprehensive support.

Multiple Wellness Dimensions

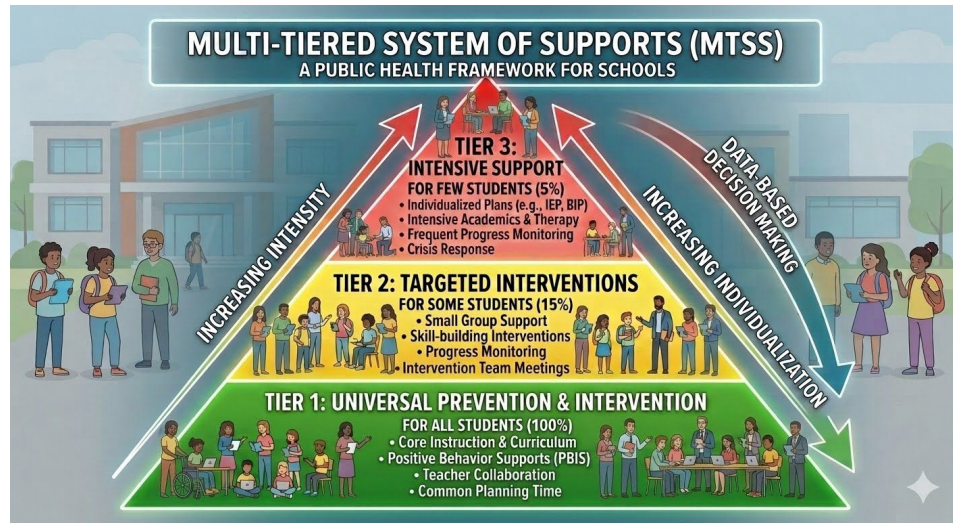
Wellness includes physical, emotional, social, and professional aspects essential for staff well-being.

Equity in Wellness

Wellness approaches address diverse needs of teachers, administrators, and support staff equitably.

Sustainable Wellness Systems

Embedding wellness into policies and routines creates lasting support beyond individual efforts.



Quick Assessment of Staff Wellness in Your School



Wellness Team and Goals

Presence of a designated wellness team and clear staff wellness goals help guide district efforts effectively.

Mental Health Supports

Visibility and accessibility of mental health resources like employee assistance programs support staff wellbeing.

Recognition and Professional Development

Recognizing staff contributions and integrating wellness into professional development fosters a positive work culture.

Data Review and Continuous Improvement

Reviewing wellness data and feedback guides ongoing improvements in district staff wellness activities.

[CDC Worksite Health Scorecard](#)

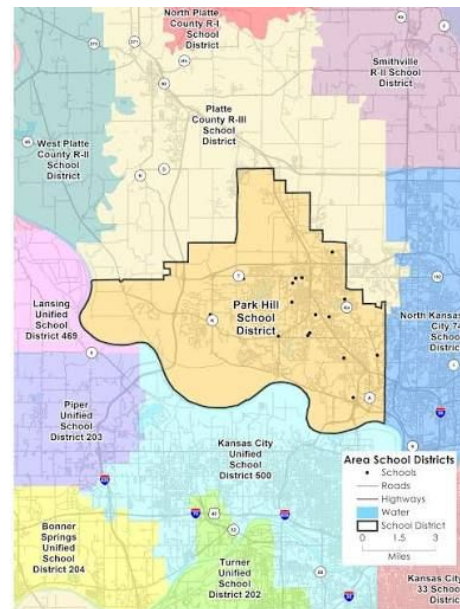


- A suburban school district, north of Kansas City, Missouri in southern Platte County
- Serving nearly **12,000 pre-k-12** students
 - 2 comprehensive high schools
 - 1 innovative personalized high school program
 - 4 middle schools
 - 12 elementary schools
 - 1 early education center
 - 1 therapeutic day school
- Approximately **2,000** staff members:
 - This includes over 1,000 certificated staff and roughly 1,000 support and operational staff.



Park Hill School District

Building Successful Futures • Each Student • Every Day



Park Hill's Employee Wellness Program Prior to 25-26

- Health Enhancement Coordinator
- On-site fitness center
- On-site annual health screenings
- District wide health challenges
- Low-cost metabolic testing
- Comprehensive benefits package, subsidized by the board of education
- Employee Assistance Program for mental health support



The Addition of a Dedicated Social Worker for Staff

- The Staff Well-Being Coordinator Role:
 - Promotes and provides access to staff well-being resources
 - Collaborates with stakeholders to support employee wellness initiatives
 - Offers short-term emergency support to staff in need
 - Educates staff on a variety of well-being topics
 - Manages and mediates workplace conflicts and responds to critical incidents
- The goal of this role is to foster a positive and supportive work environment, cultivate meaningful connections among staff, and build a strong sense of belonging across the district.



What Did This Look Like in Practice?

- **Individual Staff Well-Being Appointments**
 - Needs Assessments
 - Resource Identification
 - Self-Care and Safety Plans
 - Navigating Mental Health Options
 - Talking Through Specific Challenges
- **Monthly Newsletters**
 - Resources
 - Reading Guides
 - Relevant Mental Health Topics
 - Upcoming Events
- **New Programs**
 - Staff Support Groups
 - On-Site Crisis Support for Critical Incidents
 - Professional Development on Well-Being Topics
 - Restorative Conferences (beginning in 26-27)



Park Hill's Updated Staff Well-Being Program

- Employee Wellness vs. Staff Well-Being
 - “Wellness” is defined as *“the state of being in good health, especially as an actively pursued goal.”* For over a decade, Park Hill focused on helping employees pursue a healthy lifestyle and “build a wellness culture.” With programs like our fitness center, group exercise classes, and annual preventive health events now firmly established, it was perfect moment to broaden our vision.
 - “Well-Being,” on the other hand, is defined as *“the state of being comfortable, healthy, and happy,”* and embraces many dimensions including physical, emotional, social, and even spiritual. Supporting well-being means seeing each staff member as a whole person, not just as an employee.



Key Takeaways from Year 1

- Staff have many of the same needs as our families.
- Trust and confidentiality are key to providing these supports.
- Many just need to feel seen and heard.
- Staff are willing to be vulnerable, to a point.
- During a time when technology and AI are automating many well-being services, staff appreciate a human touch.



Case Discussion

- Tara (23, F) is a paraprofessional in local school district, working alongside a teacher in a 4th grade classroom.
- One day during class, the teacher stepped out to use the bathroom and make copies, and asked Tara to walk the class through their assignment.
- While explaining the assignment, Jane, a student in the classroom, interrupted Tara several times to ask clarifying questions. Tara, visibly frustrated, raised her voice at Jane and told her not to ask another question, or she'd be sent to the office.
- When the assignment was graded and returned, Jane received a poor grade, which sparked a discussion between Jane and her mother about what had happened.
- Jane's mother then e-mails the teacher, who realized Tara was at fault.



Case Discussion

- The teacher, who had recently taken note of Tara looking tired and showing up late to work, went to her principal to make a complaint.
- The principal was surprised, as Tara had a good work history, and had never received previous complaints.
- In turn, the principal schedules a meeting with Tara to discuss her performance at work.
- During this meeting, Tara becomes visibly upset, and cries, explaining that she has been under “a lot of emotional and financial stress” at home, but hoped to be getting things in order soon.
- Rather than disciplining Tara, or prodding Tara to say more about what is going on, she tells Tara about a new service in the district: Staff Well-Being Appointments. Tara agrees to make one.



Case Discussion

- After completing a needs assessment and discussing confidentiality, Tara discloses that she is currently staying at her sister's house, with her children (both of whom attend schools in the district) because she experienced domestic violence at the hands of the children's father.
- Tara notes that it has been hard, since her sister also has children, and the house is very chaotic. Tara has been unable to sleep and has even considered going back to live in her children's father's home, despite her family encouraging her to file a protection order.
- The Staff Well-Being Coordinator listens, validates concerns, and asks if it's okay to share some local resources with Tara. Tara agrees, and together, they make a plan to ensure Tara and her children's safety, find housing and help with groceries and other basic needs and get the family into therapy services.
- Once they have a plan in place, Tara also agrees that a protection order may be a good idea, and together they complete the form. Tara agrees to bring it in person to file it that evening.

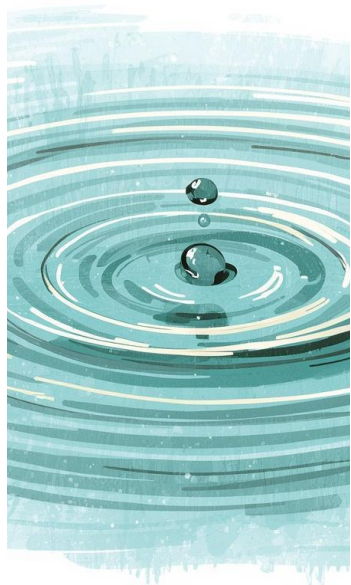


Case Discussion

- What do you imagine follow up might look like in this case?
- How might a similar case have played out in your own workplace?
What barriers are there to supporting staff in this way?



Today's Ripple



- Staff Well-Being *is* Student Well-Being
- Well-being is multi-faceted – don't forget the "basics"
- Start somewhere, anywhere... just start



Feedback Requested



What's Next

Employment as a Health Outcome: Supporting Youth with Disabilities

Join us July 30th at 12 PM CST with Amanda Ramsey &
Monica Koehn

