CAPSTONE PROJECT

Promoting Teacher Retention and Increasing Job Satisfaction
by Preventing Burnout in the Early Childhood Workforce

by

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A capstone submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Education.

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Project Overview

This project was inspired by the research question: How can early childhood program leaders learn to implement supportive strategies to promote teacher retention and increase job satisfaction? The project is comprised of three major components: a series of three professional development sessions, a single-session workshop, and a companion handbook that offers additional resources. These components are designed to teach early childhood program leaders about the causes and consequences of both teacher burnout and teacher turnover in the early childhood field, as well as present a variety of strategies that leaders might choose to implement in order to support teachers, increase their level of engagement, and sustain them in their work.

Professional Development Structure and Desired Outcomes

The following goals of the sessions are communicated to participants:

- To learn about teacher turnover and burnout
- To learn supportive strategies to reduce burnout and increase engagement
- To build community through collaborative problem-solving and sharing of ideas and resources
- To reflect on the actions participants have taken
- To discuss successes, opportunities, and challenges
- To engage in supportive dialogue
- To create sustainable action plans

Both the organization of the professional development sessions and their intended outcomes were inspired by Malcolm Knowles’s framework for adult learning, which emphasizes the importance of democratic participation, relevant and realistic problem-solving opportunities, and
practical application and evaluation of the learned material (Knowles, 1978; Knowles, 1992). The professional development sessions therefore involve significant opportunities for participants to discuss ideas in small and large groups, apply the learned material to their own particular work contexts both theoretically and practically, participate in collaborative problem-solving, and engage in a process of reflection in order to inform future action. Ultimately, the desired outcome of the professional development is to inspire, inform, and equip early childhood program leaders to improve teacher engagement and retention by mitigating the causes of burnout.

**Summary of Sessions**

The primary component of the project is the series of three professional development sessions, which take place over the course of two to three months. During the first session, participants are introduced to the major concepts of burnout, turnover, and engagement. Participants are presented with five categories of potential strategies to try out in their workplaces and are instructed to create an action plan with concrete steps for implementation of one or two of the presented strategies. In order to ensure commitment to their action plans, each participant creates an accountability plan with a partner and is encouraged to write weekly journal entries between sessions.

During the second session, which takes place approximately one month later, participants work together to reflect on and evaluate their efforts. Participants engage in a process of collaborative brainstorming that involves identifying problems and successes, asking questions, and exploring potential solutions. This session largely serves as an opportunity for community building and sharing of ideas and resources. Participants adjust their action plans based on their
reflections and renew their accountability plans. Another month later, in the third session, participants again engage in collaborative reflection, problem-solving, and identification of resources, with the ultimate goal of creating a sustainable plan based on a year-long vision.

The single-session workshop offers a condensed presentation of the three-session series. The workshop presentation is essentially identical to the first session of the three-session series, with the exception that participants are encouraged to think about the long-term sustainability of their action plans and are provided reflective practice worksheets specifically tailored to the workshop experience.

Each session of professional development, including the workshop, involves participant assessment of the presentation using an anonymous survey. The survey is used to evaluate the effectiveness of the presentation, the instructor, and the information provided.

**Overview of the Handbook**

The third component of this project is a handbook entitled *The Teacher Engagement Handbook: Tools to Reduce Burnout and Promote Teacher Retention in Early Childhood Education*. Because each strategy for improving teacher engagement cannot be described in-depth during the presentation, participants are provided a link to a PDF of the handbook to access more detailed information on the strategies of their choice. The handbook also serves as a stand-alone document, meaning that it can be of use even to people who have not attended any of the professional development sessions. The handbook offers a brief overview of burnout, its characteristics, causes, and consequences, as well as a description of the burnout-engagement continuum. It goes on to present five general strategy categories for readers to consider: Leadership Techniques, Structural Adaptations to the Workday, Adaptations to the Physical
Environment, Collegial Environment and Workplace Supports, and Outside Resources. The majority of the handbook is dedicated to providing detailed explanations of the strategies and several resources to support their implementation, including books, articles, podcasts, and links to useful information.
Slides and Speaker Notes for Three-Session Professional Development Series

The Google slides presentation for the three-session professional development series appears below, with corresponding presenter notes beneath each slide.

Session 1

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**Session 1 Slide 1**

- Time allotment for each of 3 meetings: Approximately 90 minutes
- 3 minutes for this slide:
  - Welcome participants
  - Presenter introduction - name, background
  - “I am here because I am all too familiar with the realities of burnout and attrition in this field. Having researched the causes and consequences of burnout and having learned about the many supportive strategies that program leaders can implement, I realized that the research being conducted on this issue was not making its way into the hands of those who most need it: YOU. My purpose today is to share with you some research-based information on this topic and to guide you toward using it in a way that is relevant and meaningful for your particular workplace.”
- Supplies needed:
  - Whiteboard/chalkboard/easel paper and writing implements
  - Pens and paper for each participant

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**Supervising for Teacher Engagement**

**Reducing Burnout and Promoting Teacher Retention in Early Childhood Education**

**Meeting 1 - Welcome!**
- Supplemental materials packet for each participant - include action plan worksheet, accountability plan, journal instructions, session evaluation
- Snacks

Meeting 1: Overview

- Why are we here?
- Introductions
- Early childhood teacher turnover
- What is burnout?
- Risk factors for burnout
- Consequences of burnout and turnover
- What can be done to increase retention, engagement, and job satisfaction?
- Action plan

Session 1 Slide 2

- 1 minute
- Explain what participants will be learning about and discussing at today’s meeting.
Why are we here?

We are here to:

- learn about teacher turnover and burnout
- learn supportive strategies to reduce burnout and increase engagement
- build community through collaborative problem-solving and sharing of ideas and resources

Introductions

Please turn to a neighbor or a small group around you and share:

- Your name
- Your position
- One reason you entered this work
Teacher Turnover in the Early Childhood Field

Session 1 Slide 5

- Explain: teacher turnover refers to the rate at which teachers leave their jobs and need to be replaced
- This and following 4 slides: total 1 minute

Session 1 Slide 6

8%

Annual turnover rate for K-12 teachers
(Sutcher, Darling-Hammond, & Carver-Thomas, 2016)

26-40%

Annual turnover rate for Early Childhood teachers
(Totenhagen et al., 2016)
● “The average annual turnover rate for K-12 teachers is about 8%. Can you guess what the turnover rate is for Early Childhood teachers?” (Click for animation)

● Explain: This high rate of turnover is causing a crisis in our field. One culprit for the high rate of turnover is teacher burnout.

“Next we’ll dive into a discussion of burnout, including its components, causes, and effects.”
Burnout

is a serious psychological condition caused by long-term exposure to multiple stressors

Burnout

is a result of stressful social interactions in professions that involve “people work” or caring for others
Session 1 Slide 10

- 2 minutes.

- “Emotional exhaustion is at the heart of burnout. This is the dimension of burnout that usually sets in first.”

- Read and elaborate on each column.

- Explain: Emotional exhaustion often leads to depersonalization, which can lead to feelings of inefficacy. However, the relationship is not always linear - feelings of inefficacy can also exacerbate exhaustion and detachment.
Small Group Discussion

Consider the three dimensions of burnout:

- **Emotional exhaustion**
- **Depersonalization (detachment and cynicism toward others)**
- **Reduced sense of personal accomplishment**

Do you notice any of these signs of burnout in your program staff? In yourself? What might be the specific cause(s)?

Session 1 Slide 11

- Participants will gather in small groups of 2-4. Allow 5-6 minutes.

- Regroup → Ask for a show of hands: How many of you think that there is emotional exhaustion among your program staff? Depersonalization? Reduced sense of accomplishment? How many of you are feeling some of these things yourself?
The factors that lead to burnout can be characterized as personal, interpersonal, societal, and programmatic.

Personal: Generally speaking, the higher the qualification level and the higher the quality of professional preparation, the lower the risk of burnout. This may be because when teachers feel well prepared for their role in the classroom, they are less likely to become overwhelmed by emotional demands.

Interpersonal factors such as challenging child behavior, demands from parents, and conflicts with colleagues can exacerbate emotional exhaustion.

Societal factors such as poor compensation and lack of professional status can feel demeaning. Some teachers may feel that the emotional demands of the work are not worth the low pay, especially when society may seem to think of them as babysitters rather than professionals.

Programmatic factors such as involvement of teachers in decision-making, perceived support from administrators and colleagues, and the structure of the workday can have a profound effect on whether or not teachers experience burnout. Many teachers spend a significant amount of unpaid overtime hours each week completing essential tasks that they don’t have time for during their regularly scheduled hours, which hastens the onset of burnout.
Session 1 Slide 13

- Allow 5 minutes for discussion.
- Regroup: Choose a few volunteers to summarize the discussion (another 5 minutes).

Small Group Discussion

- Which risk factors for burnout do you think play the most significant role in your program? Consider how both you and your staff are affected by these factors.
- To what extent are the various risk factors for burnout within your control? Consider both your own burnout risk and your staff's.
“When teachers experience burnout, there are severe consequences for their well-being, for the quality of care and education they provide, and for the financial health of programs.

Teachers who experience burnout have an increased level of stress that may lead to mental health concerns and relationship struggles.

Perhaps the most widely studied effect of burnout is on the quality of care and education provided to children. Burned out teachers are less likely to sustain a high level of classroom quality and effectiveness of teaching. The social distancing and cynicism that accompany depersonalization interfere with children’s social and emotional development, including their ability to form secure attachments.

The reduced effectiveness of burned out teachers coupled with the reduced likelihood for children to form secure relationships negatively affects cognitive learning outcomes.

Because we know that burnout sometimes leads to turnover, there are financial consequences to consider.”
Supervisors can help reduce teachers’ risk of burnout!

“The good news is that there are many things we can do to reduce the risk of burnout.”

“As human beings, our job in life is to help people realize how rare and valuable each one of us really is, that each of us has something that no one else has - or ever will have - something inside that is unique to all time.”
- Fred Rogers

Session 1 Slide 16
- 1 minute
- Ask for a volunteer to read slide.
“As human beings and as supervisors in early childhood education, it is our job to help teachers see their value. With this thought in mind, let’s turn to the concept of job engagement as an antidote to burnout.”

The Burnout-Engagement Continuum

Each negative dimension of burnout has a positive counterpart

- Burnout
  - Exhaustion
  - Cynicism/Detachment
  - Inefficacy/Low Sense of Accomplishment

- Engagement
  - Energy
  - Involvement
  - Self-Efficacy/High Sense of Accomplishment

Session 1 Slide 17

- 3 minutes.
- Summarize slide.

 “Interventions aimed at reducing burnout should begin by identifying which elements on the continuum are most in need of attention. Ideally, burnout prevention efforts should address each dimension of the continuum.”

- Ask participants to make a mental note of where they themselves might land on each dimension of the continuum, using a scale of 1-5, with 1 representing burnout and 5 representing engagement. Then ask them to do the same with one of their staff members in mind.
Session 1 Slide 18

- 1 minute.

- “We previously discussed the ways in which burnout puts children’s emotional development at risk, which also impacts their cognitive learning.”

- “On the other hand, research has shown that teachers who report well-being at their jobs (that is, their risk of burnout is low) not only develop more supportive relationships with children, but also engage in more complex and stimulating conversations with children, which leads to more in-depth learning and higher-order thinking skills.”
Not everything is within your control, and that’s okay.

Session 1 Slide 19

- “There are some causes of burnout that are out of your control. Our aim here is to identify which factors you might be able to influence in order to minimize the risk of burnout.”

Session 1 Slide 20

5 Types of Strategies to Consider:
- Leadership Techniques
- Adaptations to the Physical Environment
- Structural Adaptations to the Workday
- Collegial Environment
- Outside Resources
Session 1 Slide 21

- 1 minute.
- “Given the breadth of information that exists on this topic and the various paths you will choose to take, we won’t be able to delve deeply into each individual strategy. However, there are more specific descriptions, resources, and guidance available in the course handbook.”
- “With that said, let’s walk through an overview of each type of strategy you might consider implementing.”
Session 1 Slide 22

- This and following four slides: summarize (8-10 minutes)

Session 1 Slide 23

- Summarize
Strategies to Consider
Adaptations to the Physical Environment

- Fewer Children in the Classroom/Lower Ratios
  - Consider splitting into small groups for part of the day
  - Consider co-teaching arrangements

- Noise Reduction
  - Acoustic panels
  - Soft furniture
  - Area rugs

- Classroom Materials
  - Ensure an adequate supply
  - Involve teachers in selecting & purchasing materials

Strategies to Consider
Collegial Environment

- Internal Mentorship Programs
  - Novice teachers are paired with veteran teachers
  - Increases self-efficacy

- Staff Involved in Decision-Making
  - Involvement protects against cynicism & detachment

- Emotional Support and Teamwork
  - Colleagues who support each other experience more self-efficacy, energy, and involvement

Session 1 Slide 24

- Summarize

Session 1 Slide 25

- Summarize
Strategies to Consider
Outside Resources

Access to Specialists and Consultants
- Children's mental health & behavior experts
- Increases self-efficacy

Professional Development
- Focus on classroom management & challenging behavior
- Focus on self-care, stress reduction, mental wellness

External Mentorship Programs
- Make connections with veteran teachers from other programs to mentor new staff

Session 1 Slide 26
- Summarize
Session 1 Slide 27

- 1 minute (Approximately 45 minutes should have elapsed by this point)

- “All engagement strategies are important, but as you can see, certain strategies have the potential to foster all three aspects of engagement, while others primarily foster one or two aspects. Keep this in mind as you consider what you might do for your program.”
How can you determine what would be most beneficial to your staff?

Session 1 Slide 28
- 1 minute.
- Read slide.
- Encourage participants to think about soliciting input from their staff members.
Session 1 Slide 29

- 1 minute.

- “After you leave this meeting, you will be going back to your workplace with a plan to implement one or more of the strategies explored today. Thinking about what we have discussed, I would like you to choose one or two of these categories to be the focus of your strategy implementation.”
Small Group Discussion: Take Turns

First Round
- Share your chosen strategy/strategies. Consider the 3 W’s:
  - Who will be involved (and in what capacity)?
  - What steps do you need to take?
  - When will you begin?

Second Round
- What obstacles might stand in the way of you successfully carrying out your strategy? Brainstorm potential solutions with your group.

Session 1 Slide 30
- Participants return to their small groups. Direct them to the action plan worksheet in the packet of materials and ask them to fill it out as they have their discussion.
- Allow approximately 10 minutes for discussion.
- Encourage participants to write down their ideas, questions, and concerns.
Session 1 Slide 31

- 10 minutes

- Use whiteboard/chalkboard/easel paper to write down obstacles and solutions for all to see. If questions arise, encourage the group to brainstorm solutions. Write their ideas down for all to see.
Accountability → Sustainability

Choose one or two accountability partners to check in with over the course of the next month.

- Set a date: When will you check in with each other?
- How will you check in with each other? (Email, text, phone call, in person, etc.)
- How frequently will you check in? (Each week, every other week, etc.)
- Ask each other how it’s going

Session 1 Slide 32

- 1 minute to summarize slide.
- Have participants fill out the accountability worksheet with partners (allow 5 minutes).
Process Journal

Between now and the next meeting, please write a journal entry (handwritten or typed) at least once a week to document your efforts.

Consider the following themes for inspiration:
- Your feelings about your chosen strategy
- Your implementation steps
- Others’ reactions to the strategy
- Successes
- Challenges
- Changes in your thinking or approach
- Your own self-care during this process - how are you staying engaged and avoiding burnout?

Session 1 Slide 33

- 1 minute
- Read slide

Questions & Open Discussion

Session 1 Slide 34

- 10-15 minutes
When there are 5 minutes remaining, give each participant a turn to say one word describing how they feel about moving forward with their plan.

Thank you
and see you next time!
Session 2

Supervising for Staff Engagement

Reducing Burnout and Promoting Teacher Retention in Early Childhood Education

Meeting 2 - Welcome Back!

Session 2 Slide 36

- 1 minute
- Welcome all participants & thank them for being there.
- Supplies needed:
  - Large writing surface for brainstorming (whiteboard, chalkboard, easel paper) and writing implements
  - Pen and paper for each participant
  - Supplemental materials packet for each participant - include reflective practice worksheet, accountability plan, journal instructions, blank community resources sheet, session evaluation
  - Snacks
Meeting 2: Overview

- Why are we here?
- Refresher: Burnout, Job Satisfaction, and Turnover
- Group reflections
  - What strategies have you tried?
  - Successes and challenges
- Brainstorming session
- Revised action plan
- Resources and community supports

Session 2 Slide 37

- 1 minute
- Explain overview of session

Why are we here?

We are here to...

- Reflect on the actions we have taken since last meeting
- Discuss successes, opportunities, and challenges
- Engage in supportive dialogue
- Build community through collaborative problem solving and sharing of ideas and resources
- Adjust our action plans as needed

Session 2 Slide 38
Refresher: What is Burnout?

- Serious psychological condition
- Common in caring professions
- Caused by long-term exposure to multiple stressors, including stressful social interactions

Three primary dimensions
1. Emotional exhaustion
2. Depersonalization (cynicism, detachment)
3. Reduced personal accomplishment (inefficacy)
Session 2 Slide 40

- 2 minutes
- Review four main categories of risk factors
Session 2 Slide 41

- 2 minutes
- Read title, then ask participants what they think are the benefits of addressing teacher burnout.
- Click to fade in rest of slide.
Small Group Reflection

- What strategy or strategies have you begun to try?
- What have you found encouraging or successful?
- What has been challenging?
- Refer to your journal if needed

In small groups, make a list of any questions, problems, and concerns that arise, as well as potential ideas to address them. We will use these for brainstorming and problem solving with the larger group.

Session 2 Slide 42

- 10 minutes
- Participants form groups of 3 or 4.
Session 2 Slide 43

- 15-25 minutes

- Come together as a large group. Ask for a representative from each group to share one challenge or problem that they would like to discuss with the whole group. Brainstorm solutions, writing them down for all to see (on white board, chalk board, easel paper, etc.).
Reflective Practice Worksheet

On your own, complete the provided worksheet to adjust your action plan for the next month.

Accountability → Sustainability

Share your revised action plan with your accountability partner(s). Make a new plan to check in with each other:

- Set a date: When will you check in with each other?
- How will you check in with each other? (Email, text, phone call, in person, etc.)
- How frequently will you check in? (Each week, every other week, etc.)
- Ask how it’s going and share your thoughts
Participants form pairs, ideally with the same accountability partner from the first session. Direct participants to the accountability plan worksheet in their packet of supplemental materials.

Resources and Community Supports

Returning to your small groups, make a list of the people and resources in your communities and professional networks who may be helpful to you, your accountability partner, or someone else in this class.

In what ways might these resources be helpful?

Session 2 Slide 46

- 5 minutes
- Participants return to their small groups of 3 or 4.
“Anything that’s human is mentionable, and anything that is mentionable can be more manageable. When we can talk about our feelings, they become less overwhelming, less upsetting, and less scary. The people we trust with that important talk can help us know that we are not alone.”

- Fred Rogers

Session 2 Slide 47

- 10 minutes
- Ask for a volunteer to read the quote. Emphasize that we are here to support each other.
- Ask for a representative from each group to name the resources and people they came up with and explain how they might be helpful. Write down ideas on whiteboard/chalkboard/easel paper.
Process Journal

Between now and the next meeting, please continue writing in your journal at least once a week.

Consider the following themes for inspiration:

- Your feelings about your chosen strategy
- Successes and challenges
- Changes in your thinking
- Potential new approaches
- How you are utilizing community resources & networks
- How you might ensure the sustainability of your approach
- Your own self-care during this process - how are you staying engaged and avoiding burnout?

Session 2 Slide 48

- 2 minutes
- Read slide

Questions & Discussion

Session 2 Slide 49

- 5-10 minutes for questions and discussion
Thank you!

“If you could only sense how important you are to the lives of those you meet; how important you can be to the people you may never even dream of. There is something of yourself that you leave at every meeting with another person.”

- Fred Rogers

Session 2 Slide 50

- 2 minutes
- Read quote.
- “You are all important to the people here, to the teachers you support, and to the children and families you serve. Thank you for being a part of this process, for taking a risk and trying something new, and for being a part of this community.”
See you next month!

Session 3

Supervising for Staff Engagement

Reducing Burnout and Promoting Teacher Retention in Early Childhood Education

Meeting 3 - Welcome back!
Session 3 Slide 52

- 1 minute
- Welcome all participants & thank them for being there.
- Supplies needed:
  - Large writing surface for brainstorming (whiteboard, chalkboard, easel paper) and writing implements
  - Pen and paper for each participant
  - Supplemental materials packet for each participant - include reflective practice worksheet, sustainability worksheet, blank community resources sheet, session evaluation
  - List of community resources developed at previous session
  - Snacks

Meeting 3: Overview

- Why are we here?
- Refresher
  - The Burnout-Engagement Continuum
  - Types of engagement strategies
- Individual Reflections
- Group Reflections
  - Expanding on successes
  - Overcoming challenges
- Large Group Brainstorming
- Resources and Community Supports
- Action Plan
  - Sustainability

Session 3 Slide 53

- 1 minute
- Read slide
Why are we here?

We are here to...

- Reflect on the actions we have taken since last meeting
- Discuss successes, opportunities, and challenges
- Engage in supportive dialogue
- Build community through collaborative problem solving and sharing of ideas and resources
- Create sustainable action plans
“How great it is when we come to know that times of disappointment can be followed by joy; that guilt over falling short of our ideals can be replaced by pride in doing all that we can; and that anger can be channeled into creative achievements... and into dreams that we can make come true.”

-Fred Rogers

Session 3 Slide 55

- 2 minutes
- Ask for a volunteer to read the quote.
- Discuss this quote in the context of participants’ efforts to increase staff engagement. “The process may sometimes feel frustrating and disappointing if things don’t turn out as planned. Today we will work together to channel the joy, pride, and creativity we need to sustain us through this process.”
Session 3 Slide 56

- 3 minutes
- Summarize slide.
- “Interventions aimed at reducing burnout should begin by identifying which elements on the continuum are most in need of attention. Ideally, burnout prevention efforts should address each dimension of the continuum.”
- Ask participants to make a mental note of where they themselves might land on each dimension of the continuum, using a scale of 1-5, with 1 representing burnout and 5 representing engagement. Then ask them to do the same with one of their staff members in mind. Encourage them to think about whether there has been any change since doing this in the first session.
Session 3 Slide 57

- 1 minute

“You have been working with one or two of these five types of strategies. As we begin to think about moving beyond this course, consider two things: 1) how you will maintain the strategy or strategies you have been using, and 2) how you might introduce and maintain new strategies over time.”
Individual Reflections

On your own, complete the provided worksheet to reflect on your successes and challenges from the past month.

Session 3 Slide 58

- 10 minutes
- “With those thoughts in mind, please take a look at the reflection worksheet and take a few minutes to answer the questions.”
Session 3 Slide 59
- Allow 10-15 minutes for small group discussion

Session 3 Slide 60

- **Small Group Discussion**
  - Share one element of success and one challenge from your worksheet
  - Brainstorm how you might expand upon successes and overcome challenges. (Consider the supportive resources available to you.)

- **Large Group Sharing**
  - Any particularly helpful insights?
  - Any questions for further exploration?
● 10 minutes

● Ask for a representative from each group to name either an inspired idea that came out of their discussion or a question they would like to discuss with the group. Write down ideas on whiteboard/chalkboard/easel paper.

Community Resources and Supports

Session 3 Slide 61

● 5 minutes

● Remind participants of the list that was brainstormed at last session.

● Ask for potential additions to the list. Direct participants to the new community resources page in the supplemental materials packet.
Sustainability: Your One-Year Vision

With your accountability partner, plan how you will:

a) Continue to implement and improve upon your strategy
b) Build in new strategies to your practice
c) Check in with each other

Session 3 Slide 62

- 8-10 minutes
- Direct participants to the sustainability worksheet. Participants fill out the worksheet together with their accountability partners.
Large Group Sharing: Sustainability Plans

- 10-15 minutes for large group sharing
- Ask for volunteers to share their sustainability plans (or aspects of their sustainability plans) with the whole group.
  - Encourage audience members to write down ideas that inspire them.
  - Encourage participants to give feedback and ask questions to the volunteers in order to eliminate ambiguity and reinforce concrete action.
Session 3 Slide 64

- 10 minutes

- Each participant will have a turn to speak. Presenter goes first. Participants reflect on what they have learned, how they have been challenged, etc. Participants express how they feel leaving this final meeting.

- If time is limited, allow participants to say one word describing how they feel about leaving this final session and moving forward with their sustainability plans.
“I recently learned that in an average lifetime a person walks about sixty-five thousand miles. That's two and a half times around the world. I wonder where your steps will take you. I wonder how you'll use the rest of the miles you're given.”

- Fred Rogers

Session 3 Slide 65

- 2 minutes
- Read quote.
- “I want to thank you all for being present, for challenging yourselves, for supporting each other in this community, and for dedicating yourselves to such meaningful work.”
- Provide contact information in case participants would like further support or to share their progress.
Slides and Speaker Notes for Workshop

The Google slides presentation for the ninety-minute professional development workshop appears below, with corresponding presenter notes beneath each slide.

Workshop Slide 1

- Meeting time: Approximately 90 minutes

- 3 minutes for this slide:
  - Welcome participants
  - Presenter introduction - name, background
  - “I am here because I am all too familiar with the realities of burnout and attrition in this field. Having researched the causes and consequences of burnout and having learned about the many supportive strategies that program leaders can implement, I realized that the research being conducted on this issue was not making its way into the hands of those who most need it: YOU. My purpose today is to share with you some research-based information on this topic and to guide you toward using it in a way that is relevant and meaningful for your particular workplace.”

- Supplies needed:
  - Whiteboard/chalkboard/easel paper and writing implements
  - Pens and paper for each participant
  - Supplemental materials packet for each participant
Overview

- Why are we here?
- Introductions
- Early childhood teacher turnover
- What is burnout?
- Risk factors for burnout
- Consequences of burnout and turnover
- What can be done to increase retention, engagement, and job satisfaction?
- Action plan for sustainable change

Workshop Slide 2

- 1 minute

- Explain what participants will be learning about and discussing at today’s meeting.
Why are we here?

We are here to:

- learn about teacher turnover and burnout
- learn supportive strategies to reduce burnout and increase engagement
- build community through collaborative problem-solving and sharing of ideas and resources
Introductions

Please turn to a neighbor or a small group around you and share:

- Your name
- Your position
- One reason you entered this work

Teacher Turnover

in the Early Childhood Field
● Explain: teacher turnover refers to the rate at which teachers leave their jobs and need to be replaced.

● This and following 4 slides: total 1 minute

Workshop Slide 6

● “The average annual turnover rate for K-12 teachers is about 8%. Can you guess what the turnover rate is for Early Childhood teachers?” (Click for animation)

● Explain: This high rate of turnover is causing a crisis in our field. One culprit for the high rate of turnover is teacher burnout.
“Next we’ll dive into a discussion of burnout, including its components, causes, and effects.”

Burnout is a serious psychological condition caused by long-term exposure to multiple stressors.
Burnout

is a result of stressful social interactions in professions that involve “people work” or caring for others

Workshop Slide 9

- Read slide

Three Dimensions of Burnout

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emotional Exhaustion</th>
<th>Depersonalization</th>
<th>Reduced Sense of Accomplishment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tending to the emotional demands of others increases stress</td>
<td>After emotional exhaustion sets in, social distancing occurs as a form of self-protection</td>
<td>A negative attitude toward others can lead to a negative self-image</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional overexertion results in feeling drained and depleted</td>
<td>Emotional detachment can lead to cynicism and disregard for the needs of others</td>
<td>Caregivers feel inadequate and that they have failed the people in their care (inefficacy)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Compassion fatigue”</td>
<td>In extreme cases, dehumanizing can occur</td>
<td>Self-esteem diminishes, sometimes resulting in depression</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Workshop Slide 10
“Emotional exhaustion is at the heart of burnout. This is the dimension of burnout that usually sets in first.”

Read and elaborate on each column.

Explain: Emotional exhaustion often leads to depersonalization, which can lead to feelings of inefficacy. However, the relationship is not always linear - feelings of inefficacy can also exacerbate exhaustion and detachment.

Small Group Discussion

Consider the three dimensions of burnout:
- Emotional exhaustion
- Depersonalization (detachment and cynicism toward others)
- Reduced sense of personal accomplishment

Do you notice any of these signs of burnout in your program staff? In yourself? What might be the specific cause(s)?

Workshop Slide 11

- Participants will gather in small groups of 2-4.
- Allow 5-6 minutes.
- Regroup → Ask for a show of hands: How many of you think that there is emotional exhaustion among your program staff? Depersonalization? Reduced sense of accomplishment? How many of you are feeling some of these things yourself?
Workshop Slide 12

- 3 minutes.

- “The factors that lead to burnout can be characterized as personal, interpersonal, societal, and programmatic.”

- Personal: Generally speaking, the higher the qualification level and the higher the quality of professional preparation, the lower the risk of burnout. This may be because when teachers feel well prepared for their role in the classroom, they are less likely to become overwhelmed by emotional demands.

- Interpersonal factors such as challenging child behavior, demands from parents, and conflicts with colleagues can exacerbate emotional exhaustion.

- Societal factors such as poor compensation and lack of professional status can feel demeaning. Some teachers may feel that the emotional demands of the work are not worth the low pay, especially when society may seem to think of them as mere babysitters.

- Programmatic factors such as involvement of teachers in decision-making, perceived support from administrators and colleagues, and the structure of the workday can have a profound effect on whether or not teachers experience burnout. Many teachers spend a significant amount of unpaid overtime hours each week completing essential tasks that they don’t have time for during their regularly scheduled hours, which hastens the onset of burnout.
Workshop Slide 13

- Allow 5 minutes for discussion.
- Regroup: Choose a few volunteers to summarize the discussion (another 5 minutes).
Consequences of Burnout

Workshop Slide 14

- Next 2 slides: 3 minutes

- “When teachers experience burnout, there are severe consequences for their well-being, for the quality of care and education they provide, and for the financial health of programs.”

- “Teachers who experience burnout have an increased level of stress that may lead to mental health concerns and relationship struggles.”

- “Perhaps the most widely studied effect of burnout is on the quality of care and education provided to children. Burned out teachers are less likely to sustain a high level of classroom quality and effectiveness of teaching. The social distancing and cynicism that accompany depersonalization interfere with children’s social and emotional development, including their ability to form secure attachments. The reduced effectiveness of burned out teachers coupled with the reduced likelihood for children to form secure relationships negatively affects cognitive learning outcomes.”

- “Because we know that burnout sometimes leads to turnover, there are financial consequences to consider.”
Supervisors can help reduce teachers’ risk of burnout!

“As human beings, our job in life is to help people realize how rare and valuable each one of us really is, that each of us has something that no one else has - or ever will have - something inside that is unique to all time.”

- Fred Rogers

Workshop Slide 16

- 1 minute
• Ask for a volunteer to read slide.

• “As human beings and as supervisors in early childhood education, it is our job to help teachers see their value. With this thought in mind, let’s turn to the concept of job engagement as an antidote to burnout.”

---

**The Burnout-Engagement Continuum**

Each negative dimension of burnout has a positive counterpart

- **Burnout**
  - Exhaustion
  - Cynicism/Detachment
  - Inefficacy/Low Sense of Accomplishment

- **Engagement**
  - Energy
  - Involvement
  - Efficacy/High Sense of Accomplishment

---

Workshop Slide 17

• 3 minutes

• Summarize slide.

• “Interventions aimed at reducing burnout should begin by identifying which elements on the continuum are most in need of attention. Ideally, burnout prevention efforts should address each dimension of the continuum.”

• Ask participants to make a mental note of where they themselves might land on each dimension of the continuum, using a scale of 1-5, with 1 representing burnout and 5 representing engagement. Then ask them to do the same with one of their staff members in mind.
Burnout vs. Engagement: Concrete Effects

- Negative or detached attitude toward children
  - Interferes with children’s ability to form secure attachments

- Negative or unsupportive responses to children’s emotions
  - Poor emotional development
    → Social, emotional, behavioral, and academic problems in the future

- Teachers' self-reported well-being in the workplace
  - More complex & stimulating conversations with children
    → More in-depth learning & higher-order thinking skills

Workshop Slide 18

- 1 minute

- “We previously discussed the ways in which burnout puts children’s emotional development at risk, which also impacts their cognitive learning.”

- “On the other hand, research has shown that teachers who report well-being at their jobs (that is, they are not at risk of burnout) not only develop more supportive relationships with children, but also engage in more complex and stimulating conversations with children, which leads to more in-depth learning and higher-order thinking skills.”
Not everything is within your control, and that’s okay.

Workshop Slide 19

- “There are some causes of burnout that are out of your control. Our aim here is to identify which factors you might be able to influence in order to minimize the risk of burnout.”

Workshop Slide 20

- 1 minute
- Summarize slide.
Workshop Slide 21

- 1 minute.

- “Given the breadth of information that exists on this topic and the various paths you will choose to take, we won’t be able to delve deeply into each individual strategy. However, there are more specific descriptions, resources, and guidance available in the course handbook.”

- “With that said, let’s walk through an overview of each type of strategy you might consider implementing.”
Workshop Slide 22

- This and following four slides: Summarize (8-10 minutes)

Workshop Slide 23

- Summarize
Strategies to Consider
Adaptations to the Physical Environment

- Fewer Children in the Classroom/Lower Ratios
  - Consider splitting into small groups for part of the day
  - Consider co-teaching arrangements

- Noise Reduction
  - Acoustic panels
  - Soft furniture
  - Area rugs

- Classroom Materials
  - Ensure an adequate supply
  - Involve teachers in selecting & purchasing materials

Workshop Slide 24
- Summarize

Strategies to Consider
Collegial Environment

- Internal Mentorship Programs
  - Novice teachers are paired with veteran teachers
  - Increases self efficacy

- Staff Involved in Decision-Making
  - Involvement protects against cynicism & detachment

- Emotional Support and Teamwork
  - Colleagues who support each other experience more self-efficacy, energy, and involvement

Workshop Slide 25
- Summarize
Workshop Slide 26

- Summarize

Workshop Slide 27

- 1 minute (Approximately 45-50 minutes should have elapsed by this point)
• “All engagement strategies are important, but as you can see, certain strategies have the potential to foster all three aspects of engagement, while others primarily foster one or two aspects. Keep this in mind as you consider what you might do for your program.”

How can you determine what would be most beneficial to your staff?

Workshop Slide 28

• 1 minute

• Read slide.

• Encourage participants to think about soliciting input from their staff members.
Workshop Slide 29

- 1 minute

“After you leave this meeting, you will be going back to your workplace with a plan to implement one or more of the strategies explored today. Thinking about what we have discussed, I would like you to choose one or two of these categories to be the focus of your strategy implementation.”
Small Group Discussion: Take Turns

First Round
● Share your chosen strategy/strategies. Consider the 3 W’s:
  ▶ Who will be involved (and in what capacity)?
  ▶ What steps do you need to take?
  ▶ When will you begin?

Second Round
● What obstacles might stand in the way of you successfully carrying out your strategy? Brainstorm potential solutions with your group.

Workshop Slide 30

● Participants return to their small groups. Direct them to the action plan worksheet in the packet of materials and ask them to fill it out as they have their discussion.

● Allow approximately 10 minutes for discussion.

● Encourage participants to write down their ideas, questions, and concerns.
Large Group Discussion

Choose a representative from your group to explain one obstacle you discussed and:

- a potential solution
  
or
- questions about how to solve this problem

Workshop Slide 31

- 10 minutes

- Use whiteboard/chalkboard/easel paper to write down obstacles and solutions for all to see. If questions arise, encourage the group to brainstorm solutions. Write their ideas down for all to see.
Workshop Slide 32

- 1 minute to summarize slide.
- Have participants fill out the accountability worksheet with partners (allow 5 minutes).

Workshop Slide 33

- 1 minute
• Read slide
• Refer participants to supplemental materials.

Questions & Open Discussion

Workshop Slide 34

• 10 minutes for questions and discussion
• When there are 5 minutes remaining, give each participant a turn to say one word describing how they feel about moving forward with their plan.
“I recently learned that in an average lifetime a person walks about sixty-five thousand miles. That's two and a half times around the world. I wonder where your steps will take you. I wonder how you'll use the rest of the miles you're given.”

- Fred Rogers
Workshop Slide 36

- Provide contact information in case participants would like further support or to share their progress.

Thank you

and good luck!
Handbook

Link to Google Doc

Images of Handbook Pages

The Teacher Engagement Handbook

Tools to Reduce Burnout and Promote Teacher Retention in Early Childhood Education

Erin Bergevin
2018
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    - Resources for Emotional Support and Sense of Teamwork
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Introduction

This handbook is a guide for directors, supervisors, administrators, and other leaders in the field of Early Childhood Education. A companion to the professional development training series entitled Supervising for Teacher Engagement: Reducing Burnout and Promoting Teacher Retention in Early Childhood Education, the handbook will provide you with an overview of the causes and consequences of teacher burnout followed by a brief explanation of the burnout-engagement continuum. The majority of the handbook is dedicated to providing resources aimed at helping you implement various strategies that have the potential to prevent or decrease burnout in your teaching staff, thereby promoting engagement, job satisfaction, and long-term retention. As you read through the handbook, take into account how the strategies might also benefit you as a program leader. Consideration of your own personal burnout experience in addition to that of your teaching staff may guide you to try out strategies that are beneficial to all.

The strategies offered in this handbook encompass a wide range of categories and difficulty levels. Some strategies simply involve a slight tweak to the environment, while others may require a thorough overhaul of program procedures. Some strategies may instantly seem like a natural fit, while others will challenge you to change your mindset. Still others may involve a culture shift among your staff. Since every program has its own unique strengths and challenges, implementation of some strategies may require some outside-the-box thinking and brainstorming in order to suit the needs of your program. It is up to you and your staff to determine which strategies would be most helpful to your particular program.

On behalf of children, families, and early childhood educators everywhere, thank you for your efforts to improve teacher engagement and increase teacher retention. I wish you the best of luck.
Burnout

“Burnout is a syndrome of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment that can occur among individuals who do ‘people work’ of some kind. It is a response to the chronic emotional strain of dealing extensively with other human beings…. Although it has some of the same deleterious effects as other stress responses, what is unique about burnout is that the stress arises from the social interaction between helper and recipient” (Maslach, 1982, p. 2).

Three Dimensions of Burnout

- Emotional Exhaustion
  - Tending to the emotional demands of others increases stress
  - Emotional overexertion results in feeling drained and depleted
  - “Compassion fatigue”
- Depersonalization
  - After emotional exhaustion sets in, social distancing occurs as a form of self-protection
  - Emotional detachment can lead to cynicism and disregard for the needs of others
- Reduced Sense of Accomplishment
  - A negative attitude toward others can lead to a negative self-image
  - Caregivers feel inadequate and that they have failed the people in their care (inefficacy)
  - Self-esteem diminishes, sometimes resulting in depression

Emotional exhaustion often leads to depersonalization, which can lead to feelings of inefficacy. However, the relationship is not always linear; feelings of inefficacy can also exacerbate exhaustion and detachment.
**Risk Factors for Burnout**

- **Personal Factors**: Generally speaking, the higher the qualification level and the higher the quality of professional preparation, the lower the risk of burnout. This may be because when teachers feel well prepared for their role in the classroom, they are less likely to become overwhelmed by emotional demands.

- **Interpersonal Factors**: Challenging child behavior, demands from parents, and conflicts with colleagues can exacerbate emotional exhaustion.

- **Societal Factors**: Poor compensation and lack of professional status can feel demeaning. Some teachers may feel that the emotional demands of the work are not worth the low pay, especially when society may seem to think of them as babysitters rather than professionals.

- **Programmatic factors**: Involvement of teachers in decision-making, perceived support from administrators and colleagues, and the structure of the workday can have a profound effect on whether or not teachers experience burnout. Many teachers spend a significant amount of unpaid overtime hours each week completing essential tasks that they don’t have time for during their regularly scheduled hours, which hastens the onset of burnout.
Consequences of Burnout

*Risks to Teachers’ Well-being*

Teachers who experience burnout have an increased level of stress that may lead to mental health concerns and relationship struggles.

*Diminished Quality of Care and Education*

Perhaps the most widely studied effect of burnout is on the quality of care and education provided to children. Burned out teachers are less likely to sustain a high level of classroom quality and effectiveness of teaching. The social distancing and cynicism that accompany depersonalization interfere with children’s social and emotional development, including their ability to form secure attachments.

The reduced effectiveness of burned out teachers coupled with the reduced likelihood for children to form secure relationships negatively affects cognitive learning outcomes. Research has shown that teachers who report well-being at their jobs (that is, their risk of burnout is low) not only develop more supportive relationships with children, but also engage in more complex and stimulating conversations with children, which leads to more in-depth learning and higher-order thinking skills (Whitebook, King, Philipp, & Sakai, 2016).

*Financial Costs*

Because burnout has the potential to lead to turnover, there are also financial consequences for programs to consider, including those associated with:

- Overtime pay for teachers filling in gaps
- Pay for long-term substitutes (agencies often charge extra)
- Hiring, training, and onboarding new staff
- Background checks
- Loss of tuition revenue if families leave programs
The Burnout-Engagement Continuum

Each negative dimension of burnout has a positive counterpart. While burnout is characterized by exhaustion, depersonalization (cynicism and detachment), and a low sense of personal accomplishment, occupying the other end of the spectrum is job engagement, which is characterized by energy, involvement, and a high sense of personal accomplishment (Maslach & Leiter, 2008). Interventions aimed at reducing burnout should begin by identifying which elements on the continuum are most in need of attention. Ideally, burnout prevention efforts should address each dimension of the continuum.

The following sections will outline a range of strategies and introduce several resources to help you implement the strategies of your choice. Each strategy addresses one or more dimensions of the burnout-engagement continuum.
Strategies to Increase Engagement and Reduce Burnout

5 Types of Strategies to Consider:
- Leadership Techniques
- Structural Adaptations to the Workday
- Adaptations to the Physical Environment
- Collegial Environment
- Outside Resources
Leadership Techniques

This section outlines research-backed leadership and supervision techniques that have been demonstrated to reduce burnout and increase job engagement. By adapting your leadership strategies to fit the styles detailed below, you are likely to increase staff engagement along all three dimensions: energy, involvement, and sense of personal accomplishment.

Reflective Supervision

In contrast to traditional models of supervision that involve critical evaluation and top-down commands, reflective supervision provides a regular, reliable context for collaborative professional learning and growth. In reflective supervision, supervisors encourage teachers to reflect on the behaviors and interactions that occur in their classrooms by engaging in a process of inquiry into their pedagogical practice (Emde, 2009; Weiss & Weiss, 2001). Reflective supervision provides teachers an opportunity for continuous, collaborative learning. By allowing teachers to initiate topics of personal concern or interest, this model can address the individual needs of staff with a wide range of experience or training.

Many early childhood providers associate the term ‘supervision’ with negativity; they feel that supervision is something to be dreaded because it elicits judgment and an expectation of perfection. However, teachers who experience reflective supervision see it as a positive opportunity to seek help and develop awareness of their capacity for self-improvement and professional growth (Emde, 2009). Research into reflective supervision in the early childhood field suggests that it may reduce stress and burnout by offering teachers a safe and supportive place to discuss their stressors while simultaneously helping to increase teachers’ sense of personal accomplishment and classroom effectiveness (Brown, 2016).

Resources for Reflective Supervision

Please note that although some of the resources listed here are intended for infant and toddler programs, they contain information that is useful in any early childhood context.

Links to more information on Reflective Supervision:

- Multiplying Connections
  http://multiplyingconnections.org/become-trauma-informed/what-reflective-supervision
- Zero to Three
  https://www.zerotothree.org/resources/415-what-is-reflective-leadership

- Minnesota Association for Children’s Mental Health
  http://www.macmh.org/programs/iec/macmh-iec-professional-endorsement/guidelines-reflective-supervision/

- Infants and Young Children
  https://journals.lww.com/yycjournal/Fulltext/2012/04000/Professional_Development_Through_Reflective_2.aspx

Organizations that offer professional trainings on Reflective Supervision:

- University of Minnesota
  - http://ceed.umn.edu/online-courses/intro-to-reflective-supervision/

- Zero to Three
  - https://www.zerotothree.org/resources/407-reflective-supervision

Books and Scholarly Articles on Reflective Supervision:


  https://my.zerotothree.org/NC__Product?id=a1B1a0000000J5L9EAI

  https://my.zerotothree.org/NC__Product?id=a1B1a0000000J5L7EAI

Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership is a style of personalized supervision that helps teachers see their intrinsic value, increases motivation, and encourages creative problem solving. Transformational leaders exhibit four essential qualities: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration (Bass, 1999).

**Idealized influence** refers to the act of modeling behavior that serves the organization’s values and demonstrates a sense of purpose in positively impacting others.

**Inspirational motivation** involves raising morale by helping to develop a shared sense of calling for the work and allowing teachers a high level of involvement in shaping the program’s future vision.

**Intellectual stimulation** refers to considering new perspectives, questioning the status quo, and encouraging creative approaches to the work.

Finally, **individualized consideration** emphasizes attention to individual teachers’ needs within the organization. Transformational leaders tailor their supervision, coaching, and problem solving strategies to each teacher’s strengths and areas for growth.

In a study of the relationship between transformational leadership and burnout in Special Education teachers, Gong, Zimmerli, and Hoffer (2013) found that transformational leadership was positively related to teachers’ sense of personal accomplishment and negatively related to emotional exhaustion and depersonalization, thereby minimizing each of the three core components of job burnout. Although the specific effects of transformational leadership in the early childhood field have not been widely studied, the study of Special Education teachers suggests that transformational leadership can protect against burnout by reinforcing teachers’ sense of calling for their work.

**Resources for Transformational Leadership**

Links to more information on Transformational Leadership:
- [https://www.verywellmind.com/what-is-transformational-leadership-2795313](https://www.verywellmind.com/what-is-transformational-leadership-2795313)
- [http://changingminds.org/disciplines/leadership/styles/transformational_leadership.htm](http://changingminds.org/disciplines/leadership/styles/transformational_leadership.htm)

Books on Transformational Leadership:

**Additional Leadership Strategies**

Teachers thrive when their supervisors provide clear communication, offer constructive feedback, acknowledge their hard work, express appreciation, and treat all staff fairly and equitably. Teachers need to be able to seek guidance and support from supervisors and know that their supervisors have a thorough understanding of the challenges and responsibilities inherent to the work.

**Resources for Supportive Leadership**

Links to more information on Leadership:

- [https://www.zerotothree.org/resources/414-leadership-as-a-way-of-thinking](https://www.zerotothree.org/resources/414-leadership-as-a-way-of-thinking)

**Books on Leadership:**

- Biddle, J. K. (2012). *The three Rs of leadership: Building effective early childhood programs through relationships, reciprocal learning, and reflection*. Washington, DC: NAEYC.

**Leadership Self-Assessment Tool:**

- [https://www.zerotothree.org/resources/413-leadership-self-assessment-tool](https://www.zerotothree.org/resources/413-leadership-self-assessment-tool)
Structural Adaptations to the Workday

Making strategic changes to the workday to allow for additional planning time, collaboration with colleagues, and energy-restoring breaks primarily protects against the onset of burnout by preventing exhaustion. In addition to increasing energy, these adjustments have the added benefit of increasing teachers’ feelings of efficacy and involvement.

Planning Time

Because teachers are expected to be with children for the vast majority of their workday, very little time tends to be allotted for essential tasks such as lesson planning, assessments, and preparation of materials. Teachers therefore spend significant time outside of regular working hours completing these tasks, often without pay. One study of burnout risk in early childhood teachers found that 84.9% of teachers reported working unpaid overtime hours every week (Shine, 2016). Another study found that many teachers spent two to three unpaid hours each day outside of their regularly scheduled workday attempting to complete all of the tasks required of them (Boyd, 2013). In addition, in a study of early childhood educators’ perceived stress, the majority of teachers felt that they did not have enough time to do their work and commonly felt physically and emotionally exhausted by the end of their workday (Wagner et al., 2013).

The perceived need for additional time to complete tasks combined with an already long workday in a stressful environment creates heightened risk for burnout. Research findings have indicated that long hours, large class sizes, inadequate resources, challenging child behavior, and parent demands contribute to teachers’ feelings of burnout (Al-Adwan & Al-Khayat, 2016) and put teachers at risk of wanting to leave their jobs (Brill & McCartney, 2008).

Giving teachers plenty of paid time during the workday to engage in planning, assessments, preparation of materials, reflection, problem solving, and other essential tasks can offset some of the aforementioned stressors and serve as a significant protective factor against burnout risk. Very little research exists to determine what constitutes enough planning time in the early childhood field, yet it is known that teachers often work multiple overtime hours each day (Boyd, 2013). This finding suggests that teachers should receive a minimum of 60 minutes within the regular work day to plan, prepare materials, conduct assessments, and engage in reflective practice in order to prevent burnout.
Time for Collaboration with Colleagues

Similarly to increased planning time, having time for collaboration with colleagues improves teachers’ sense of job engagement. Collaboration time with colleagues not only allows for creative problem solving and consistency in curriculum implementation, but also strengthens workplace relationships and feelings of camaraderie. According to Ozgun (2005), positive relationships among teachers are related to higher program quality, increased feelings of personal accomplishment, and job satisfaction.

Resources for Planning Time and Time for Collaboration with Colleagues

Links to more information:

- [https://edpolicy.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/publications/how-high-achieving-countries-develop-great-teachers.pdf](https://edpolicy.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/publications/how-high-achieving-countries-develop-great-teachers.pdf) (Note: although this report refers to K-12 educational settings, the basic premise regarding planning and collaboration time applies.)

Short Breaks to Restore Energy

Carson, Baumgartner, Ota, Kuhn, and Durr (2017) examined the strategies that early childhood teachers used to keep themselves from burning out. Participants were surveyed three times per day over a one-week period, including once during a mid-morning break, once after lunch, and once at the end of the work day. They were surveyed on levels of emotional, physical, and mental exhaustion as well as rejuvenation strategies. Teachers reported that the most effective methods for reducing stress during the workday were those that allowed them a brief reprieve (15 minutes or less) from their work in which to restore their physical or cognitive energy.

Physical reprieves were activities such as going outside, exercising, or taking a moment to relax. Cognitive reprieves were actions such as taking a mental vacation, meditating, or engaging in a hobby such as reading or music. In addition to a regular, longer break, allowing teachers short breaks of 5 to 15 minutes to help restore physical and cognitive energy a few times each day may be effective in reducing the daily stress and exhaustion that contribute to burnout.
Adaptations to the Physical Environment

Ratio and Class Size

Research by Sjödin, Kjellberg, Knutsson, Landström, and Lindberg (2012) has shown that teachers experience a higher level of stress when more children are present in the classroom. Similarly, Jeon, Buettner, and Grant (2018) found that perceived chaos in the classroom (partially due to the amount of children present) was the most significant predictor of teachers’ stress, depression, and emotional exhaustion.

Classrooms with smaller numbers of children and lower ratios of children to teachers are associated not only with lower stress levels, but also with higher educational quality and more positive teacher-child interactions. In addition, co-teaching environments are reported to be more successful than single-teacher classrooms in sustaining high quality care and positive adult-child interactions (Shim, Hestenes, & Cassidy, 2004).

While it can be difficult for many programs to reduce class size or ratios due to financial costs, there are some potential approaches worth considering.

- Take advantage of co-teaching arrangements. Split large groups into two or more smaller groups for certain segments of the daily routine. For instance, one group may use the playground or large muscle room while another group stays in the classroom. If walking trips are an option, one group may visit a neighborhood destination while another group remains at school. If this approach is taken, be sure to implement it in a way that respects children’s need for consistency and predictability in their routine.

- Brainstorm ways to structure staffing patterns so that classrooms can benefit from the presence of two or more adults for part of the day.

Noise Reduction

High levels of noise create a stressful environment for teachers (Sjödin et al., 2012; Jeon et al., 2018). In addition, high noise levels have been associated with adverse effects on children’s development (Evans, 2006).

Certain noise-reduction techniques may be helpful, especially if reducing class sizes or ratios is not an option for your program. The following techniques work by softening hard surfaces, thereby creating less noise from impact and reverberation:
- Installing acoustic panels on the walls and/or ceiling
- Using padded area rugs to cover hard flooring
- Sticking felt pads under the feet of tables and chairs
- Lining shelves and other hard surfaces with felt, fabric, or cork
- Creating wall displays using cork board
- Hanging soft, textured objects such as quilts on walls
- Adding curtains or drapes

Classroom Materials

Having a limited supply of classroom resources is a problem that early childhood teachers often cite as a cause of stress, both because teachers often find themselves paying out of pocket for classroom supplies (Pica, Heick, Henton, & Stewart, 2014) and because a shortage of materials makes it more difficult to teach effectively. An inadequate supply of resources is also likely to increase children’s interpersonal conflict over items of limited quantity (Evans, 2002).

Supervisors can assist teachers by ensuring that there is an adequate supply of resources and by allowing teachers to select the materials that best meet their classroom needs.

Resources for Classroom Materials

- This podcast contains suggestions on how to ensure sufficient resources without causing financial strain. Full link: https://www.bamradionetwork.com/index.php?option=com_content&Itemid=68&lang=en&month=8&view=archive&year=2014

- Education crowdfunding websites such as www.donorschoose.org and www.adoptaclassroom.org can be used to help raise funds for specific projects or resources for your program.
Collegial Environment and Workplace Supports

Thorough Onboarding Procedures

Thorough induction and onboarding programs for new teachers have been shown to be a preventative measure against turnover in K-12 educational settings (Brill & McCartney, 2008). These programs allow for a period of several weeks during which new teachers can be thoroughly trained and oriented to their new positions using the support and guidance of supervisors and experienced teachers.

Unfortunately, such programs are rare in the early childhood field, where new teachers are often expected to hit the ground running (Whitebook, Gomby, Bellm, Sakai, & Kipnis, 2009). Noble and Macfarlane (2005) point out that teachers’ initial experience in early childhood education is an important predictor of their longevity in the field. It is therefore worthwhile to develop a system of orienting and training new teaching staff so that they feel supported and prepared to succeed in their teaching roles.

Resources for Onboarding Procedures

Links to more information:

- Examples of onboarding procedures, checklists, and documents from Virginia Department of Social Services: [https://dss.virginia.gov/files/division/cc/provider_training_development/intro_page/publications/directors_toolbox/chapters_individually/05.pdf](https://dss.virginia.gov/files/division/cc/provider_training_development/intro_page/publications/directors_toolbox/chapters_individually/05.pdf)

  Note: regulatory requirements vary from state to state.

Book:

Internal Mentorship Programs

Research on teacher retention has highlighted the benefits of mentor partnerships between teachers. Brill and McCartney (2008) argue that high-quality orientation, training, and mentoring programs are the most effective method to support teacher retention. According to these authors, receiving positive feedback and encouragement from experienced teachers may help new teachers develop a sense of calling for the work and strengthen their feelings of success despite challenging classroom circumstances. Similarly, Buchanan et al. (2013) discuss that collegial mentorship is important because experienced teachers’ sharing of resources and ideas gives new teachers tools to cope with the demands of the work. These studies support the idea that mentorship may reduce burnout and increase engagement by strengthening new teachers’ self-efficacy and sense of accomplishment.

In a study by Ozgun (2005), novice teachers who felt satisfied with their mentoring relationships adjusted more easily to their roles and had a more positive perception of their first few years of teaching than teachers who did not have a mentor or did not have a satisfying partnership with a mentor. According to the novice teachers in this study, mentorship was seen as valuable because it provided an opportunity for them to discuss their concerns and challenges in relation to their teaching goals. In addition, novice teachers found value in utilizing their mentor teachers for classroom visits and observations, both in their own classrooms as a way to receive feedback and in their mentors’ classrooms as a way to gain new ideas.

However, the majority of teachers surveyed reported that they either had no mentoring relationship or that their mentoring relationship was inadequate to provide them the support they needed. The author emphasized the importance of thorough training and incentives for mentors in order to optimize the potential for both instructional and emotional support through these partnerships (Ozgun, 2005).

Resources for Internal Mentorship Programs

Link to more information:


Book:

Mentoring Toolkit:

- [https://www.earlylearningtexas.org/media/23607/0_final_texas_mentoring_7-8-13.pdf](https://www.earlylearningtexas.org/media/23607/0_final_texas_mentoring_7-8-13.pdf)

### Involvement in Decision-Making

Several pieces of scholarly research have pointed to teacher voice as an important factor in both job satisfaction and the quality of the educational environment. Jiang (2005) found that empowering teachers to have a voice in such matters as curriculum development directly increased job satisfaction, which in turn had the effect of increasing professional commitment and reducing burnout.

Kilgallon, Maloney, & Lock (2008) surveyed early childhood teachers on the factors that help to sustain them in their work and found that teachers’ autonomy over classroom decision-making with regard to teaching methods, scheduling, and purchasing supplies contributed to teachers’ job satisfaction, commitment, and motivation.

Hur, Jeon, and Buettner (2016) found that teachers’ sense of influence within the program were associated with both job-related well-being and the developmental appropriateness of teachers’ beliefs about how children learn. Giving teachers a voice within a positive collegial environment is therefore related not only to teachers’ job engagement, but also to the quality of the educational program.

**Resources for Involvement in Decision-Making**

**Book:**


**Report:**

Emotional Support and Sense of Teamwork

Collegial relationships are a central predictor of teacher retention, job satisfaction, and efficacy. Research has shown that receiving daily emotional support from colleagues can help sustain teachers within their teaching roles (Kligallon et al, 2008).

Positive relationships with colleagues and perception of colleagues as supportive and friendly have been found to contribute to job satisfaction and program quality. In a study by Ozgun (2005), when teachers believed that they were working well as a team, they experienced a greater level of satisfaction with their ability to have a positive effect on children. The author of this study discussed the idea that by setting clear expectations and offering teachers supportive guidance, constructive feedback, and acknowledgment of their hard work, program administrators create a culture of community and sense of connection amongst their staff.

Resources for Emotional Support and Sense of Teamwork

Books:


Focus on Self-Care, Stress Reduction, and Mental Wellness

Mental and emotional wellness are necessities for teachers to do their best work for children. Many resources aimed at reducing stress and promoting self-care in the early childhood workforce are intended to give teachers tools to manage their own mental well-being. However, it shouldn’t be solely up to teachers themselves to identify and implement all necessary supports for mental well-being, given that the circumstances of working in the early childhood field contribute significantly to teachers’ stress. Rather, early childhood programs should actively seek to care for teachers by supporting their mental health.

In line with this thinking, Buettner, Jeon, Hur, & Garcia (2016) encourage programs to support teachers with stress management; just as teachers should create a positive atmosphere to support children’s well-being, programs should create a positive atmosphere to support
teachers’ well-being. Jeon et al. (2018) explain that helping teachers increase their competence in the classroom is an effective way to promote their psychological well-being.

Creating an atmosphere that supports teachers’ mental health and wellness may include:

- Adopting a practice of reflective supervision (see page 9)
- Allowing for short breaks in addition to a regular break (see page 14)
- Mentorship (see pages 18 and 23)
- Arranging for professional development on mindfulness-based stress reduction and mental wellness (see page 24)
- Facilitating the creation of self-care plans for teachers (see link below)
- Providing healthcare benefits, paid sick leave, and paid vacation

**Resources for Self-Care, Stress Reduction, and Mental Wellness**

More information:

- Health and Well-Being of Early Childhood Educators

Creating a self-care plan:


**Book:**

  [http://books.wwnorton.com/books/Mindfulness-for-Teachers/](http://books.wwnorton.com/books/Mindfulness-for-Teachers/)

**Additional Resources for Collegial Environment and Workplace Supports**

**Books:**


**Articles:**


Outside Resources

Access to Specialists and Consultants

Working with young children with emotional and behavioral challenges can be a contributing factor to teacher burnout. Several studies have illustrated that providing teachers the opportunity to consult with children’s mental health professionals can strengthen job engagement by increasing both efficacy and energy.

When teachers have access to consultation with children’s mental health specialists and other supports such as trainings and curriculum resources, they exhibit fewer signs of depression, higher levels of job satisfaction, and higher feelings of personal accomplishment in handling challenging classroom situations (Gilliam, 2005; Shine, 2016; Zinsser, Christensen, and Torres (2016).

Resources for Access to Specialists and Consultants

Links to more information:

- Professional Consultation: [https://www.naeyc.org/resources/pubs/yc/may2015/working-with-consultants](https://www.naeyc.org/resources/pubs/yc/may2015/working-with-consultants)

External Mentorship Programs

If it is not possible to form mentor partnerships between your program’s teaching staff (see page 18 of this handbook), consider collaborating with external organizations to find mentors for your staff.

Resource for External Mentorship Programs

Mentoring Toolkit:

- [https://www.earlylearningtexas.org/media/23607/0_final_texas_mentoring_7-8-13.pdf](https://www.earlylearningtexas.org/media/23607/0_final_texas_mentoring_7-8-13.pdf)
Professional Development

Professional development opportunities may have a positive effect on teachers' ability to sustain themselves in their roles, particularly when it comes to helping teachers develop tools to address classroom-related challenges and cope with stress. In other words, professional development, depending on its focus, has the potential to increase job engagement along the dimensions of energy and efficacy while protecting against the exhaustion and lowered feelings of personal accomplishment that characterize burnout.

In addition, program administrators can encourage teachers' participation in professional learning conferences such as NAEYC or local conferences. These opportunities can benefit teachers not only by increasing their skills and energy, but also by making teachers feel appreciated and respected as professionals. Since professional learning conferences can be costly, programs should offer financial assistance for teachers to attend.

Resources for Professional Development

Links to more information:
- Council for Exceptional Children: [http://www.dec-sped.org/professional-development](http://www.dec-sped.org/professional-development)
- HighScope: [https://highscope.org/training](https://highscope.org/training)
- NAEYC: [https://www.naeyc.org/resources/pd](https://www.naeyc.org/resources/pd)
- National Head Start Association: [https://www.nhssa.org/our-work/professional-development/overview](https://www.nhssa.org/our-work/professional-development/overview)

Professional Development for Self-Care, Stress Reduction, and Mental Wellness
- [https://mindfulness-training.teachable.com](https://mindfulness-training.teachable.com)
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Supplemental Materials

Action Plan Worksheet

1. We have discussed five broad categories of supportive strategies: Leadership Techniques, Structural Adaptations to the Workday, Adaptations to the Physical Environment, Collegial Environment/Workplace Supports, and Outside Resources. Each of these categories contains several strategies. What is your chosen strategy? (Not necessarily an entire category.)

2. Consider the 3 W’s:

   ● Who will be involved?

   ● What steps will you need to take?
     ○
     ○
     ○

   ● When will you begin?

3. What obstacles might stand in the way of successful implementation of this strategy? Brainstorm some solutions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Obstacles</th>
<th>Solutions</th>
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Accountability Plan

Name of accountability partner:

Contact information:

Set a date (and time if applicable). When will you first check in with each other?

How will you connect with each other? (Phone, email, text, meet in person, etc.)

How frequently will you check in? (Weekly, every other week, etc.)

When you connect, ask each other how it’s going.
   - What’s working?
   - What’s challenging?
   - What might need to change?
   - Add your own questions based on your prior conversations.

Provide encouragement and share problem-solving suggestions as appropriate.

Remind each other to write journal entries and refer to the class handbook for ideas.

At the end of your conversation, schedule your next check-in.
Reflective Practice Worksheet: In-Session Version

What strategy(ies) for teacher engagement have you begun implementing or attempted to implement since the last meeting?

In what ways have you experienced success in your staff engagement efforts since the last meeting? How have your successes made you feel (creative, proud, encouraged, etc.)?

What are some steps you might take to replicate or extend your successes?

What aspects of the process have been challenging?

What are some steps you might take to overcome these challenges? What support or resources might be useful to help you overcome these challenges?

In what ways, if any, have your thoughts, feelings, and opinions changed as a result of this process?

What is one important thing you have learned from this process?

What adjustments would you like to make to your action plan and goals?
Reflective Practice Worksheet: Workshop/Take-Home Version

What strategy(ies) for teacher engagement have you begun implementing or attempted to implement in the past month?

What feedback have you received from stakeholders (staff, families, etc.)?

In what ways have you experienced success in your staff engagement efforts? How have your successes made you feel (creative, proud, encouraged, etc.)?

What are some steps you might take to replicate or extend your successes?

What aspects of this process have been challenging?

What are some steps you might take to overcome these challenges? What support or resources might be useful to help you overcome these challenges?

In what ways, if any, have your thoughts, feelings, and opinions changed as a result of this process?

What is one important thing you have learned from this process?

Based on your experience, what adjustments would you like to make to your action plan? (Trying out a different strategy, expanding on your current strategy, approaching your strategy in a new way, etc.)

Create a new action plan: What would you like to have achieved one month from now? What provisions do you need to make in order to achieve this goal? Who can help you? How will you know that your goal has been met? Use extra paper as needed.
## Resources and Community Supports

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of person or organization</th>
<th>How might this resource be helpful?</th>
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Journal Instructions

As you work toward increasing staff engagement, you are encouraged to write weekly journal entries. Journaling will help you reflect on the process of implementing your chosen strategy(ies).

Consider the following themes for inspiration:

- Reflections on burnout
- Your feelings about your chosen strategy
- Your implementation steps
- Others’ reactions to the strategy
- Successes
- Challenges
- Changes in your thinking or approach
- Potential new approaches
- How you are utilizing community resources & networks
- How you might ensure the sustainability of your approach
- Your own self-care during this process
Sustainability Plan

1. What is your vision for employee engagement one year from now?

2. Using your reflective practice worksheet and action plan as a guide, describe how you will sustain or improve upon the strategy you have been implementing in order to achieve your one year vision.

3. Describe how you might implement one or more additional engagement strategies. Use extra paper as needed.

Who will be involved (and in what capacity)?

What steps do you need to take?

When will you begin?

4. Accountability - Make a plan to check in with each other on an ongoing basis:

   ● Set a date: When will you check in with each other?
   
   ● How will you connect with each other? (Email, text, phone call, in person, etc.)
   
   ● How frequently will you check in? (Each week, every other week, etc.)
   
   ● Ask how it’s going, share your thoughts, offer support.
# Course Evaluation: Supervising for Teacher Engagement

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The purpose of the session was clearly defined.</td>
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<td>Participation and interaction were encouraged.</td>
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<td>The topics covered were relevant to me.</td>
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<td>The content was organized and easy to follow.</td>
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<td>The supplemental materials (handouts) were helpful.</td>
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<td>The information from the session will be useful in my work.</td>
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<td>The trainer is knowledgeable about the topic.</td>
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<td>The trainer was well prepared.</td>
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<td>The trainer was receptive to questions.</td>
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What did you like most about this session?

How might the structure, format, and/or materials of the session be improved?

What specifically did the trainer do well?

In what ways might the trainer improve?
REFERENCES


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Session 3 Slide 59:


Session 3 Slide 65, Workshop Slide 35:

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