The Price of Happiness: Needs for Investing in Teachers’ Well-Being

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Acknowledgement

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Ms. Sexton’s Story

“I’ve had my knees replaced. It’s some genetic, but also the work I do. I am up and down, up and down, up and down all the time. I recently had a rib out of place so I went to therapy and was out of work for six weeks because I couldn’t lift. I think these issues are kind of normal for teachers, I guess.”
Early Childhood Workforce

- Low Pay & Poor Benefits
- High Job Demands
- Limited Resources
- Underappreciation
- Low Qualification
- Low Classroom Quality
- High Turnover

Teacher Well-Being

At Risk
Median Hourly Wages by ECE Occupation
(Whitebook et al., 2018)

- Child care workers: $10.7
- Family child care workers: $10.4
- Preschool teachers, all settings: $13.9
- Preschool teachers in schools: $26.9
- Directors, all settings: $22.5
- Kindergarten teachers: $31.3
- Elementary teachers: $33.0
Happy Teacher Project:
Understanding and Supporting Whole Teacher Well-Being

Conceptual Model

- Physical Well-being
  - General health
  - Obesity
  - Ergonomic pain
  - Cardiorespiratory
  - Work-related injuries
  - Exercise

- Psychological Well-being
  - Depression
  - Personal stress
  - Job stress
  - ACEs

- Professional Well-being
  - Relationship with children
  - Job commitment
  - Self-efficacy
  - Job retention

- Work Environment & Workplace Support
  - Work climate
  - Compensation
  - Benefits
  - Breaks
  - Job demand
  - Physical environment
Integration of Two Studies on Teacher Well-Being

Happy Teacher Project

Phase 1: 262 early childhood teachers (serving children age 0-preK) in Oklahoma
Phase 2: 40 teachers

COVID-19 Impact Study

1,434 early childhood teachers serving children age 0-K across states in U.S.

Phase 1: Teacher questionnaire & direct assessment
Phase 2: Observation & interviews about teacher well-being and working conditions

Online survey on teacher well-being and work during the COVID-19 pandemic
Research Findings
Psychological Well-Being

Happy Teacher Project (n=262 in OK)
- 23% Depressed
- 21% 4+ACES scores

COVID Impact Study (n=1,434 in US)
- 48% Negative change in psychological well-being
- 35% Depressed
- 31% Diagnosed anxiety
Working Conditions

31% No health insurance provided by employer
39% No paid sick days
42% No Retirement plan
30% No resources for well-being
44% No designated break

75% Work environment somewhat positively +
33% No place for relaxation
    No storage for belongings
    Noise level disturbing
19% Furniture not adult size
## Noise Level

### Acoustics (Sound) Levels
(measured in db)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Morning</th>
<th>Nap Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>54.8</td>
<td>44.35</td>
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<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>73.85</td>
<td>69.85</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>63.94</td>
<td>55.62</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Recommended Level**: 35

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American National Standard Acoustical Performance Criteria (ANSI) S12.60
Teachers’ Well-Being in the Context of Head Start (n=262 in OK)
Working Conditions & Well-Being of Head Start Teachers (n=112) vs. Non-Head Start ECE Teachers (n=150)

Better:
- Wage
- Benefits
- Additional staff
- Resources
- Educational level
- Classroom quality

Worse:
- Injuries at work
- Headache
- Cardioresp. fitness
- Depressive symptoms
- Job stressors & stress
- Conflict w/children
- Designated break
Teachers’ Well-Being in the Context of COVID-19 (n=1,434 in US)
Well-Being Risk During the Pandemic by Teaching Modality

Teaching In-Person (27%)
- Physical job demand
- Ergonomic pain (Severity & # of area)
- Personal stress
- Depression
- Food insecurity
- Job commitment
- Life satisfaction

Teaching Online (37%)
- Secondary trauma
- Skill discretion (requiring high levels of job skills)

School Closed (36%)

→ Highest Risk Group

→ Lowest Risk Group

BUT well-being significantly varies by whether they are paid during the school closure
Teachers’ Physical Well-Being

Ken Randall, PhD
Happy Teacher Project: Supporting Teachers’ Physical and Psychological Well-Being
Happy Teacher Project
(n=262 in OK)

- 75% Obesity/Overweight
- 66% 1+ Ergonomic pain (52% Back pain & 29 knee pain)
- 54% Below average cardiorespiratory fitness
- 33% Urinary Track Infection
- 20% Asthma

COVID Impact Study
(n=1,434 in US)

- Obesity/Overweight 77%
- 1+ Ergonomic pain 79% (52% Back pain & 29 knee pain)
- Low food security 26%
- Urinary Track Infection 23%
- Asthma 20%
Ergonomic Pain of Infant Toddler Teachers During Routine (n=159)

Note: This finding demonstrates the percent of infant toddler teachers who feel the ergonomic pain during each of the routine tasks.
## Risk Levels of Activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Mean REBA score</th>
<th>Risk Category</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Standing while holding and reaching</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sitting and reaching</td>
<td>9.33</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stooping while holding</td>
<td>8.09</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>22</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Stooping</strong></td>
<td><strong>7.19</strong></td>
<td><strong>Medium</strong></td>
<td><strong>37</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Squatting while holding</td>
<td>6.61</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stooping while reaching</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standing while reaching</td>
<td>6.43</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>11</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sitting</td>
<td>6.33</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>15</td>
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<tr>
<td>Squatting while reaching</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Squatting</td>
<td>5.85</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walking</td>
<td>5.67</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Standing while holding</strong></td>
<td><strong>5.5</strong></td>
<td><strong>Medium</strong></td>
<td><strong>33</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Sitting while holding</td>
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<td>Walking while holding</td>
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<td>Medium</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Standing</strong></td>
<td><strong>4.45</strong></td>
<td><strong>Medium</strong></td>
<td><strong>29</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Ergonomic Analysis: Categories of Activities

**Standing** (includes sub-categories of lifting/carrying and/or reaching)

**Stooping** (also includes subcategories of lifting and/or reaching)

**Squatting** (includes subcategories of lifting and/or reaching)

**Sitting** (includes lifting and/or reaching)
“Educational Athletes”
Recommendations: Ergonomic Adjustments

Performance of activities enhanced by:

- Awareness of deviations
- Education in safer movements
- Adjust the environment
- Educate teachers in proper lifting and alignment during activities
Teachers’ Needs & Recommendations
**Teachers' Wishlist**

**Happy Teacher Project**

1. Wages & Benefit
2. Paid Vacation Days & Daily Break
3. Support for Behavioral & Special Needs
4. Leadership & Supportive Colleagues
5. More Supported Physical Environment

**COVID Impact Study**

1. Wages & Benefit
2. More Support and Resources for Well-Being
3. Coaching and Professional Development
4. Paid Vacation Days & Daily Break
5. Support for Behavioral and Special Needs
Recommendations for Improving Whole Teachers’ Well-being

• Appropriate salary and benefits are necessary but not sufficient
• Create positive work climate (e.g., committee, teacher appreciation)
• More behavioral management support and coaching to work with children exposed to trauma
• More breaks (daily, monthly, yearly)
• Self-care and mindfulness training and mental health services
• Physical conditioning through exercise adopting an ‘educational athlete’ approach (addressing flexibility, strength, and endurance of teachers)
• Alter the way teachers perform activities (ergonomic adjustments)
• Alter the environment
• Add “resources for well-being” as a criteria for state regulations & QRIS systems
• More collaboration across disciplines and systems
Teachers Need a Break, a Real Physical & Mental Break!
Space for Relaxation

Access to daylight and views and flexible seating options
Child & Teacher-Friendly Environment

Vs.
Alter the Environment

Vs.
Next Steps
Happy Teacher Wellness Intervention for Head Start Staff

Baseline Assessment
- Health & Well-Being Assessment: survey, direct assessment
- Individual strengths and needs: interview
- Classroom quality: observation
- Child outcomes: direct assessment

Intervention
- 10-week multi-faceted and multi-tiered intervention
  - Tier 1: Self-guided online modules
  - Tier 2: Add individualized circle of wellness coaching
  - Tier 3: Add wellness room and additional morning staff

Post-Assessment
- Health & Well-Being Assessment: survey, direct assessment
- Individual strengths and needs: interview
- Classroom quality: observation
- Child outcomes: direct assessment

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Teacher well-being is not only important because it is linked to better care and learning outcomes, but also because it is human rights. Also, it is a way we can show—not just tell—our teachers that they matter and that we care about them as human beings.
From
Happy Teacher Project Team