



COMPASSION FATIGUE AND TEACHER RESILIENCE

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INTRODUCTION

A Hanover Research (Hanover) member aims to improve supports for teachers experiencing compassion fatigue and explore strategies for building resilience among staff. Compassion fatigue, sometimes called vicarious trauma, is a term used to describe the cumulative distressing emotions felt by individuals who work closely with those who have experienced trauma.¹² Educators and mental health professionals particularly feel the physical, psychological, and emotional impacts of compassion fatigue through their interactions with students.³ Compassion fatigue may result from hearing students' trauma stories, seeing high levels of distress in the aftermath of a traumatic event, needing to retell a student's story, and/or seeing photos or images related to the trauma."⁴

This year and last, the COVID-19 pandemic and resulting shutdowns require school staff to help children and families cope with crises. School staff often find support extending beyond an educator's standard training and expertise. School personnel, particularly those who fail to engage in self-care or lack resilience training, are at increased risk of burnout or compassion fatigue.⁵ To mitigate the effects of compassion fatigue, teachers can practice behaviors, thoughts, and actions over time that strengthen resilience.⁶ Resilience is the process of adapting to and learning from circumstances in the face of adversity, trauma, and stress.⁷

To address compassion fatigue and resilience, the member has partnered with Hanover to review best practices in fostering teacher resilience and mitigating compassion fatigue. This report intends to provide district leaders with examples of strategies to guide the proactive and positive actions members can implement to support emotionally burdened teachers. Hanover divides this report into two sections:

- **Section I – Compassion Fatigue** discusses strategies for schools, districts, and individual teachers to proactively prevent and combat the effects of compassion fatigue.
- **Section II – Resilience** discusses attributes of resilience and best practices for teachers to build resilience individually and through school and district support.

¹ "Vicarious Trauma." American Counseling Association. p. 1. [2] Baicker, K. "The Impact of Secondary Trauma on Educators." *ASCD Express*, March 2020. <http://www.ascd.org/ascd-express/vol15/num13/the-impact-of-secondary-trauma-on-educators.aspx>

² Panlilio, C. and C. Tirrell-Corbin. "Our Research Shows Educators Are Experiencing Trauma During the Pandemic. Here's How We Can Reduce the Burden." *EdSurge*, March 2, 2021. <https://www.edsurge.com/news/2021-03-02-our-research-shows-educators-are-experiencing-trauma-during-the-pandemic-here-s-how-we-can-reduce-the-burden>

³ Walker, T. "'I Didn't Know It Had a Name': Secondary Traumatic Stress and Educators." National Education Association, October 2019. <https://www.nea.org/advocating-for-change/new-from-nea/i-didnt-know-it-had-name-secondary-traumatic-stress-and>

⁴ "Secondary Traumatic Stress and Self-Care Packet." National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments. p. 1. https://safesupportivelearning.ed.gov/sites/default/files/Building_TSS_Handout_2secondary_trauma.pdf

⁵ "Care for the Caregiver: Guidelines for Administrators and Crisis Teams." National Association of School Psychologists (NASP). <https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/school-climate-safety-and-crisis/mental-health-resources/care-for-caregivers-tips-for-families-and-educators/care-for-the-caregiver-guidelines-for-administrators-and-crisis-teams>

⁶ "Building Your Resilience." American Psychological Association, 2012. <https://www.apa.org/topics/resilience> [2] Helmke, S. "We Will Be Different: Let's Start Now to Build Teachers' Resilience to Bounce Back After Crisis." *The Learning Professional*, 41:3, June 2020. <http://web.b.ebscohost.com/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=0&sid=68955153-4f38-408e-8c41-1dfb01e9f53b%40sessionmgr103> [2] Duffield, S. and D. O'Hare. "Teacher Resilience During Coronavirus School Closures." The British Psychological Society, 2020.

⁷ "Building Your Resilience," Op. cit. [2] Mullen, C.A., L. Brantley Shields, and C.H. Tienken. "Developing Teacher Resilience and Resilient School Cultures." *AASA Journal of Scholarship and Practice*, 18:1, Spring 2021. <https://www.aasa.org/uploadedFiles/Publications/JSPSpring2021.FINAL.docx.pdf>

KEY FINDINGS



District and school leaders can effectively support teachers coping with compassion fatigue by ensuring that all staff recognize, identify, and address the signs and symptoms of secondary traumatic stress and compassion fatigue. Schools can offer training and professional learning to teach staff to understand the signs and ways to prevent secondary traumatic stress and burnout. Implementing preventive awareness allows staff to identify specific factors that put certain educators at greater risk and recognize the signs of trauma in themselves and others.



School leaders should foster a culture of support and understanding around trauma and compassion fatigue by providing in-school and out-of-school mental health support services. Support services include hiring on-site mental health counselors, scheduling time for stress-relieving social activities, and providing opportunities for teachers to discuss compassion fatigue with colleagues and mentors. Additionally, schools and districts can reduce the stigma around asking for help by encouraging educators to take breaks and prioritize and practice self-care as a means to both prevent and address compassion fatigue.



Teachers can implement self-care practices to mitigate compassion fatigue and build resilience. Educators can integrate physical, mental, emotional, and socially based prevention strategies into their daily routines and work habits to reduce the likelihood of compassion fatigue. Engaging in self-care through social connection helps reduce professional isolation and combats emotional fatigue. Schools and districts can support social connections by establishing peer support groups and assigning mentors to educators to discuss experiences, develop strategies, and build skills together for managing compassion fatigue.



Schools must understand what conditions lead to attrition to understand how to develop teacher resilience. The challenges teachers face that affect self-efficacy and require resilience include poor working conditions, lack of administrative support, lack of agency over school policy and procedure, and non-competitive salaries. These factors and others contribute to the likelihood of a teacher staying in the profession and job satisfaction, as well as commitment, efficacy, motivation, and positive sense of identity—all aspects that impact teacher resilience.

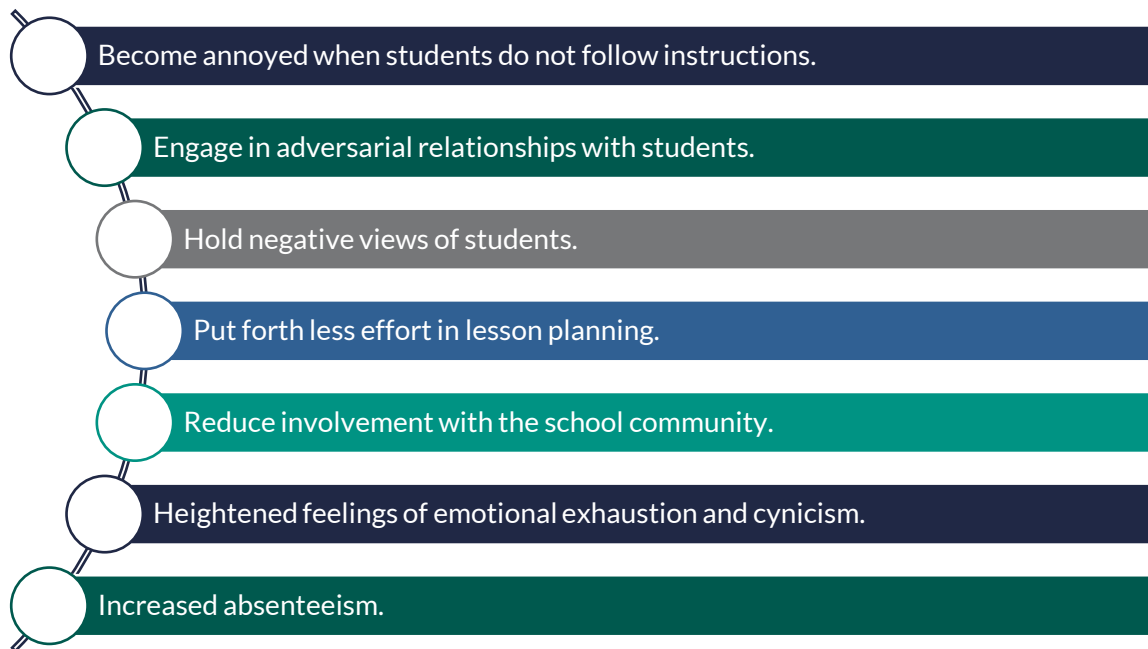
SECTION I: COMPASSION FATIGUE

The following section provides strategies for schools and individual teachers to implement to proactively prevent and combat the effects of compassion fatigue.

TEACHER BURNOUT AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

Burnout can manifest in many occupations but is particularly prevalent among teachers, with teaching considered one of the most stressful professions. Compassion fatigue and the increased stress over the past 18 months contribute to diminished resilience among teachers and results in reduced job performance. The Prosocial Classroom Model, a theory aimed at understanding how teacher wellbeing can impact student academic performance, proposes that teacher wellbeing and socioemotional functioning influence the capacity of teachers to effectively lead instruction and effectively manage classroom behaviors. Figure 1.1 highlights outcomes when teachers experience burnout or struggle with their wellbeing.⁸

Figure 1.1: Negative Outcomes for Teachers Experiencing Burnout



Source: Madigan⁹

The above outcomes have also been shown to create similar feelings in students, from reduced intrinsic motivation to a lack of depth of understanding to increased feelings of disconnectedness, and a lessened sense of competence. A meta-analysis of the association between teacher burnout and student misbehavior found that all dimensions of burnout were associated with higher levels of disruptive behaviors, and there is some evidence that students being taught by a teacher suffering from burnout tend to perform worse on exams, tests, and receive lower cumulative grades, than those taught by teachers not experiencing burnout.¹⁰

⁸ Madigan, Daniel. "Does Teacher Burnout Affect Students? A Systematic Review of its Association with Academic Achievement and Student-Reported Outcomes." *International Journal of Educational Research*, Nov 2020. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijer.2020.101714>

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

UNDERSTANDING WARNING SIGNS AND RISK FACTORS

School leaders and staff must learn to recognize signs and symptoms of compassion fatigue to reduce its impact on educators. Compassion fatigue is a “less stigmatizing way” to describe the psychological condition called secondary traumatic stress (STS), which is defined as “the emotional distress that results when an individual hears about the traumatic experiences of another individual.”¹¹ Educators experiencing STS can experience a variety of physical, psychological, emotional, and social symptoms, including increased anxiety, negative thoughts related to their own or students’ traumatic experiences, trouble concentrating, and feeling fatigued, numb, detached, powerless, and socially and emotionally withdrawn from others.¹² Schools can ensure that all administrators and staff learn to identify signs of compassion fatigue in themselves and others to implement preventative awareness.¹³ Figure 1.2 outlines common signs of secondary traumatic stress exhibited by educators and other caregiving professionals.

Figure 1.2: Common Warning Signs of STS and Compassion Fatigue

PHYSICAL	PSYCHOLOGICAL
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Chronic fatigue ▪ Sleeping problems ▪ Appetite change ▪ Headaches ▪ Stomachaches ▪ Muscle tension 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Excessive worrying and anxiety ▪ Decreased concentration and difficulty with decision making ▪ Intrusive, recurring, negative thoughts and images related to students’ traumatic stories ▪ Disconnection or numbing ▪ Recurrent dreams about students’ traumas ▪ Minimization of an experience by comparing it with another situation regarded as more severe ▪ Feelings of professional inadequacy
EMOTIONAL	SOCIAL AND INTERPERSONAL
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Extreme anger and increased irritability ▪ Demoralization or resignation ▪ Extreme depression, hopelessness, suicidal thoughts ▪ Inability to empathize ▪ Increased drug or alcohol use ▪ Feeling numb or detached from students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Difficulties with relationships at home or work ▪ Increased staff arguments ▪ Increased impatience with students ▪ Social withdrawal, isolation, or absenteeism ▪ Over-control at work and compulsion to be a “rescuer” in every crisis ▪ Decreased patience with students ▪ Poor boundaries with work and personal life

Source: Multiple¹⁴

¹¹ Baicker, “The Impact of Secondary Trauma on Educators,” Op. cit.

¹² “Secondary Traumatic Stress and Self-Care Packet,” Op. cit., p. 1.

¹³ “Care for the Caregiver,” Op. cit.

¹⁴ Table content verbatim and nearly verbatim from “Care for the Caregiver,” Op. cit. [2] “Secondary Traumatic Stress and Self-Care Packet.” National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments, 2020. https://safesupportivelearning.ed.gov/sites/default/files/Building_TSS_Handout_2secondary_trauma.pdf [3] National Child Traumatic Stress Network. “Self Care for Educators.” American Psychological Association, 2008. http://tsafor schools.org/_static/tsa/uploads/files//self-carecnetsn.pdf [4] “Secondary Traumatic Stress.” U.S. Department of Health & Human Services. <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/trauma-toolkit/secondary-traumatic-stress>



Additional Information

For more common warning signs of vicarious trauma, see this fact sheet developed by the [American Counseling Association](#).¹⁵ The warning signs listed in this fact sheet aim to support mental health counselors but may also apply to teaching and other caregiving professions that experience vicarious trauma.

Although any educator who provides emotional support to students can experience compassion fatigue, the National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN) and National Center on Safe Support Learning Environments (NCSSLE) identify factors that put certain educators at greater risk for STS. Educators with greater risk include those with the following characteristics:¹⁶

- Prior exposure to trauma;
- Unresolved personal trauma;
- Female gender identity;
- Highly empathic;
- Young age;
- Inexperienced in the field;
- Lack of professional training;
- Working with unsupportive administrations; and
- Working in communities with high levels of poverty, crime, generational/historical trauma, tragic events, and natural disasters.

Schools can empower staff to identify and acknowledge when they experience secondary traumatic stress or burnout.¹⁷ Not having the ability to identify symptoms or name these conditions can be extremely isolating for teachers and further the negative consequences.¹⁸ Without school-wide acknowledgment, training, and support for secondary traumatic stress and self-care, educators feel isolated in the experience and believe that they must address the problem alone.¹⁹ Additionally, reflecting on how supporting students who have experienced trauma impacts teacher well-being can help staff recognize the importance of self-care and seeking help when needed.²⁰

IMPLEMENTING STRATEGIES FOR SCHOOLS AND DISTRICTS

Building a culture of awareness around compassion fatigue is a commonly cited strategy for mitigating this challenge. Through building a culture of awareness, the school community recognizes compassion fatigue as a serious problem and actively supports community members coping with secondary trauma.²¹ Schools can

¹⁵ “Vicarious Trauma,” Op. cit.

¹⁶ Adapted nearly verbatim from “Secondary Traumatic Stress and Self-Care Packet,” Op. cit. [2] Baicker, K. “The Impact of Secondary Trauma on Educators.” ASCD, March 12, 2020. <https://www.ascd.org/el/articles/the-impact-of-secondary-trauma-on-educators> [2] “Secondary Traumatic Stress: A Fact Sheet for Child-Serving Professionals.” The National Child Traumatic Stress Network. https://www.nctsn.org/sites/default/files/resources/fact-sheet/secondary_traumatic_stress_child_serving_professionals.pdf

¹⁷ Plumb, J.L., K.A. Bush, and S.E. Kersevich. “Trauma-Sensitive Schools: An Evidence-Based Approach.” *School Social Work Journal*, 40:2, 2016. p. 52. <http://www.communityschools.org/assets/1/AssetManager/TSS.pdf>

¹⁸ Walker, Op. cit.








¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Plumb, Bush, and Kersevich, Op. cit., p. 52.

²¹ Lander, J. “Helping Teachers Manage the Weight of Trauma.” Harvard Graduate School of Education, September 26, 2018. <https://www.gse.harvard.edu/news/uk/18/09/helping-teachers-manage-weight-trauma>

build a culture of awareness by *educating staff about the effects of trauma*, STS, and related conditions and provide regular opportunities for staff to address potential issues related to STS.²² Figure 1.3 highlights school-based strategies for supporting staff experiencing compassion fatigue.

Figure 1.3: Strategies for Building a Culture of Awareness and Acknowledgment

	Acknowledge and validate staff concerns about students and the difficulty of their job.
	Promote a culture where staff members feel comfortable asking for help and taking time during the day to manage stress.
	Ensure that encouragement to take breaks is not perceived as weakness or inability to do the job.
	Check-in with staff collectively and individually to assess their level of need.
	Appreciate staff publicly and privately.
	Create an organizational culture that normalizes the effects of working with trauma survivors.
	Encourage staff to meet mental health needs and offer wellness activities to promote routine health care.

Source: Multiple²³

Districts can commit to *developing trauma-sensitive environments* in their schools to support the culture of awareness and reduce compassion fatigue among educators.²⁴ Schools with trauma-sensitive environments appropriately respond to and support staff experiencing trauma through a shared commitment from school leaders and staff and both school-wide and individual strategies.²⁵ To do this, schools should adopt policies that promote staff self-care, create a safe, positive, and welcoming school climate, supports the physical, mental, social, emotional, and academic needs of all students and staff, and creates structures and environments that reduce unnecessary trauma or experiences of re-traumatization.²⁶

²² Figure contents quoted verbatim from: “Secondary Traumatic Stress and Self-Care Packet,” Op. cit., p. 4.

²³ Table contents quoted verbatim and nearly verbatim from Lander, Op. cit. [2] “Trauma-Informed School Strategies during COVID-19,” Op. cit. [3] “Care for the Caregiver,” Op. cit. [4] “Creating, Supporting, and Sustaining Trauma-Informed Schools: A System Framework.” The National Child Traumatic Stress Network, 2017. https://www.nctsn.org/sites/default/files/resources/creating_supporting_sustaining_trauma_informed_schools_a_systems_framework.pdf [5] “Secondary Traumatic Stress,” Op. cit.

²⁴ “Secondary Traumatic Stress and Self-Care Packet,” Op. cit., p. 4.

²⁵ Ibid.

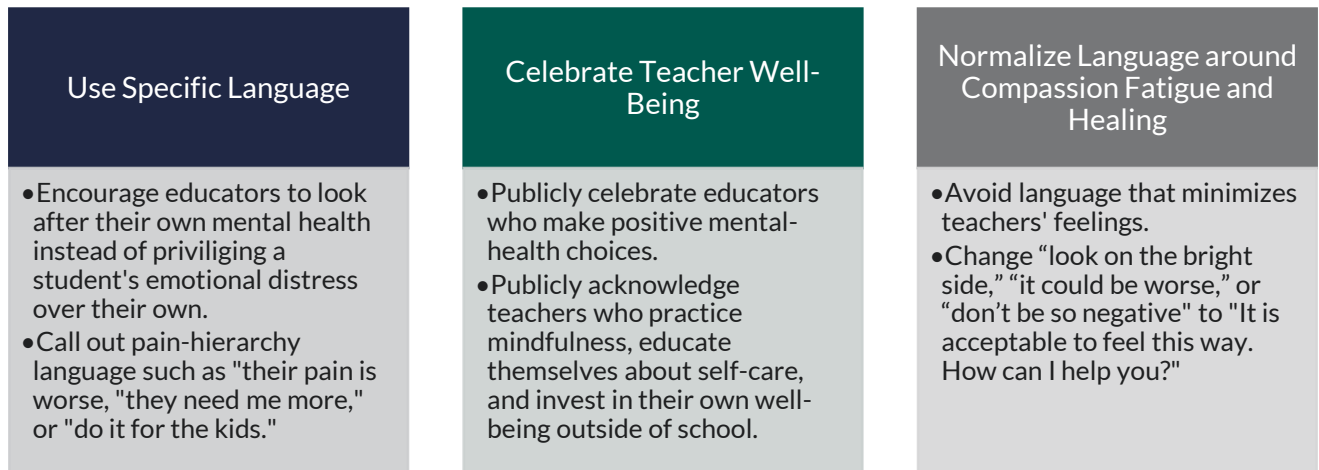
²⁶ [1] “Creating, Supporting, and Sustaining Trauma-Informed Schools: A System Framework,” Op. cit., p. 4. [2] Harper, K. and D. Temkin. “Responding to Trauma through Policies That Create Supportive Learning Environments.” Child Trends, 2019. p. 2. https://www.childtrends.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/RespondingTraumaPolicyGuidance_ChildTrends_January2019.pdf [3] “Secondary Traumatic Stress,” Op. cit.

Schools working to implement trauma-sensitive environments for staff should follow the following five steps:²⁷

- **Listen:** Create a safe space for teachers to share their stories.
- **Protect:** Preserve the teacher's confidentiality and work to keep them safe from their stressors.
- **Connect:** Connect with the teacher's experience and use that to help provide them with resources for stress management.
- **Model:** Develop systems and plans for stress management.
- **Teach:** Using these steps, help one another in teacher capacities, continue to learn more about STS, and share experiences.

Schools and districts can also build a culture of awareness and support secondary trauma healing by *re-examining the language* used around compassion fatigue and mental health. Figure 1.4 describes strategies for reframing the conversation.

Figure 1.4: Strategies for Reframing Conversations



Source: EdWeek²⁸

District leaders can *use assessment tools*, such as surveys, questionnaires, checklists, or scales to identify and monitor levels of compassion fatigue, STS, and other related conditions among staff.²⁹ Tracking this information will better inform school strategies to support teachers coping with compassion fatigue. For more information, see the three formal assessment tools linked below:³⁰

- [Compassion Fatigue and Satisfaction Self-Test](#)
- [Professional Quality of Life Scale, ProQOL 5](#)
- [School Self-Care Plan, National Center for Safe Supportive Learning Environments](#)

²⁷ Bullet points quoted verbatim from: Baicker, "The Impact of Secondary Trauma on Educators," Op. cit.

²⁸ Figure content taken verbatim and nearly verbatim from Ewing, S. "Compassion Fatigue Is Overwhelming Educators During the Pandemic." *Education Week*, June 4, 2021. <https://www.edweek.org/teaching-learning/opinion-compassion-fatigue-is-overwhelming-educators-during-the-pandemic/2021/06>

²⁹ "Secondary Traumatic Stress: A Fact Sheet for Child-Serving Professionals," Op. cit.

³⁰ Bulleted links obtained from "Compassion Fatigue/Satisfaction Self-Test (CFS)." [2] "The ProQol Measure In English and Non-English Translations." ProQOL. <https://proqol.org/proqol-measure> [2] "Secondary Traumatic Stress and Self-Care Packet," Op. cit.






Schools and districts can also provide supports and services to teachers through professional development, counseling, mental health support services, mentorship, and peer support groups. Schools and districts can ensure that all administrators and staff understand compassion fatigue by *offering professional development and training* to teach staff the signs and ways to prevent secondary traumatic stress and burnout.³¹ Professional learning sessions encourage open discussions among staff and administrators, promote positive stress management strategies, and train staff on social and emotional skills to support staff and student well-being.³²

School leaders should also ensure staff members have access to *in-school and external mental health support services*. Schools should encourage educators to use these resources and provide access in a way that reduces the stigma associated with compassion fatigue – opposing the perception that compassion fatigue reflects weakness or inability to do the job.³³ Districts can connect teachers to resources by providing the following supports in each school:³⁴

- On-site mental health professionals available to all staff;
- Substitutes available when staff need to leave and receive support;
- Counseling support services and Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) available to all staff; and
- Designated time for stress-relieving social activities.

Notably, schools should foster a culture of support and compassion around trauma and compassion fatigue, particularly by *offering peer support groups and staff mentorship opportunities*. Schools and districts can develop formal strategies to reduce professional isolation using the action steps outlined in Figure 1.5.³⁵

Figure 1.5: Strategies to Reduce Professional Isolation

	Establish peer support groups that share experiences, strategies, and skills for managing compassion fatigue.
	Schedule peer meetings for educators weekly or monthly and invite a mental health professional to provide additional support.
	Designate time during professional development to reflect on and discuss compassion fatigue.
	Host a back-to-school visit for staff to socialize prior to students returning.
	Pair staff with a mentor or wellness accountability buddy at the beginning of the school year to hold them accountable to wellness goals throughout the year.

³¹ “Creating, Supporting, and Sustaining Trauma-Informed Schools: A System Framework,” Op. cit., pp. 10–11.

³² Verbatim from “Secondary Traumatic Stress,” Op. cit. [2] “Creating, Supporting, and Sustaining Trauma-Informed Schools: A System Framework.” The National Child Traumatic Stress Network, 2017. pp. 10–11. https://www.nctsn.org/sites/default/files/resources/creating_supporting_sustaining_trauma_informed_schools_a_systems_framework.pdf [3] “Trauma-Informed School Strategies during COVID-19,” Op. cit.

³³ Lander, Op. cit. [2] “Care for the Caregiver,” Op. cit. [3] “Creating, Supporting, and Sustaining Trauma-Informed Schools: A System Framework,” Op. cit.

³⁴ Table content verbatim and nearly verbatim from “Care for the Caregiver,” Op. cit. [2] “Secondary Traumatic Stress,” Op. cit. [2] “Trauma-Informed School Strategies during COVID-19,” Op. cit. [2] Baicker, “The Impact of Secondary Trauma on Educators,” Op. cit.

³⁵ Figure contents quoted verbatim from: “Secondary Traumatic Stress and Self-Care Packet,” Op. cit., p. 4.



Check-in with staff over texts, emails, and virtual staff meetings and explicitly encourage staff to check in with each other.

Source: Multiple³⁶



Spotlight: San Lorenzo Unified School District

San Lorenzo Unified School District's (San Lorenzo USD) Student Support Services division maintains a webpage dedicated to providing trauma-informed care resources for staff. The site defines vicarious trauma and compassion fatigue and notes that "To avoid or address the impact of Compassion Fatigue, it is essential that educators attend to the ABCs of self-care: Awareness, Balance, and Connection." San Lorenzo USD offers a wide variety of resources, tools, and articles for staff to manage trauma, self-care, and address compassion fatigue.³⁷ For more information on trauma-informed care resources, visit the [San Lorenzo USD website](#).³⁸

IDENTIFYING STRATEGIES FOR TEACHERS

Strategies for mitigating compassion fatigue among teachers typically involve *self-care practices*. Providing opportunities for self-care and setting expectations that educators will engage in self-care helps ensure that staff can continue to appropriately support students.³⁹ A report from WestEd explains that:⁴⁰

The key to self-care is to give yourself time to recharge your batteries on a regular basis, as well as set reasonable and solid boundaries for yourself. We cannot always fix everything we encounter with others, so sometimes the goal is to give the person a brief respite from their problems. You cannot take care of others if you are not taking care of yourself.

Examples of self-care activities for educators can include:⁴¹

- Finding ways to relax and "blow off steam;"
- Ensuring appropriate nutrition;
- Partaking in activities that promote physical fitness;
- Engaging in spiritual wellness; and
- Spending time with friends and family.

Self-care is also important as a preventative measure, as "[t]eachers who are unable to regularly attend to their own care and develop burnout, compassion fatigue, or vicarious trauma may be unable to adequately

³⁶ Figure contents quoted verbatim and nearly verbatim from Lander, Op. cit. [2] "Trauma-Informed School Strategies during COVID-19," Op. cit. [2] Goode, H. and E. Shinkle. "4 Ways to Reduce the Impact of Secondary Traumatic Stress on Teachers." Global Teletherapy, March 15, 2021. <https://globalteletherapy.com/4-ways-to-reduce-secondary-traumatic-stress-on-teachers/> [2] "Care for the Caregiver," Op. cit. [2] Duffield and O'Hare, Op. cit.

³⁷ "Trauma Informed Care Resources." San Lorenzo Unified School District.

https://www.slzsd.org/apps/pages/index.jsp?uREC_ID=2203502&type=d&pREC_ID=1446492

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ [1] "What Are the Basics of a Trauma-Informed Environment?" KnowledgeWorks.

<https://knowledgeworks.org/resources/basics-trauma-informed-environment/> [2] "Creating Trauma-Informed Learning Environments." WestEd, 2019. p. 2. <https://www.wested.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/TIP-K-3-TIP-SHEET.pdf>


⁴⁰ Block quoted reproduced verbatim from Herriford, W. "What Are the Basics of a Trauma-Informed Environment?"

KnowledgeWorks, February 7, 2019. <https://knowledgeworks.org/resources/basics-trauma-informed-environment/>

⁴¹ Plumb, Bush, and Kersevich, Op. cit., p. 52.


respond to their students.”⁴² When educators take care of themselves, they model proper self-care practices for their students and demonstrate how to prioritize mental health and social-emotional needs.⁴³ Figure 1.6 highlights recommended practices for self-care, particularly addressing the common signs and symptoms of compassion fatigue.

Figure 1.6: Strategies for Teacher Self-Care

 Physical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Healthy diet; ▪ Adequate sleep; ▪ Breaks during the workday; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Exercise; ▪ Limited alcohol and substance use; and ▪ Relaxation and deep breathing.
 Emotional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Watch for signs of secondary trauma; ▪ Know limitations and take fewer responsibilities; ▪ Good time-management skills; ▪ Practice spiritual/religious faith; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Engage in hobbies or creative activities; ▪ Calming self-talk, soothing music, visualization; and ▪ Practice self-compassion.
 Mental	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Count to five before responding to a situation; ▪ Talk to students quietly when feeling like yelling; ▪ Maintain daily routines; ▪ Check-in with self to identify areas of struggle; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Note the most stressful times during the school day; and ▪ Integrate scheduled coping strategies into a daily routine like deep breathing and mindfulness.
 Social	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Stay connected to friends/family; ▪ Engage in activism, advocacy, and community outreach; ▪ Debrief events with colleagues at end of the day; ▪ Attend STS-related professional development; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Join virtual support groups; ▪ Attend counseling; and ▪ Plan virtual coffee breaks or lunch hours with colleagues, discuss topics outside of work, or share strategies for coping with compassion fatigue.

Source: Multiple⁴⁴

Spotlight: Schenectady City School District



Schenectady City School District (SCSD) highlights the impact of compassion fatigue for educators working with students experiencing trauma and recommends that school staff engage in self-care. The district offers the following suggestions for engaging in self-care:⁴⁵

- Guard against your work becoming the only activity that defines who you are;
- Keep perspective by spending time with children who are not experiencing traumatic stress;
- Be sure to eat well, exercise, engage in fun activities, take a break during the day, and find time to self-reflect; and
- Practice Mindful Identity and Connection (meditation).

Compassion fatigue can be addressed at both the prevention and treatment levels.⁴⁶ Educators and caregivers can integrate prevention strategies into their daily routines and work habits; however, even the most experienced educators and caregivers can struggle with emotional fatigue.⁴⁷ Figure 1.7 offers individual prevention and treatment strategies for teachers to consider.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ “Trauma-Informed School Strategies during COVID-19,” Op. cit.

⁴⁴ Ibid. [2] Goode and Shinkle, Op. cit. [2] Panlilio and Tirrell-Corbin, Op. cit. [2] “Care for the Caregiver,” Op. cit.

⁴⁵ Bullet points quoted verbatim “Trauma Sensitive Schools.” Schenectady City School District, 2018. p. 4.


⁴⁶ “Secondary Traumatic Stress,” Op. cit.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

Figure 1.7: Compassion Fatigue Prevention and Treatment Strategies for Teachers

	STRATEGY	DETAILS
Prevention Strategies	Life Balance	Work to establish and maintain a diversity of interests, activities, and relationships.
	Relaxation Techniques	Ensure downtime by practicing meditation or guided imagery.
	Connect with Nature	Garden or hike to remain connected to the earth and help maintain perspective about the world.
	Creative Expression	Drawing, cooking, or photography to expand emotional experiences.
	Assertiveness Training	Learn to be able to say “no” and to set limits when necessary.
	Interpersonal Communication Skills	Improve written and verbal communication to enhance social and professional support.
	Cognitive Restructuring	Regularly evaluate experiences and apply problem-solving techniques to challenges.
	Time Management	Set priorities and remain productive and effective.
	Plan for Coping	Determine skills and strategies to adopt or enhance when signs of compassion fatigue begin to surface.
Treatment Strategies	Focusing on Self-Care	Making a healthy diet, exercise, and regular sleep priorities reduces adverse stress effects.
	Journaling	Writing about feelings related to helping or caregiving and about anything that has helped or been comforting can help make meaning out of negative experiences.
	Seeking Professional Support	Working with a counselor who specializes in trauma to process distressing symptoms and experiences provides additional perspectives and ideas.
	Joining a Support Group	Talking through experiences and coping strategies with others who have similar circumstances can enhance optimism and hope.
	Learning New Self-Care Strategies	Adopting a new stress management technique such as yoga or progressive muscle relaxation can reduce adverse physical stress symptoms.
	Asking for Help	Asking for social supports or co-workers to assist with tasks or responsibilities can hasten healing.
	Recognizing Success and Creating Meaning	Identifying aspects of helping that have been positive and important to others assists with resolving trauma and distress.

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services⁴⁸



Additional Resources

The Greater Good in Education, a research institution based at The University of California, Berkeley, provides online stress management resources for educators. These resources include guided meditations, mindfulness practices, and journaling exercises. For more information and resources, visit the Greater Good in Education [Stress Management for Educators](https://ggie.berkeley.edu/collection/stress-management-for-educators/) website.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Verbatim from Ibid.

⁴⁹ “Stress Management for Educators.” Greater Good In Education. <https://ggie.berkeley.edu/collection/stress-management-for-educators/>

SECTION II: RESILIENCE

The following section discusses attributes of resilience and best practices for teachers to build resilience individually and through school and district support.



EXPLORING FACTORS OF TEACHER RESILIENCE

Schools must understand what conditions lead to attrition to understand how to develop teacher resilience. The challenges teachers face that affect self-efficacy and require resilience include:⁵⁰

- Poor working conditions;
- Lack of resources;
- Inadequate administrative support;
- Noncompetitive compensation;
- Subpar induction programs; and
- Demographic factors (rural areas typically witness greater teacher shortages).

Teacher resilience expert Caroline Mansfield developed a framework that identifies four dimensions of teacher resilience: professional, motivational, emotional, and social.⁵¹ Within these dimensions, individual factors (personal to the teacher) and contextual factors (originating from the school) impact a teacher’s ability to persevere.⁵² These factors also contribute to teacher retention, job satisfaction, commitment, efficacy, motivation, and a positive sense of identity.⁵³ In identifying attributes of resilient teachers, schools can provide targeted support to individuals experiencing gaps in certain areas. Figure 2.1 outlines individual and contextual factors of resilience.

Figure 2.1 Individual and Contextual Factors of Resilience



	INDIVIDUAL FACTORS	CONTEXTUAL FACTORS
 Professional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Professional autonomy ■ Commitment to teaching ■ Flexible locus of control ■ Organization and preparation ■ Effective teaching skills ■ Sense of making a difference ■ Reflection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Work conditions ■ Small class size ■ Competitive compensation ■ Reduced workload ■ Sound professional development ■ Facilities ■ Safety
 Motivational	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Optimism ■ Focus on improvement ■ Education is viewed as important ■ Self-efficacy ■ Calling to teach ■ Intrinsic motivation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ School Culture ■ Motivated students ■ Funding for programs ■ Clear administrative goals

⁵⁰ Mullen, Brantley Shields, and Tienken, Op. cit.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.

	INDIVIDUAL FACTORS	CONTEXTUAL FACTORS
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Perseverance through challenges 	
 Emotional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Religion, values, and beliefs ▪ Regulating Emotions ▪ Coping skills and Ability to Bounce Back ▪ Sense of humor ▪ Passion for their career ▪ Love for Children ▪ Caring for one’s well-being 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Support from administration ▪ Support from parents ▪ Behavioral climate
 Social	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Strong interpersonal and communication skills ▪ Problem-solving skills ▪ Positive Relationships ▪ Ability to seek help 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Opportunity to build professional relationships ▪ Meaningful participation in decision making ▪ Induction/coaching programs

Source: Mullen et al⁵⁴

IMPLEMENTING STRATEGIES FOR SCHOOLS AND DISTRICTS

Among the evidence-based factors influencing teacher resilience, *administrative support, teacher agency, and salary* emerge as predictive of teacher self-efficacy, confidence, and attrition.⁵⁵ To help teachers feel supported and develop resilience, schools can implement the strategies outlined in Figure 2.2.⁵⁶

Figure 2.2: Strategies to Support Teacher Resilience

Administrative Support

- Establish organized leadership, sufficient supervision, high expectations, and fair workplace conditions.
- Provide sufficient financial support and resources for programming.
- Communicate clear school vision through policy and procedures.
- Demonstrate support by recognizing teachers' hard work.

Teacher Agency

- Empower teachers to assume leadership roles and participate in decision-making.
- Provide opportunities for teachers to influence curriculum, school policy, student behavior, and administrative decisions.

Salary and Benefits

- Increase salary, provide adequate benefits, and establish fair leave policies.
- Add performance incentives.

Source: Mullen et al⁵⁷

⁵⁴ Adapted verbatim and nearly verbatim from Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ “Secondary Traumatic Stress and Self-Care Packet,” Op. cit. [2] Mullen, Brantley Shields, and Tienken, Op. cit.

⁵⁷ Adapted verbatim and nearly verbatim from Mullen, Brantley Shields, and Tienken, Op. cit.

School leadership can implement strategies to better support personnel, facilitate a positive school culture, and diminish teacher workload to support teacher resilience.⁵⁸ Figure 2.3

Figure 2.3 provides examples of actionable steps districts and schools can take to bolster teacher resilience.

Figure 2.3: School and District Actions to Support Resilience

PERSONNEL SUPPORT	SCHOOL CULTURE	TEACHER WORKLOAD
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Create induction programs. ▪ Incorporate targeted coaching and professional development. ▪ Establish teacher support groups, coaching, buddy systems, and network strategies for relationship management. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Create a positive collegial school culture. ▪ Demonstrates inclusive and collaborative leadership. ▪ Facilitate “relational resilience” so teachers and administrators are mutually supportive and trusting. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Streamline teacher workload. ▪ Considers workload implications as jobs and duties change.

Source: Mullen et al⁵⁹

Hanson and Hanson (2018) study the environmental conditions that help individuals develop resilience.⁶⁰ Hanson and Hanson divide environmental conditions that influence resilience into three categories: safety, satisfaction, and connection.⁶¹ Applying this framework to education, *safety, satisfaction, and connection* perpetuate calmness, clarity, and feelings of motivation for work, and mitigate teacher burnout and staff attrition.⁶² Figure 2.4 outlines protective factors influenced by Hanson and Hanson’s research that schools can implement to build resilience among teachers.

Figure 2.4: Hanson and Hanson Strategies for Resilience-Building

SAFETY	SATISFACTION	CONNECTION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Mitigate unexpected changes (i.e., school schedule disruptions or altered procedures) and be intentional about maintaining stability and predictability. ▪ Provide opportunities for increased teacher choice to foster a sense of agency. ▪ Help teachers feel comfortable taking risks and be gracious about mistakes. ▪ Call attention to positive experiences and successes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Promote gratitude by encouraging teachers to share words and gestures of appreciation. ▪ Focus attention on celebrating progress and working toward goals rather than outcomes. ▪ Set goals and frequently discuss how to pursue these goals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Remind the community of shared values and school mission statements to foster a shared purpose and guide daily interactions.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Adapted verbatim and nearly verbatim from Ibid.

⁶⁰ Helmke, Op. cit.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.

IDENTIFYING STRATEGIES FOR TEACHERS

While current research frames teacher resilience in terms of attitudes and characteristics resilient individuals possess and provides school-based strategies for supporting teachers through challenging workdays, there is a lack of research on specific habits educators can practice to strengthen resilience.⁶⁴ Elena Aguilar, an educator resilience coach, provides a list of twelve practical ways educators can build resilience – outlined in Figure 2.5.

Figure 2.5: 12 Practices to Build Educator Resilience

PRACTICE	ACTION	CONNECTION TO RESILIENCE
Know Yourself	Reflect on personal strengths, weaknesses, and personality traits.	Self-knowledge helps educators become more confident about actions and decisions. Reactions to situations are rooted in experience, context, identity, and perception.
Emotions	Practice naming and understanding emotions.	Emotional intelligence is embedded within emotional resilience.
Tell Empowering Stories	Shift the language around challenging school experiences.	A positive narrative empowers teachers to reframe a situation.
Build Community	Discuss and practice strategies with colleagues.	Relationships with colleagues can be a source of resilience when setbacks occur.
Be Here Now	Practice mindfulness and create metacognitive space before reacting to a situation.	Mindfulness helps educators react appropriately to situations and is a form of self-care.
Take Care of Yourself	Set aside time for routine and self-care.	Important to check-in and use a variety of self-care strategies.
Focus on Bright Spots	Focus on strengths, assets, and skills that work well. Actively push against negative bias and notice the progress you have made.	Resilience is about experiencing positive emotions.
Cultivate Compassion	Provide space for yourself, colleagues, and students to not be at their best.	Practicing empathy, compassion, and patience fosters resilience.
Be a Learner	Take away lessons from hardships.	In difficult moments, it helps to acknowledge and value the emotions and learn from them.
Play and Create	Integrate creativity into the work.	Play helps alleviate stress and strengthens problem-solving skills.
Ride the Wave of Change	Engage with change and decide whether to spend energy on new initiatives.	Identifying change provides an opportunity to reflect on energy expenditure.
Celebrate and Appreciate	Take time to recognize growth and show gratitude.	Celebrating achievements improves self-efficacy and confidence.

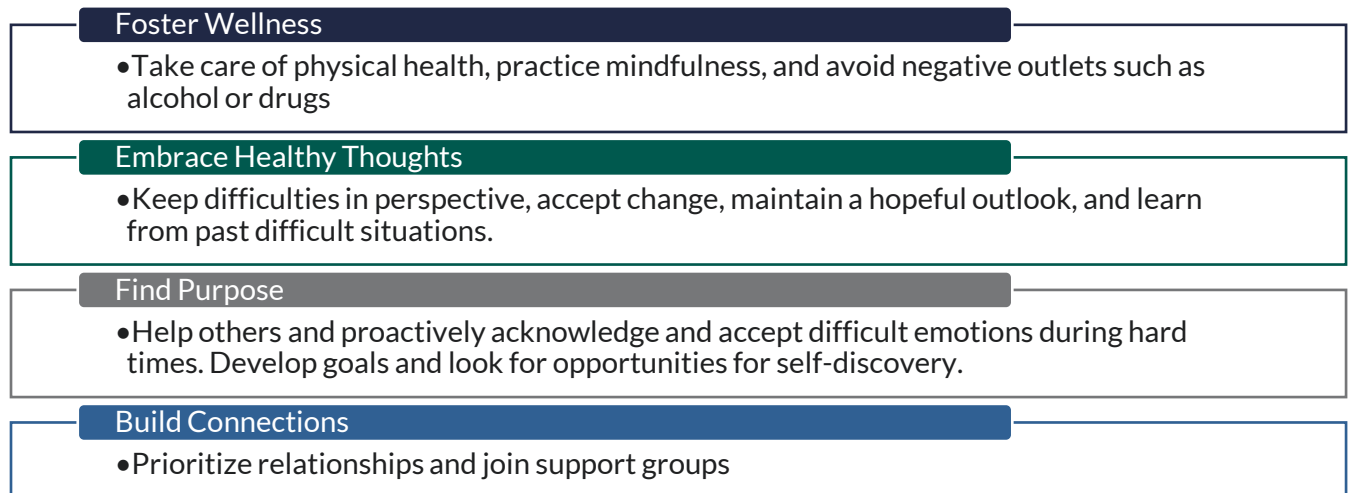
⁶³ Adapted nearly verbatim from Ibid.

⁶⁴ Schwartz, K. "12 Ways Teachers Can Build Resilience So They Can Make Systemic Change." KQED, July 30, 2019. <https://www.kqed.org/mindshift/53640/12-ways-teachers-can-build-resilience-so-they-can-make-systemic-change>

Source: KQED⁶⁵


Additionally, the American Psychological Association divides resilience practices into four components: **connection, wellness, healthy thinking, and meaning**.⁶⁶ Figure 2.6 provides examples of actions steps teachers can take to implement these practices.

Figure 2.6: Resilience Best Practices



Source: American Psychological Association⁶⁷

Spotlight: Compassion Resilience Toolkit



The Wisconsin Initiative for Stigma Elimination (WISE), a statewide coalition that supports mental health, offers a toolkit of information, activities, and resources for school leadership to build resilience among staff. WISE defines compassion resilience in the education field as:

- The ability to maintain physical, emotional, and mental well-being while addressing student learning challenges;
- Identifying barriers and partnering with caregivers, parents, and other colleagues to address these barriers; and
- Identifying, preventing, and minimizing compassion fatigue within the self.

For more information on the compassion resilience toolkit, see the [WISE Wisconsin](#) webpage.⁶⁸

A study conducted on sources of resilience in teachers of color found that participants attribute their resilience to relationships with family members, mentors of color, and colleagues and peers of color.⁶⁹ Teachers seek advice and support from family members and mentors, particularly for wisdom on navigating unwelcoming white spaces at predominantly white schools.⁷⁰ **Affinity groups and supportive professional relationships** between teachers of color serve as a source of comfort and provide a space for exchanging ideas,

⁶⁵ Adapted verbatim and nearly verbatim from Ibid.

⁶⁶ "Building Your Resilience," Op. cit.

⁶⁷ Verbatim from Ibid.

⁶⁸ "How to Implement." Compassion Resilience. <https://compassionresiliencetoolkit.org/schools/how-does-it-work/>

⁶⁹ Darwich, L. "Whom Do I See in the Staff Room Every Day? The Sources of Resilience of Teachers of Color." *Teacher Education Quarterly*, 48:2, Spring 2021.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

growth, and mutual empowerment.⁷¹ These peer relationships are critical for feeling supported, encouraged, and inspired in the teaching profession.⁷² Additionally, teachers of color reference social-justice and equity-oriented curriculums both in K-12 schools and teacher preparation programs as a source of resilience.⁷³ Strategies to support teachers of color in developing resilience include:⁷⁴

- Increasing hiring and retention of teachers of color in schools; and
- Implementing social-justice-oriented curriculum in classrooms and teacher preparation programs.



Additional Resources

The **Vermont Agency of Education** published a document that provides educators with tips for resilience during Covid-10. These tips include physical, mental, and social care strategies, such as sleep and exercise, mindfulness and learning, and staying connected to friends and family. For specific strategies recommended by the Vermont Agency of Education, view [Educator Resilience: Tips on Self-Care in the Time of COVID-19](#).⁷⁵

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ "Educator Resilience: Tips on Self-Care in the Time of COVID-19." *Vermont Agency of Education*, 2020.

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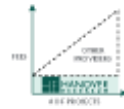
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