

# TEACHER INFORMATION SHEET

## TEACHER WELLBEING

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Insight in teacher wellbeing is important for several reasons. First of all, it adds to the understanding of teacher careers. Knowing factors that are of high concern to teachers is helpful in creating school contexts that foster teachers' job commitment and prevents dropout from the profession. Second, by examining what is most satisfying and rewarding for teachers, a better understanding of their attitudes toward school reforms and intervention programs can be gained. In many cases, teachers are the agents of change, and insight in teacher wellbeing might add to the dissemination of intervention programs in schools. Last but not least, teachers are important adults in children's scholastic lives, and there is some evidence that teacher wellbeing, at least indirectly, has significant effects on children's socioemotional adjustment and academic performance.

UK Research reports that increases in the average levels of job stimulation and enjoyment reported by teachers were significantly and positively associated with the value-added measure of pupil performance. This finding suggests that where teachers within a school experience improvements in their feelings of stimulation and enjoyment, school performance may also improve. These findings suggest that there are links between how teachers within a school on average feel about their work and the performance of pupils in that school.

Research on teacher wellbeing has focused largely on stress and burnout. Organizational and social pressures such as administration workload, classroom management issues, and lack of supervisor and team support have been extensively studied. To date, however, the interpersonal relationships between teachers and students have been largely ignored as a factor of significance to teacher wellbeing.

Teaching has been ranked as one of the highest in stress-related outcomes from a database of 26 occupations, and the emotional involvement of teachers with their students is considered the primary explanation for such findings. It seems obvious that the formation of personal, supportive teacher-student relationships inherently demands emotional involvement from teachers. For students, it is evident that the affective quality of the teacher-student relationship is an important factor in their school engagement, wellbeing, and academic success. Teacher-student relationships characterized by conflict and mistrust have deleterious effects on children's learning.

The major implication of these findings is that if we want to improve school performance, we also need to start paying attention to teacher wellbeing. How teachers feel on an everyday basis is likely to affect their performance and so, in turn, the performance of the pupils they teach. This may happen in several ways. For example, happier, motivated teachers may make pupils feel happier, motivated and more confident. Happier teachers may also be able to concentrate better on the job of teaching, and experience more motivation to help pupils in need of special attention.

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The psychological health and wellbeing of people is relatively stable. Yet, research on job stress and satisfaction demonstrates that prolonged exposure to chronic stressors and unsuccessful coping do impact the wellbeing of employees. The wellbeing of teachers as a long-term outcome influenced by mental representations of teacher–student relationships through everyday emotions and stress.

Teacher perceptions of student misbehavior and discipline issues have been considered among the primary sources of negative emotional experiences and stress for teachers. We need to understand teachers' interpretations and attributions of student misbehavior because habitual patterns in teachers' judgments underlie the everyday emotional experiences of teachers that contribute to stress and burnout. We reasoned that teacher perceptions of student behavior and daily emotional experiences of teachers need to be considered in light of the interpersonal relationships between teachers and students. We proposed that teachers' internalized representations of interpersonal difficulties could mediate or moderate the effects of perceived behavior problems on teacher wellbeing. Teachers' mental representations of relationships with disruptive children appear characterized by elevated levels of internalized negative affect, which in turn appear predictive of emotional displays in daily interactions.

## REFERENCES

Jantine L. Spilt<sup>1</sup>, Helma M. Y. Koomen<sup>2</sup> and Jochem T. Thijs<sup>3</sup> (2011) Teacher Wellbeing: The Importance of Teacher–Student Relationships. *Educational Psychology Review*.