

# PREVENTING TEACHER BURNOUT

Amid competing priorities, staff shortages, and tense environments, teachers have less time to prepare lessons, collaborate with colleagues, and assess student work than ever. With little balance between time spent with students and preparatory activities, teachers have relatively limited time to engage in the work key to successful teaching. This lopsided distribution of time places extraordinary pressure on our teachers. Insufficient time to complete tasks integral to successful teaching and other stressful conditions often lead to exhaustion.

**In fact, 50 percent of teachers consider quitting, naming stress as one of the primary reasons. To address this crisis, leaders in education must find strategies to combat teacher burnout and build supportive teaching environments (American University School of Education, 2021).**

## KEY DEFINITION

The World Health Organization describes burnout as an occupational phenomenon characterized by three main attributes:

1. **Exhaustion.** When teachers experience burnout, they can feel depleted of energy and too exhausted to continue with their work.
2. **Cynicism.** Teachers who have reached a state of burnout can begin to feel mentally detached from their jobs. Their feelings about the profession can turn negative and cynical.
3. **Inefficacy.** Teacher burnout also leads to feelings of incompetence or ineffectiveness.

**The National Education Association sums up next steps with an illuminating assessment...**

“To avoid a “Great Resignation,” districts need to make substantive changes to reduce stress and improve morale in schools. Educators don’t need any more chair massages or Casual Fridays, this is about support and autonomy.”

## AWARENESS TO ACTION TIPS

The New England MHTTC’s School Mental Health Initiative develops training and technical assistance resources to support the mental health and well-being of the educational and behavioral health workforces. Use our “Awareness to Action” tips to inform school/workplace structures to combat burnout, reduce stress and fatigue, and put into place systems and policies that help these community stewards do the work that matters most.”

## Foster Communication

Encourage teachers to speak up when they are feeling overwhelmed, stressed, or experiencing trauma.



## Educate

Train teachers on the signs and symptoms of burnout, trauma, and toxic stress, and provide resources for coping with these issues.



## Emphasize Balance

Provide flexible work arrangements and encourage employees to take breaks and prioritize self-care.



## Examine Workload

Assign appropriate and equitable workload to each teacher, considering their skills and abilities, and reevaluate regularly.



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## AWARENESS TO ACTION TIPS

### Provide Trauma Support

Provide access to counseling, peer support, or debriefing sessions for employees who have experienced traumatic events.



### Celebrate Success

Recognize and reward teacher successes, and find opportunities to celebrate together.

### Encourage (& Listen to) Feedback

Ask teachers for feedback on policies and encourage their participation in decision-making processes.



### Address Toxic Behavior

Address toxic behavior such as harassment, bullying, or discrimination promptly and fairly.