

WSCC Component: Employee Wellness

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Employee Wellness

Gymnasium

Climbing Wall

Physical education class is a place where students can learn new activities in a safe instructional environment. These skills are transferable across many different activities over a lifetime. Mr. Rodriguez wants all students to find a physical activity they like, so he introduces a variety of nontraditional physical activities.

He promotes the climbing wall because it builds teamwork, leadership, and social skills. Climbing activities are equally popular among males and females, and students can participate in climbing activities outside of school. At the climbing wall, they fine-tune balance and flexibility skills and find answers to the wall's physical and mental challenges. They gain strength and are better prepared for outdoor recreational activities.

Mr. Rodriguez teaches climbers to use harnesses so they climb safely. Climbers team up with partners, and Mr. Rodriguez explains the role of spotters and belayers for safe climbing. This activity also promotes communication skills and supporting others, real-world skills that transfer to many other activities.

The climbing wall has become so popular at Jefferson School that staff can be seen climbing along with students after school. The students and adults form partnerships as they spot each other, and teachers serve as role models. This led Mr. Rodriguez to recruit several parent volunteers to organize a weekend climbing trip for everyone who wanted to participate.

You can:

- Collaborate with local facilities to include outdoor recreation and expand physical education options beyond traditional team sports.
- After teaching the basic skills in physical education class, collaborate with climbing groups to help plan after-school or weekend excursions to local recreation areas.

SMART Board

Mr. Rodriguez makes good use of the SMART board in the gymnasium. He posts the daily challenge on the board so students can engage in physical activity immediately upon entering the gymnasium, and then increase to moderate-to-vigorous physical activity (MVPA).

Students who select heart rate monitors from the equipment cart wear them to show their perceived exertion related to actual performance, and project their heart rates on the SMART board in real time. This encourages friendly competition among the students.

Mr. Rodriguez projects detailed lesson work and sometimes divides the class into small groups for students to engage in cooperative learning activities. In their small groups, the students use the SMART board after their physical activity to document progress. The students take turns prioritizing their heart rate beats per minute to determine their target and maximum heart rates.

They also access websites such as the American Heart Association to obtain information during their lesson. The SMART board's touch recognition features allow the students to use the different colored pens, as well as other objects or even their hands to write. This allows for accessibility for all Mr. Rodriguez's students and successfully integrates the technology skills students are learning at school.

You can:

- Use a SMART board to encourage instant activity, allow students to access tools and information that enhances their learning on the spot, and engage all students, regardless of their physical abilities.

Learn More

- [American Heart Association](#)

Grades 3-5

Water Bottle

Ms. Lewis recognizes the importance of drinking plenty of water to keep the body running smoothly. She encourages her students to bring lidded containers from home to keep drinking water handy.

At lunchtime, students refill their containers with ice and water at the water filling station in the cafeteria. Ms. Lewis sets a good example by staying hydrated throughout the day using her water bottle.

Reusable water bottles are on the donation list that Ms. Lewis sends to the parents of her students. Students without bottles can reach into the donations box, pick a water bottle, and stay hydrated too.

You can:

- Set up a donation box at your school.
- Ask parents or merchants in the community to contribute so everyone has a container.

Learn More

- [Water & Nutrition](#)

Clock

Research shows that sitting for long periods can be unhealthy. These studies caught the attention of Ms. Lewis.

To ensure her students avoid marathon sitting sessions, Ms. Lewis schedules physical activity breaks in the classroom. She leads her class in active stretching, dancing to music, and other physical activities such as Tai Chi. Sometimes she shows the students moves she learned in her dance class.

Recess before and after lunch is another way that students can be active. Physical activity breaks take place in the classroom, whereas recess is a dedicated time when students are encouraged to be physically active outdoors.

You can:

- Add physical activity breaks to your lesson plan.

Learn More

- [How much physical activity do children need?](#)

Grades 6-8

Athletic Shoes

The aerobics classes that Principal Paul arranged for staff at Jefferson School were very popular. Mr. Wu wanted to take staff fitness to the next level so he joined the School Health Team. His first task was to use the *School Health Index* (SHI) to assess the health policies and practices at Jefferson School related to Employee Wellness and Health Promotion (Module 9). He and other members of the team identified

strengths and weaknesses in Jefferson School's employee wellness initiatives based on the results of the module score cards, and then they developed an action plan to recommend improvements.

Mr. Wu started leading the Employee Wellness Committee of the School Health Team. The committee arranged for the staff to attend a wellness webinar developed by Kolbe's health department. Then, they gathered information about smoking cessation from the American Cancer Society, the American Lung Association, and the school's health insurance provider. This information was made available to staff.

The Employee Wellness Committee introduced a weight loss program to support those having a hard time breaking unhealthy eating habits. After receiving approval from Principal Paul, Mr. Wu worked with the committee to implement a rewards program. Fridays were turned into Super Salad Days. Staff members host a salad potluck luncheon and celebrate achievements in reaching wellness goals. Through contacts in the PTA, Mr. Wu located a Zumba® instructor who volunteered to lead a 10-week session in the gym.

You can:

- Serve on health-related committees at your school, such as a school health team or employee wellness committee.
- Use the *School Health Index* (SHI) to assess employee wellness and health promotion policies and practices at your school.
- Establish wellness initiatives at your school with the help of community health organizations.
- Contact health leaders in your community and ask them to present programs.
- Survey staff members to find out which physical activities and health topics are of the most interest.
- Organize small groups to meet after school for fitness and other health sessions.

Learn More

- [School Health Index](#)
- [Staff Involvement](#)

Staff Lounge

District Employee Wellness Program

A few years ago, the district developed an Employee Wellness Program to encourage school practices that promote staff health and attendance. The wellness program is part of employment benefits that include health insurance and retirement benefits.

Health promotion activities, such as annual health fairs, ergonomic assessments, education with an emphasis on prevention, safety training, health care screenings, flu shots, and nursing assessments for minor injuries and non-work-related illnesses, promote employees' total wellness. In addition, the District Employee Wellness Program coordinator encourages each school to develop its own School Health Team and Staff Wellness Work Groups. A School Health Team is a group of individuals representing different segments of the community who advise a school on aspects of the school health program. A Staff Wellness Work Group, made up primarily of school employees who work in conjunction with the School Health Team, focus their efforts specifically on increasing health knowledge and behaviors among staff members.

The Staff Wellness Work Group makes recommendations to implement or improve policies and programs based on assessments and surveys. A satisfaction survey distributed to Jefferson School staff showed they wanted access to fitness equipment, fresh and healthy foods in vending machines, and incentives for participating in wellness activities. Based on the findings, the Staff Wellness Work Group developed recommendations to continue to improve the wellness culture and environment at Jefferson School. The team also made recommendations about staff wellness educational offerings on stress reduction, compassion fatigue, smoking cessation, healthy eating, and mindfulness.

Principal Paul has seen that if teachers are chronically absent or suffer from burnout, the need for substitute teachers increases. This can disrupt classroom activities and student learning. That is why he believes promoting teachers' health is an investment in students' learning. He also recognizes that skillful teaching is not easy and makes a point to provide his teachers with relevant training, coaching, and professional development opportunities.

To build a greater sense of community, Jefferson School serves healthy options at staff recognition breakfasts and lunches, rather than providing donuts or pizza. The district's Employee Wellness Program supports walking meetings and standing desks for staff. Teachers are encouraged to be active at lunch

and use substitute teachers to attend professional development opportunities, such as conferences and workshops.

This year, the district plans to apply for state and national awards through recognition programs such as the National Healthy Schools Award. Recognition for their efforts will help the district recruit and retain quality staff members as well as demonstrate its accomplishments to community members and parents.

You can:

- Work with your school administration, staff wellness work group, and school staff to support, develop, or improve the wellness program in your district.
- Rely on publicly available resources, such as the Alliance for a Healthier Generation's Health Promotion for Staff website, when developing your Employee Wellness Program.
- Conduct assessments and satisfaction surveys among staff to determine interests.

Learn More

- [School Health Guidelines \(Guideline 8\): Employee Wellness Program](#)
- [Health Promotion for Staff](#)

Celebration Board

Principal Paul supported School Health Team members interested in creating a Staff Wellness Work Group. The work group decided a Wellness Celebration Board was a simple and visible way to begin making changes on the Jefferson School campus. The board highlights staff that are involved in wellness activities and encourages others to join in. The board content changes frequently.

Currently, the board displays winners of a staff wellness competition. Visual icons represent categories, such as healthy eating, physical activity, stress reduction, and community engagement. Participating staff who earn the most points in each category receive a blue ribbon. This has created friendly competition for bragging rights. Each quarter, everyone who earned points can redeem them for prizes including kitchen tools, movie and sporting event tickets, gift cards, and cash. The award system has increased morale and reduced absenteeism.

At other points throughout the year, the board served to:

- Thank staff that has contributed to employee wellness through actions such as organizing fitness events, hosting healthy potluck lunches, serving on the Staff Wellness Work Group, or working with community partners to enhance health and wellness at the school.
- Recognize staff that has been “caught” creatively incorporating healthy behaviors into their routines and class activities.
- Feature a “wellness employee of the month” from those who participate in the staff wellness activities. The board highlights some of the individual’s personal health goals, healthy behaviors, and a quote describing how wellness activities positively affected their health. This information encourages others to participate in wellness activities and recognize that everyone has different wellness goals and interests. This was a great way for the staff to get to know each other better.

Ever since staff wellness activities began, there has been a lot more interaction and laughter in the lounge! Principal Paul is pleased that they have needed fewer substitute teachers, which has benefited the students.

You can:

- Find ways to reward your staff for participating in local wellness activities that promote healthy behaviors and community engagement.
- Make sure incentives are appealing by gathering staff opinions through surveys or informal polls.
- Celebrate accomplishments publicly via a celebration board, school newsletters, or various prizes.
- Remind staff through wellness program activities and publications that by taking care of themselves, they can be more physically, mentally, and emotionally available for their students.
- Check out the School Health Team's discussion about recommendations to improve Family Engagement and Community Involvement at Jefferson School.

Fitness Equipment

Moving around is a great way for staff to take a break from their daily schedules and to participate in wellness activities. There is an “active” area of the lounge for easy and sociable quick “movement breaks.” Staff can use yoga mats, weights, and fitness balls to stretch and flex their muscles in the middle of their workdays. They can also check out loaner “wearables” to help them track their fitness both at home and work. Staff has raved about fitness challenges where they keep track of who moved the most during the week.

An employee wellness survey found that staff wanted to be able to use treadmills and exercise bikes at school. The Staff Wellness Work Group reached out to a fitness trainer, who allowed them to try out different exercise equipment at a local gym and helped them decide which equipment would work best for their needs. The school bought a few treadmills and exercise bikes for staff to use in the gym; a schedule in the lounge lists when the gym equipment is available for staff use.

The survey also found that staff was interested in working with a fitness trainer. The fitness trainer came to the school to help staff develop custom fitness plans. The wellness work group secured a gym membership discount for staff interested in more exercise equipment, classes, and an indoor pool.

Jefferson School staff also participates in wellness activities as a group. After school, there is a walking club and a dance class where staff can exercise together.

You can:

- Set up areas in the school for employees to use low-cost fitness equipment, such as stretching mats, fitness balls, and a TV with exercise DVDs.
- Encourage physical activity and build a sense of community around wellness activities by:
 - connecting staff with local gyms and fitness trainers;
 - creating a walking club;
 - providing wearable step counters;
 - coordinating fitness challenges and friendly competitions.

Learn More

- [School Employee Well-Being](#)

Water Dispenser

The staff lounge makes it easy for staff to access healthy beverages and stay well hydrated. The water dispenser provides access to both hot and cold drinking water.

Although the Staff Wellness Work Group encourages staff to make water their primary beverage of choice, they also make sure the lounge has decaf coffee and low-fat creamers.

Ms. Dubois is a role model for students and staff. She views self-care as an essential skill for academic achievement and life success. At a recent wellness celebration, she remarked:

“I believe in practicing what I preach. How can I convey to my students the importance of taking care of themselves if I don't understand and do what it takes to care for myself? For example, my students see me drink lots of water from my reusable water bottle. I encourage them to use the water stations in the cafeteria and gymnasium to do the same. My hope is that my students will develop habits that will help them concentrate in school and keep them healthy. When I envision the happy and successful lives I want for my students, I think it also helps me choose healthy behaviors for myself.”

Ms. Dubois's example is certainly food for thought!

You can:

- Make hot and cold water available to your staff so they have healthy alternatives to drinking high-calorie beverages.
- Encourage staff to use reusable water bottles.
- Remind staff that they can be great role models for their students by making healthy choices for themselves.

Learn More

- [Water Access](#)

Vending Machine

Based on results from an employee wellness survey, the Staff Wellness Work Group realized that convenient and consistent access to a variety of fresh foods and healthy snacks was really important to staff. The work group took action. Some work group members immediately began stocking a fresh fruit bowl in the lounge. They placed a money jar next to the bowl, so any staff who wanted to take fruit could help cover the cost. The work group also recommended a refrigerated vending machine that could

stock healthier snacks and fresh foods in the lounge. The work group and School Health Team (which includes community partners), collaborated to budget for the new vending machine.

Some staff members bring their food from home or eat in the cafeteria; however, many use the vending machine. The vending machine previously only had unhealthy “junk” foods. The work group turned to community partners for help with the vending machine makeover. They consulted a worksite wellness director at a local business and a registered dietitian nutritionist from the community who were part of the School Health Team. The employee wellness director shared lessons she learned when her business started adding healthier options to their vending machines. The registered dietitian nutritionist suggested the work group use the Food Service Guidelines for Federal Facilities, which align with Smart Snack standards, when selecting vending machine products.

The Staff Wellness Work Group asked the vending machine company to provide samples of products that meet the nutrition standards. They held taste tests for the staff to vote for their favorites. Food options included fruit cups and bars, baby carrots, dried fruit, yogurt smoothies, yogurt, a variety of nuts and seeds, nut butters, baked tortilla chips, cereals, oatmeal, soup, and hummus cups. Drink options included sparkling and flavored waters, 100% fruit or vegetable juices, and skim or nondairy milks. The vendor replaced products that were not selling well with some of the healthier option “winners.”

Not all of the staff wanted to have only healthier options, so the work group coordinated with the vendor to retain some of the most popular items while transitioning toward healthier options. The vendor agreed to price the healthier options competitively with similar foods that do not meet the nutrition standards. He also agreed to make the healthier products as visible, or more visible, than the less healthy products. In the future, any advertising materials will only promote products that meet the specified nutrition standards.

You can:

- Work with partners to identify healthier options to sell in vending machines.
- Involve staff in taste testing and selecting new products for the vending machines.

Learn More

- [Procurement and Vending Machines](#)
- [Healthy Food Service Guidelines](#)

Bulletin Board

Jefferson School makes it convenient for staff to learn about employee wellness and health by providing information in various formats, including the staff portal of the school's website, regular e-mail updates, and the bulletin board in the staff lounge.

Staff gathers around the bulletin board to discuss the frequently updated content. There are flyers, schedules, and sign-up sheets for school and community wellness events such as potlucks, fitness competitions, educational programs, and wellness celebrations. There is often general information on healthy behaviors, such as fitness, nutrition, and aging tips.

The Staff Wellness Work Group members, District Employee Wellness Program staff, Parent Teacher Association (PTA), and the school district's health care insurance provider often provide the bulletin board content. It has covered a range of topics such as stress reduction, mindfulness, hiking opportunities, community sports leagues, tennis lessons, 5K races, healthy cooking classes, yoga workshops, the local farmers' market schedule, and professional development opportunities related to school health. At the end of the school year, there will be a sign-up sheet for those who want to take advantage of a free chair massage offered as part of Teacher Recognition Day. The shelves below the bulletin board store a detailed District Employee Wellness Program notebook as well as bins with supplies for holiday and staff celebrations.

You can:

- Place a health and wellness bulletin board in the staff lounge.
- Gather and post promotional flyers, posters, and sign-up sheets related to health and wellness events in your school and community in a convenient location.

Relaxation Area

Some dedicated staff members at Jefferson School were at risk of burnout because they were not taking time to relax and recharge. Before the staff lounge makeover, it was supposed to be a place for employees to unwind. However, many staff members did not actually like to go in the lounge because they found it to be a stressful environment.

In the makeover, the Staff Wellness Work Group removed a TV that was on constantly (at a volume that seemed too loud to some!). Now there is less tension in the lounge about channel preferences and fewer stressful conversations about news coverage. The staff seems to be talking to each other more. The work group was able to repurpose the TV and make better use of it. They put it on a cart in a gym

storage closet with some exercise DVDs. Now, individuals and groups of staff members work out before and after school with the videos.

There are different ways to get refreshed and recharged—sometimes by sitting quietly, by stretching muscles, and by connecting with others. To allow for all of these, a room divider now separates the active parts of the room from the relaxation areas. In the relaxation area, there is soft lighting and comfortable seating.

Mr. Gupta likes to sit on the couch and practice belly breathing using an app on his tablet. He has learned that deep breathing is a healthy way to release stress. It also gives him a sense of calm and concentration when he returns to the classroom.

Other staff plugs their mobile phones and other devices into the charging station. They use headphones to relax with music and podcasts.

You can:

- Encourage a healthy emotional climate in the lounge by removing TVs, sharing free apps on stress management techniques, and providing an area for staff to refresh themselves in a quiet atmosphere, free from bothersome background noises.

Learn More

- [Breathe2Relax - iOS](#)
- [Breathe2Relax - Android](#)

Counselor's Office

Bookshelf

Ms. Kowalski maintains a well-stocked lending library of books, movies, and audio media on topics related to academic, career, and social and emotional development. These resources provide guidance on advancing academically, establishing personal goals, and developing plans. The resources also address the behavioral, mental, and emotional health of students.

The bookshelf has plenty of "how to" guides on setting goals, nurturing special talents, and establishing healthy lifestyles. Topics also include anger management, personal safety, violence prevention, and substance abuse. The books and audio media offer guidance to Ms. Kowalski and all educational staff members.

Students, parents, and staff borrow these resources to help them address problems or barriers to learning and general well-being. The books and audio media can suggest ways to promote student achievement and solve behavioral issues in the classroom.

You can:

- Build a resource center to reinforce student well-being and learning. Many materials are available from publishers that specialize in school counseling. Some community organizations may have resources to donate that can help stock the lending library.
- Check out the School Health Team's discussion about recommendations to improve Health and Academics at Jefferson School.

Principal's Office

Emergency Toolkit

Principal Paul ensures Jefferson School has action plans in case of an emergency. Public health emergencies include such things as flu epidemics. Environmental emergencies include natural disasters, such as a tornado or flash flood. Also, Principal Paul has action plans for workplace safety emergencies. The step-by-step action plans are kept in notebooks in his office and are distributed to staff.

Principal Paul realized any emergency requires coordination of all staff. He established training classes and drills so the staff knows what to do in an emergency. Emergency management leaders in the community staged training exercises at the school and explained how, during an emergency, staff can find the most up-to-date information via emergency notification systems and social media channels, such as Twitter and Facebook.

Principal Paul prepares for emergencies in other ways. He and other staff members know how to use the automated external defibrillator (AED) located near his office. Principal Paul has assigned handheld transceivers, also called walkie-talkies, to key staff. He uses his walkie-talkie during fire drills and shelter-in-place practice exercises. In these situations, he can communicate with school administrators and teachers to account for all students and ensure everyone is safe. On a routine basis, Principal Paul and the building manager use walkie-talkies to stay in touch with the front office when they are moving about the buildings and school grounds.

You can:

- Contact emergency management officials in your area to assist with developing action plans to handle a full range of emergencies. Training exercises will help staff members gain confidence in their actions and solidify their knowledge of protocols.
- Encourage staff to sign up for announcements from emergency notification systems and social media.

Learn More

- [Defibrillators](#)
- [School Crisis Guide](#)

Standing Desk

Principal Paul realized he was spending too much time sitting when he was in his office. At the start of the school year, he installed a height-adjustable desk in his office and approved the purchase of height-adjustable desks for staff and teachers. Now, he and others alternate between sitting and standing at their desks. Standing at the desk causes the heart to beat faster than sitting does, so they are burning extra calories. Also, changing positions has many health benefits. It improves blood circulation and alertness, and it decreases shoulder and back pain. Principal Paul paces purposefully in his office while talking on his telephone as a way to get a few more minutes of exercise.

Principal Paul keeps reusable water bottles and nutritious snacks at his desk and maintains his weight at a healthy range. He asked the cafeteria staff to place fruit and water bottles in the conference room, staff lounge, and other work areas for staff. He knows he is a role model and is setting a good example for everyone at the school—students and staff alike. When he went to the doctor recently for a physical exam, tests showed he has improved his cholesterol levels.

You can:

- Avoid sedentary work habits by using a desk with standing options.
- Find innovative ways to move about the office, classroom, or work areas.
- Make sure everyone has access to water and healthy snacks.

Gym Bag & Shoes

Principal Paul joins students and other staff in the after-school running club. The exercise keeps him fit and relieves stress. He likes the friendly interaction and competition as runners prepare for the upcoming 5K event. If the students beat him in the race, he has agreed to wear bright yellow shorts to work the next day!

Principal Paul knew that some staff members did not take time to exercise. He encouraged them to join the running club too, but some did not like to run. He conducted a staff survey to determine interests and realized aerobics and yoga were popular. Principal Paul coordinated with the local fitness club, which provided fitness instructors for a free 10-week session of classes in the school gymnasium. He knows people will stick with the exercise programs they like best.

You can:

- Promote employee wellness by offering different opportunities for exercise.
- Contact a local fitness club and negotiate for discounted memberships.
- Encourage staff members to support each other and engage in friendly competition.
- Check out the School Health Team's discussion about recommendations to improve Physical Education at Jefferson School.