Are Schools Doing Enough

To Support Faculty Mental Health?

According to mentalhealth.gov, mental health is our emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It affects how we think, feel and act. The current climate of uncertainty has induced higher stress levels in everyone. Parents are now adjusting to having their kids at home full time and searching for ways to teach what educators would normally do in the classroom.

On the other end of the spectrum, educators are scrambling to rearrange their physical classrooms into virtual ones. For those who have never taught online, it means having to learn a new technology platform and design their lesson plans to meet the needs of both parents and students. Dealing with change itself can be very stressful and quite uncomfortable.

Faculty are not only having to adjust to the changing environment, they must ensure they are taking care of themselves and their families during this time. Add to that the pressure and demands of switching from face-to-face instruction to virtual.

As parents, we often don't think of the difficulties that comes with teaching a classroom of 22-25 individuals all with very different personalities, learning styles and emotional needs. Helping prepare students for the next phase by providing educational tools and life skills to assist them throughout their academic journey.

Supporting faculty mental health is critical, especially right now, amidst the coronavirus pandemic. As with any organization, schools have the responsibility to promote the well-being of their employees. The correlation that mental health has on performance is undeniable. If our teachers are stressed, their ability to teach students effectively is compromised thereby creating a disruption in the positive ecosystem.

Stress can manifest into physical ailments resulting in absences from work, long term health issues and even faculty turnover. It is imperative that faculty be at their best to help transition students from being in the classroom to virtual learning, and for the continuity of their education for the remainder of the school year. Schools can support mental health by doing the following:

- Regularly educate faculty on where to find resources available to them.
- Create an awareness by getting comfortable discussing mental health and encourage faculty to take care of themselves, mentally and physically.
- Have virtual check-ins with faculty to demonstrate their value to the school.

Faculty can practice and improve their mental well-being by:

- Exercising, meditating and practicing mindfulness techniques to decrease and manage stress.
- Addressing stress by talking with peers, family members or a Licensed Professional Counselor.
- Utilizing employee resources to help identify and mitigate the effects of stress.

- Have a discussion with their supervisor on the sources of stress and create ways to alleviate or reduce it if possible.

The mental health of school faculty is an essential component to student success. Schools need faculty to educate and inspire students, helping prepare them for the next phase in their educational journey and in life. This positive continuum of this exchange is made possible when faculty has the resources and support, they need to be at their best. TeacherCoach has a library of resources available to help faculty effectively manage stress.

Nikki Modeste, holds a Ph.D. in I/O Psychology. She has over 10 years of experience in Human Capital Management with an expertise in internal coaching, mentoring, performance management, succession planning and the well-being of the employee. She has facilitated workshops focused on improving performance with leaders of people, to include executives and directors. She believes in improving talent in organizations by approaching it from a holistic perspective to understand the barriers that are preventing organizational talent from being their best selves.

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