

# **A Large-scale Resilience Initiative Among School Staff in North Carolina**

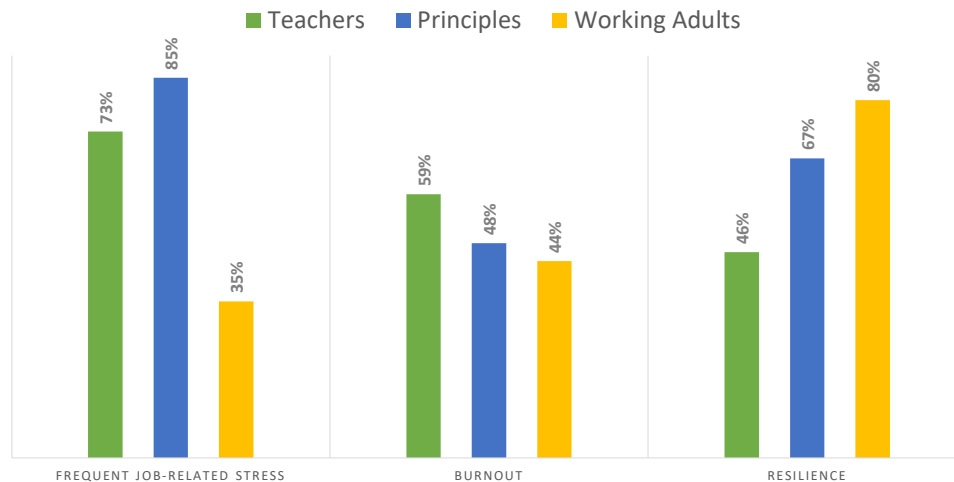
Considerations for Collaborative Partnerships and Interventions

Ruby Brown-Herring, MEd, BSW; and Morgan Daniels, MS, CHES



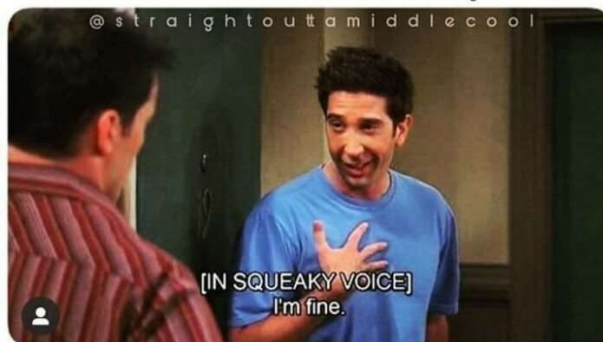
**Moment of Resilience**

## Stress & Well-being as of January 2022\*



\*Retrieved from Rand Corporation Survey, 2022

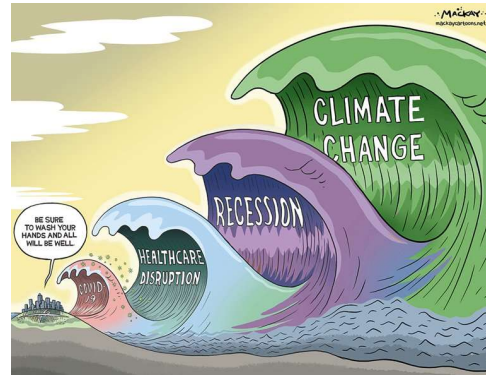
Teachers trying to keep up with virtual teaching, parent emails, virtual department meetings, virtual school-wide meetings, their own children, & the Coronavirus, etc.




## The Next Wave


“When faced with potentially traumatic events about **65%** of people are going to show psychological symptoms”


“Even if most individuals prove resilient, the toll of the COVID-19 Disruptions and sheer number involved have experts warning of a mental health tsunami.”





L. Denworth (2020) *The Biggest Psychological Experiment is History is Running Now*. Scientific American.




 **NORTH CAROLINA  
Healthy Schools**

 **CONTINUUM**

 **UNC** | GILLINGS SCHOOL OF GLOBAL PUBLIC HEALTH  
North Carolina Institute for Public Health

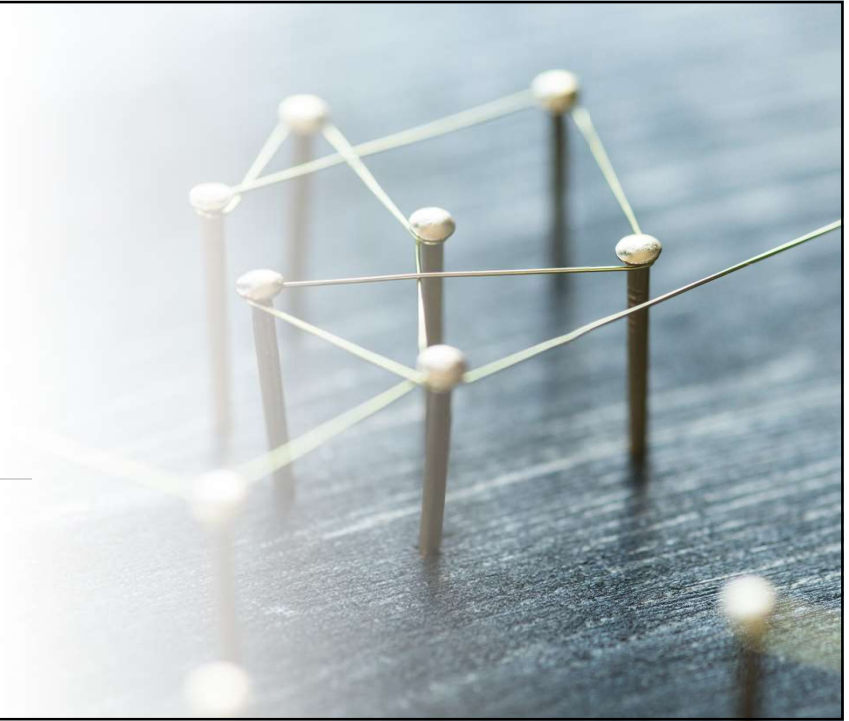
 **RBH  
WELLNESS  
SOLUTIONS**

*This work is funded by the NC Department of Public Instruction through a CDC cooperative agreement, Improving Student Health and Academic Achievement Through Nutrition, Physical Activity and the Management of Chronic Conditions in Schools (DP18-1801 Healthy Schools). While funding for this training was made possible by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the views expressed do not necessarily reflect the official policies of the Department of Health and Human Services, nor does the mention of trade names, commercial practices, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Government.*



## A “System” Mindset in the Well-being Space

---



### Audience

Original

School Staff (Primarily Teachers) Across 10 Priority School Districts



Evolved

School Staff (Including Administration and Administrative) Across NC School Districts

## The Process



Appreciative Inquiry Discovery Sessions



Survey to Top 10 Priority School Districts



Feedback Review and Design



Training Sessions (Enhances, Modules, Care for Caregiver)



Toolkit Development & Launch



Strategic Planning Sessions & Follow-up Coaching

9



## Discovery

## Discovery Process Overview

### Purpose:

To guide in the design of the health, well-being and resilience initiative for school staff in the upcoming school district

### Process

- 2 Discovery Sessions across 16 participating staff at 10-designated high-priority districts
- 1 Survey completed by 165 staff at 10 designated high-priority school districts



11

## Appreciative Inquiry Approach

Strength-based approach to discovery –

Focusing on what is going well, what strengths you can play to and reframing challenges from deficits and problems to wishes of desires as you co-design for the future state.



12

## Strengths



OVERWHELMING  
CONNECTION TO PURPOSE



COMMUNITY AMONG  
DIRECT TEAMS



RESILIENCE AND AGILITY

13

## Challenges

Trauma/survival  
mode

Balance and burnout

Compassion fatigue

Self-care and  
mental/emotional  
well-being

Negative mindsets  
that snowball

Social connections  
and support systems

Need for support,  
recognition and  
empathy from  
administration

Managing  
complexities of new/  
unknown working  
environments

Competing priorities

Increased  
resignations

14

## Needs More Attention

### Support Networks



- Staff need more support and recognition from administration.
- Strengthening support network among peers.
- Needing space and opportunities to process the grief.
- Desire for longer in-person team building

### Inclusivity



- All-staff inclusion - customization of approach to specific and diverse stakeholders (not just teachers).
- Inclusion of diversity and equity throughout all efforts.

### Training Considerations



- Shorter bursts, with more pre-work and follow-up.
- More fun and lightness.
- Consideration of all the items in flux or causing stress – not just COVID.
- Whole-person well-being - not just limited to mental and emotional health.

15



## Training Sessions



# Resilience & Mental Health Modules

*Two-part series with 90-minute modules (8 modules total)*

## From Stress to Strength

- Investigate multiple strategies for identifying and managing stressors
- Develop new practices for enhancing your resilience muscle

## Managing Change and Thriving During Times of Transition

- Establish strategies for creating an emotionally healthy environment in the workplace
- Develop strategies for creating an emotionally healthy environment at home

17



## Restructuring How You Think

**A**ctivating Event  
+  
**B**elief of Event  
=  
**C**onsequence of Event



## Mind Over Matter



**Superhero Pose**

## Well-being & Resilience Modules

*45-minute lunch and learn style programs (10 total)*

Positive  
Intelligence

8 Dimensions of  
Mental Well-being  
and Self-Care

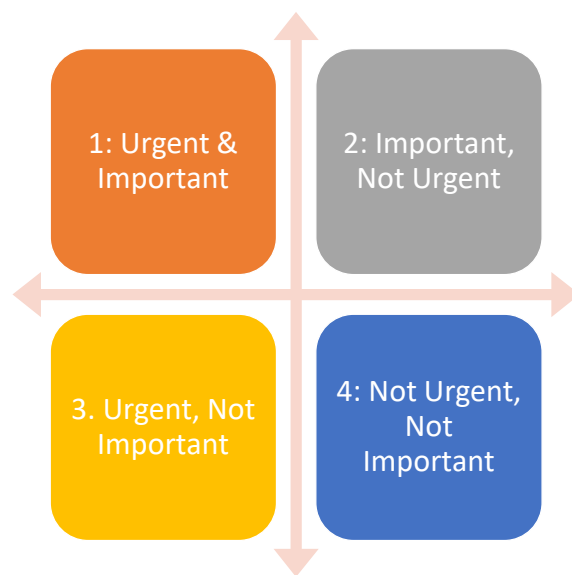
Balance and  
Boundaries

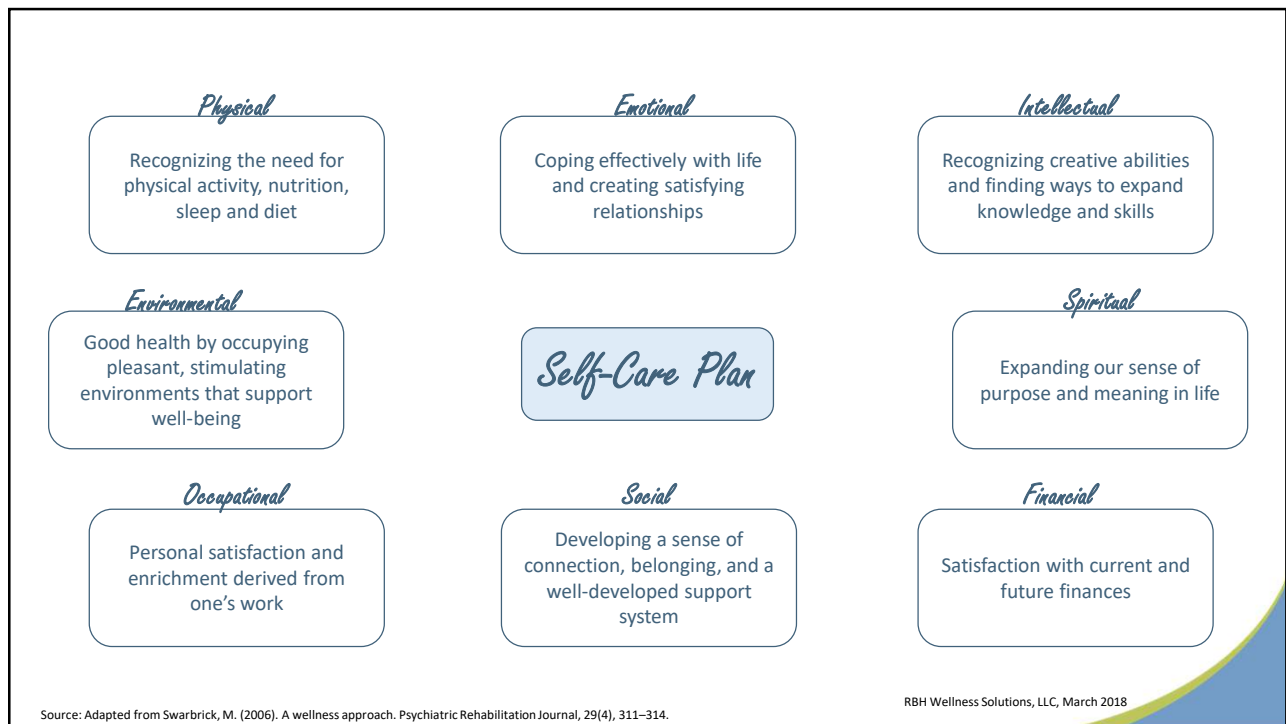
Social and  
Community Health

21



## Eliminating Unneeded Stress







## Care for the Caregiver

***"I really enjoyed Ruby's presentation yesterday afternoon. It was exactly what I needed to help get through these last few weeks of school!"***



## Leadership Tool: Positive Core

Develop resilience, confidence, and courage to live and lead effectively in an uncertain world.



**Description:** Developing and sustaining your individual Positive Core is foundational to leading with a sense of presence in uncertain times.

A strong Positive Core ensures a leader can effectively respond instead of reacting under stress. It provides a sense of confidence, courage, and resilience in the face of challenges and novel unknowns.

# Employee Mental Health Toolkit

North Carolina Healthy Schools Employee Mental Health  
Toolkit



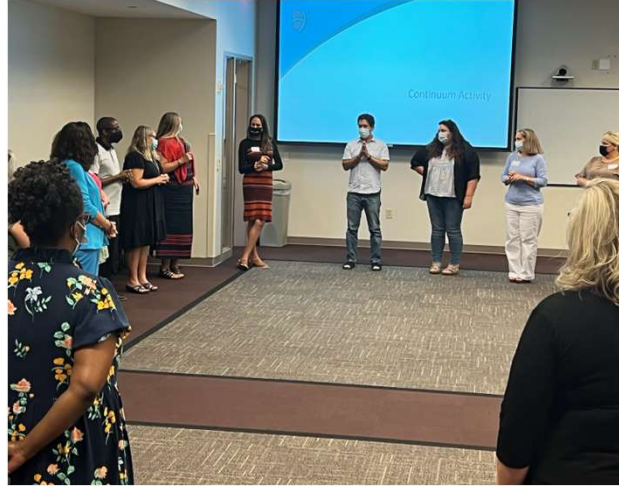
## Toolkit ACTIVATED – Sampson County Schools

9:00	Welcome and Inclusion activity/Introductions
9:30	Resilience Training – Nash County Project Aware Director
10:30	Wellness Bingo – Prizes!
11:00	Words from the community – Local Minister
11:45	Wellness Evaluation – Mental Health Clinician
12:00	Lunch
1:00	Paint Party
3:00	Wrap Up



## Strategy Retreat Sessions and Follow-Up Coaching

## Strategy Retreats



31

## Learning Objectives



Discuss challenges and learnings with peers in supporting school staff well-being throughout the COVID pandemic



Identify successful practices and resources in supporting employee mental well-being moving forward



Create a sustainable and realistic district action plan to enhance current staff support measures

32



# Follow-Up Coaching

33

## Lessons Learned – Successes

Appreciative inquiry approach – flipping mindsets to solutions, not problems.

Taking an OD systems approach to well-being

Strategy Sessions – giving ownership back to the impacted population

High engagement/impact through interactive, conversation-oriented, tool-based training with immediate skills to implement

Expanding skills and mindsets – the shift in mentality of putting your own oxygen mask on first

Diversity of trainings - offerings, customization for impact groups, inclusion of overall well-being

Expansion of the audience and impact groups with customization based on audience

Interprofessional development – learning with, from and about each other, information and experience sharing

Adaptability and agility managing the trauma and burnout in the room

Diversity of skillsets and specialization of trainers and variation of collaborators

Key person who knows the system and could pull the pieces together

Passion-project – knowing you're impacting a community and having a ripple effect

## Lessons Learning – Considerations for the Future

---

Improving communications and marketing strategy - ability to involve impacted population directly

---

Continual expansion of a systems-approach – moving beyond trainings

---

Empowering the system - increasing ownership of work moving forward on a local-level

---

Bringing administration in early – starting the strategy sessions earlier with later follow-up of continual coaching

---

Administration to school system intervention – improving support and trust

---

Strong requests for ½ or full-day team building.

---

Need for socialization – enacting peer support networks on a school-level

---

Continuing to generate ways they can support each other across school districts

---

Considering the stress that school staff is always under and providing support beyond just COVID

---

Further work directly districts and schools versus state-level – low or no-cost solutions

---

Unpacking what support can be provided at a state level to propel grassroots initiative at a school or district-level

---

Expanding the model for other states

---

35



Q&A



# ACTIVATE

2023 | NATIONAL WELLNESS CONFERENCE

## Thank you!

**Ruby Brown-Herring, MEd, BSW**

CEO

RBH Wellness Solutions, LLC

Raleigh, NC

[ruby@rbhwellness.com](mailto:ruby@rbhwellness.com)



**Morgan Daniels, MS, CHES**

Senior Consultant

Continuum Consulting Services, LLC

Washington, DC

[morgan.daniels@continuumcs.com](mailto:morgan.daniels@continuumcs.com)

