

REIMAGINING EDUCATOR SUPPORT: A FRAMEWORK FOR A MULTI-TIERED SYSTEM TO PROMOTE TEACHER WELL-BEING AND MENTAL HEALTH

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Abstract

This paper presents a conceptual framework for a Multi-Tiered System of Support for Teachers (MTSS-T) aimed at addressing the well-being of educators, developed through a comprehensive review of existing literature. While MTSS models have been widely implemented to support student well-being, similar frameworks for supporting teachers remain underdeveloped. The growing prevalence of burnout, stress, and mental health challenges among educators underscores the urgent need for a structured, scalable approach tailored specifically to their well-being. This paper proposes a three-tiered model designed to meet the diverse needs of educators: Tier 1 (universal support) for all teachers, Tier 2 (targeted support) for those showing early signs of stressor need for additional instructional support, and Tier 3 (intensive, individualized support) for teachers needing personalized interventions or facing severe challenges in the classroom. Drawing on research from psychology, educational theory, and organizational studies, this review synthesizes evidence-based strategies that have proven effective in supporting educator mental health. These include stress management programs, mindfulness practices, peer support networks, and organizational changes to reduce workplace stressors. The proposed MTSS framework provides a conceptual model that adapts existing student-focused interventions to meet the unique needs of educators while recognizing the distinct pressures teachers face. The review identifies key findings, including the critical role of early intervention in preventing burnout, and the importance of a tiered approach in ensuring equitable access to support. Despite significant progress in supporting student mental health, research on effective mental health interventions for educators is limited. This paper highlights these gaps and advocates for further studies on the scalability and systemic integration of mental health support for teachers. In conclusion, this paper argues that a comprehensive MTSS model for educators could significantly improve teacher mental health, enhance job satisfaction, and contribute to a positive classroom environment. By adapting the successful principles of student mental health support to meet the needs of educators, this review offers a foundational framework for future research and practical implementation of teacher-focused mental health initiatives.

Keywords: *Multi-tiered system of support (MTSS), educator mental health, teacher well-being, burnout prevention, mental health support for teachers.*

1. Introduction

The teaching profession is increasingly characterized by high rates of burnout and attrition, with research indicating that teachers face extreme emotional and psychological challenges due to heavy workloads, secondary trauma, and insufficient institutional support (Cells, et al., 2023; Ha, et al., 2025; Reinke, et al, 2025; Williams, 2024). These challenges are not confined to any one region but are a global phenomenon affecting educators in diverse educational systems. The World Health Organization (WHO) and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) have recognized teacher stress and burnout as a growing crisis, particularly in low-resource and conflict-affected regions (World Health Organization & United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2021).

In many parts of the world, teachers work under stressful conditions exacerbated by economic instability, political conflict, and natural disasters. For example, in disaster-prone areas such as Southeast Asia and the Caribbean, educators must navigate post-disaster trauma, school closures, and increased student emotional distress while managing their own well-being (Hoffman & Blecha, 2020; UNICEF, 2023). In conflict zones, such as parts of the Middle East and Sub-Saharan Africa, teachers frequently act

as first responders to students experiencing war-related trauma, placing additional emotional burdens on them (Sam & Gupton, 2024; Sharifian, & Kennedy, 2019). Similarly, the COVID-19 pandemic underscored the need for systematic educator support, as teachers worldwide were required to rapidly shift to remote instruction while managing personal and professional stressors (Barron, et. al., 2021).

Traditional interventions for teacher well-being are often reactive rather than preventative, failing to systematically address the multifaceted challenges educators face. This paper proposes a Multi-Tiered System of Support for Teachers (MTSS-T) as an innovative, research-driven model aimed at providing structured, proactive support at varying levels of need. By integrating a tiered system that ranges from universal preventive measures to targeted interventions and crisis response, this model ensures that educators receive tailored support at every stage of their professional journey.

This paper introduces *The Multi-Tiered System of Support for Teachers Framework (MTSS-T)* as a necessary and adaptable approach to enhancing global teacher retention, well-being, and sustainable educational systems. The model emphasizes the importance of scalable interventions tailored to diverse educational contexts, including those affected by natural disasters, pandemics, and humanitarian crises, ensuring that educators receive appropriate levels of support based on their needs. The MTSS-T framework offers a structured, evidence-based approach that shifts education systems from reactive crisis management to proactive, long-term resilience-building for educators worldwide.

2. Design

This study employs a conceptual framework approach to developing a Multi-Tiered System of Support for Teachers (MTSS-T). By synthesizing existing literature on teacher burnout, mental health interventions, and tiered support systems, this model is structured to address varying levels of need. This framework draws upon best practices from student-focused MTSS models, psychological theories of resilience, and organizational strategies for workplace well-being. The goal is to create a research-informed model that can be applied across diverse educational settings.

To ensure a comprehensive and systematic review, a set of keywords and search terms was used to identify relevant literature. The following keywords were utilized across academic databases such as PsycINFO, ERIC, Google Scholar, and PubMed:

- "Teacher burnout"
- "Compassion fatigue in educators"
- "Mental health interventions for teachers"
- "Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) for educators"
- "Workplace well-being in education"
- "Stress management programs for teachers"
- "Organizational support for teachers"
- "Resilience and professional development in education"

Inclusion criteria prioritized peer-reviewed articles, government reports, and policy documents published within the last 15 years, with a focus on educator mental health, professional development, and systemic interventions. Studies that focused exclusively on student MTSS without connections to educator well-being were excluded. The findings from this literature review were synthesized to develop a structured, scalable MTSS framework tailored specifically for teachers.

3. Methodology

A comprehensive review of peer-reviewed literature, policy documents, and global education reports was conducted to assess the existing research on teacher well-being and burnout interventions. Sources were analyzed to identify common themes related to teacher mental health, multi-tiered intervention frameworks, and institutional support structures. Key areas of analysis included:

- Studies on teacher burnout and compassion fatigue
- Research on existing mental health interventions for educators.
- Comparative analyses of international teacher support models
- Policy recommendations from UNESCO, United Nations, OECD, and national education ministries.

Findings from this review informed the development of a structured, tiered intervention model designed to be scalable and adaptable across different education systems.

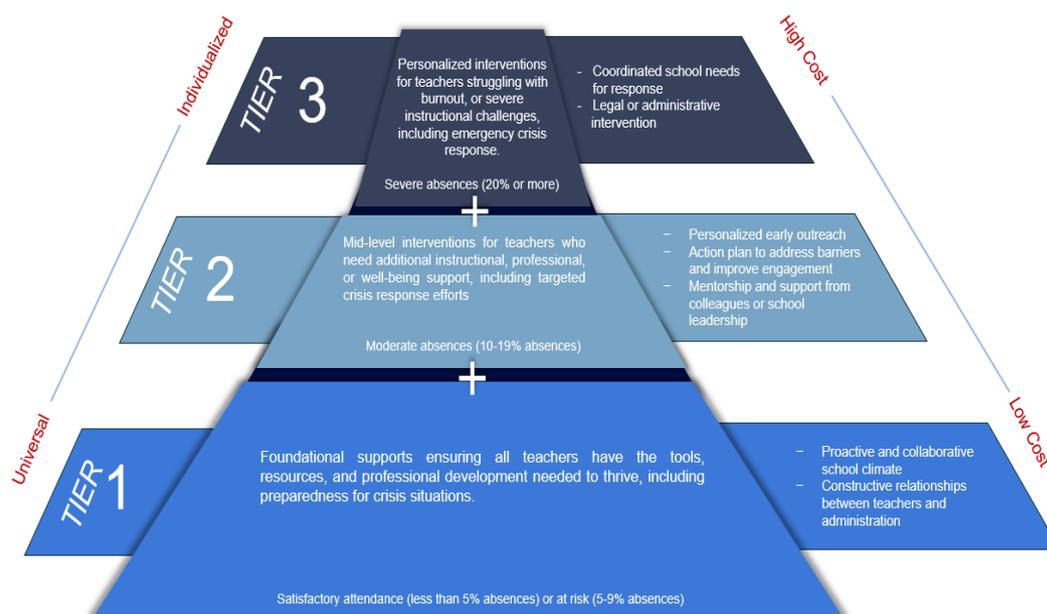
4. Discussion

The *Multi-Tiered System of Support for Teachers Framework (MTSS-T)* provides a structured, tiered approach to addressing educator well-being, professional growth, and crisis intervention. Unlike traditional support mechanisms that often function in isolation, this model integrates multiple layers of intervention to provide comprehensive, ongoing support based on individual teacher needs. By adapting the well-established principles of MTSS, which have been successfully implemented in student interventions, this model ensures that educators receive proactive, systematic support rather than relying on reactive measures when challenges arise.

The Multi-Tiered System of Support for Teachers Framework (MTSS-T)

To systematically address teacher well-being and burnout, this study proposes a **three-tiered MTSS framework (MTSS-T)** tailored to the needs of educators. This model ensures that teachers receive appropriate levels of support based on their risk of burnout or mental health challenges. The framework is structured as noted in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Multi-Tiered System of Support for Teachers Framework (MTSS-T).



Implications of the MTSS-T Framework for Educator Well-Being

A key strength of this framework is its ability to differentiate support based on need, ensuring that universal strategies are available to all teachers while providing targeted and intensive interventions for those at greater risk of burnout or crisis. **Tier 1 interventions** emphasize systemic efforts to promote teacher well-being through professional development, mentorship, and workplace wellness initiatives. These strategies create an institutional culture that prioritizes teacher mental health, reducing the stigma associated with seeking support and fostering an environment where self-care is normalized.

For teachers showing early signs of burnout or need for additional instructional support, **Tier 2 interventions** offer structured, mid-level supports such as peer mentoring, personalized early outreach, and flexible workload accommodations. Research indicates that timely intervention at this stage can prevent more severe emotional and psychological distress, improving long-term teacher retention rates. Additionally, in schools with high stress levels due to external crises such as natural disasters, school violence, or economic instability, targeted support at this level are critical for maintaining teacher resilience and instructional effectiveness.

At the most intensive level, **Tier 3 interventions** ensure that teachers facing significant challenges needing individualized support, including severe instructional challenges, access to emotional support, crisis response services, and alternative career pathways if needed. The inclusion of crisis response mechanisms acknowledges the reality that teachers often experience instructional challenges and extreme stress in their roles, particularly in under-resourced or high-risk environments. Schools implementing this model must prioritize access to emotional support services, administrative accommodation, and structured recovery plans to support teachers facing acute challenges.

This model has important implications for education policy, school leadership, and global implementation. Countries with existing teacher support frameworks can integrate the MTSS for Teachers approach into their professional development and wellness programs. In low-resource settings or disaster-prone regions, flexible adaptations of this model can be developed, focusing on peer-support networks and if needed external interagency services. Future research should explore how this framework can be piloted in diverse educational contexts and assess its long-term impact on teacher retention, job satisfaction, and student outcomes.

5. Conclusion

The Multi-Tiered System of Support for Teachers Framework (MTSS-T) represents a proactive, scalable solution to the growing crisis of teacher burnout, stress, and challenges in the classroom. By applying a tiered intervention model, this approach ensures educators receive appropriate levels of support, ranging from universal well-being initiatives to targeted and intensive interventions. Through structured mentorship, workload adjustments, psychological first aid, and crisis response mechanisms, this model provides a comprehensive strategy to enhance teacher resilience and professional sustainability.

The implementation of this model requires institutional commitment, cross-sector collaboration, and policy integration. School leaders, policymakers, and researchers must work together to establish data-driven teacher support systems that prioritize educator well-being as a core component of educational success. Additionally, future research should examine the scalability of this model in different educational settings, particularly in regions affected by economic hardship, political instability, or environmental disasters.

By shifting from reactive, short-term interventions to a structured, long-term framework, the MTSS for Teachers Framework (MTSS-T) has the potential to transform the teaching profession, ensuring that educators receive the support they need to thrive. Investing in teacher well-being ultimately enhances student outcomes, school environments, and overall educational effectiveness, reinforcing the critical need for a multi-tiered, data-informed approach to educator support worldwide.

By adapting the evidence-based principles of MTSS-T to address teachers' instructional and emotional needs, this model provides a structured, tiered approach to fostering teacher success and well-being. Recognizing that teachers, like students, require differentiated support, the MTSS for Teachers Framework (MTSS-T) offers a proactive, data-driven strategy to combat burnout, improve job satisfaction, and enhance overall educational effectiveness.

Future research should explore how this framework can be implemented at scale across varying education systems, particularly in under-resourced or crisis-affected regions. By prioritizing teacher well-being as a core component of educational reform, policymakers and school leaders can create environments that support both educators and the students they serve. Without a clearly defined multi-tiered framework for teacher support, many educators are left navigating challenges alone, leading to higher attrition rates and declining job satisfaction. Addressing this gap requires a shift in how schools and districts conceptualize teacher well-being—not as an add-on to professional development but as an integrated, essential component of the educational system. Future research should explore how existing MTSS principles, such as universal screening, tiered interventions, and data-driven decision-making, can be adapted to create a sustainable support system that enhances teacher resilience, professional growth, and long-term retention.

6. Summary

The MTSS for Teachers Framework (MTSS-T) extends the evidence-based principles of Multi-Tiered Systems of Support beyond student interventions, addressing the instructional, emotional, and professional needs of educators. Recognizing that teachers, like students, require differentiated and tiered supports, this model introduces a structured, data-driven framework to combat burnout, enhance job satisfaction, and improve retention rates.

By embedding teacher well-being into school policies and professional development structures, MTSS-T fosters an adaptive, proactive approach to sustaining educators' resilience throughout their careers. Moreover, its inclusion of crisis-responsive support ensures that teachers receive the resources they need to navigate both daily challenges and extraordinary circumstances.

As educational institutions continue to grapple with workforce shortages and increasing teacher attrition, MTSS-T offers a sustainable, systemic solution that prioritizes educators' mental health while ultimately enhancing student learning and school-wide stability. Implementing this model is not only an investment in teacher success but a critical step toward ensuring the long-term effectiveness of the education system as a whole.

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