

Elevating Education-System Employee Wellness

January 2026 Wellness Newsletter

Welcome back from break and welcome to the first Wellness column of 2026! To support education-system employee wellness, the ODE [School Wellness, Inclusion Safety & Health Unit](#) features a monthly article in the Education Update. Creating a culture of belonging and wellness for education-system employees leads to higher levels of professional satisfaction and promotes employee retention and well-being, which creates a ripple effect that impacts students' success!

Part of the landscape of Employee well-being includes looking at the entire workforce continuum from recruitment through to retirement (and everything in between!) This month we will pick up where we left off in [December's column](#) about Transformative Social Emotional Learning (TSEL), how it connects to adult well-being and the intersection of TSEL and the work being done to support educator preparation programs. What was taught 5, 10, 15 years ago may or may not align with the skills and resources that are needed in 2026. To that end, we invited a colleague from the Teacher Standards and Practices Commission (TSPC) to share some thoughts and resources.

Nurturing a Thriving Teacher Pipeline Upstream

Across Oregon, educator preparation faculty are working with purpose and care to prepare future teachers to step into classrooms grounded, confident, and ready to support all students. Since the [launch of the TSEL standards](#), faculty have deepened their [focus on the social, emotional, and cultural growth of adults](#), recognizing that educators deserve to thrive and flourish not only for their students, but for their own well-being. Faculty weave [evidence-based SEL practices and culturally sustaining approaches](#) throughout entire programs and content areas, ensuring that well-being is not an add-on but an essential thread of professional identity. They reimagine candidate learning experiences so future teachers practice building strong relationships, meeting challenges with compassion, and creating classrooms where every child is a capable and confident learner. Faculty also tend to their own well-being, supporting one another through communities grounded in collaboration, care, and emotional awareness. Their way of teaching becomes a way of being, offering candidates lived examples of what healthy, human-centered education can be. These upstream efforts are already strengthening schools. Candidates enter classrooms more prepared to support students

and themselves. By placing adult well-being at the heart of preparation, faculty help cultivate a future where educators flourish and school communities thrive. *Many thanks to Kristin Rush from TSPC for this contribution.*

Wellness Spotlight 📍 : Mt Hood Community College



As we all know, the definition of “well- being” varies from person to person, and even from season to season. This means that the most effective educator well-being programs don’t take a “one size fits all” approach. Instead, they work to offer a variety of well-being supports that take staff needs, interests, and barriers into account.

As a Flourish Grantee from [Oregon Well-Being Trust](#), Mt. Hood Community College is an organization that works hard to offer diverse and accessible well-being activities for all of their staff. They utilize staff knowledge and experience in their well-being program and aim to make their program responsive to staff feedback. They’ve hosted everything from weekly drop-in yoga classes to a grow-your-own-mushroom class utilizing staff feedback and expertise.

Char Lede, Wellness Coordinator at MHCC, had this to say about their educator well-being work: *“We recognize that wellness takes many forms. Staff are encouraged to foster their well-being in a way that aligns with their goals and interests through our different initiatives.”*

If you are interested in cultivating Employee Well-Being in your school, district or ESD, please check out ODE’s [Employee Well-Being website](#) or reach out to ODE.HealthySchools@ode.oregon.gov for more resources and information.