



RESEARCH IN ACTION

Compassion Fatigue, Burnout, and a Way Forward for Educator Wellbeing

SUMMARY OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

Working with children and youth demands emotional labor from educational workers. Two workplace psychological hazards related to providing this emotional labour – compassion fatigue and burnout – were explored over five years to understand the impact on educational workers.

Dr. Astrid Kendrick and her team surveyed more than 4500 participants from across Alberta and the Northwest Territories yearly between 2020-2025. Over 90% of respondents experienced symptoms of burnout and 50-65% of respondents experienced symptoms of secondary traumatic stress (compassion fatigue). More than 50 interviews were conducted with teachers, administrators, support staff, and educational assistants exploring the impact of these workplace hazards on their ability to be effective in schools.

An outcome of this research was the development of HEARTcare Planning, a framework for educators to investigate and integrate the school, system, individual, professional, and educational worker interventions intended to improve or restore their wellbeing. Educators can learn about HEARTcare through self-study, group, or school-based professional learning.

TIPS & TAKEAWAYS

Key message: Healthy students are better learners, but they need to be supported by healthy adults who create the conditions for safe, caring, and compassionate schools and classrooms.

Integrating wellbeing interventions into pedagogical practice can include:

- ▶ Silent reading time or using audio books to read to students, as both a pedagogical tool and an opportunity for teachers to rest from direct instruction.
- ▶ Planning ahead to make appointments with medical professionals to ensure they happen.
- ▶ Going outside with the students for recess and walking around the supervised area to get some physical activity.
- ▶ Instituting a communications policy restricting email responses to work hours only.

LEARN MORE

Find free booklets, videos, podcasts, and other resources to support educator wellbeing at www.heartcareeducators.ca



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