

Elevating Education-System Employee Wellness

November Wellness Newsletter

To support education-system employee wellness, the ODE [Health in Education Unit](#) will feature a monthly article in the Education Update. We know that 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 and impacts students' success and positive outcomes.

This month we will learn into the intersections of educator well-being and school based suicide prevention, continue to explore the mind body connection and learn about the amazing educator wellbeing work that North Powder SD is doing.

Mind Body Connection

Last month we learned that the Greek word for body is *soma* and that somatic means relating to the body. Neuroscience shows that our well-being directly impacts those around us. It's contagious! When we take a moment to check in with our mind and body, we may realize we're out of balance. With student success as our north star, let's explore how supporting educator well-being is essential to creating a culture of belonging and wellbeing for Oregon's schools. This month we will learn about the connection between our mind, body and trauma. Learning about trauma can be empowering and transformative. One of the benefits of thinking about the connections between somatics, trauma and learning is that we can begin to think about how a traumatic experience can impact one's ability to teach and to learn. The Trauma Research Foundation offers a [Somatic Library](#) and this month's resource is the [Trauma 101](#) resource that addresses how trauma impacts the body and the nervous system. This four-part series is taught by a trauma therapist who specializes in cutting edge brain-and body-based modalities for the healing of complex developmental trauma.

School-Based Suicide Prevention: Creating Student and Employee Wellness

Oregon schools are key partners in suicide prevention, supporting students by fostering [connection, belonging](#), and access to help. Every district is required by [Adi's Act](#) to adopt a board policy that requires a [Student Suicide Prevention Plan](#). Once that foundation is in place, real impact happens when those [plans are put into practice](#). This includes **recognizing that employee wellness is integral to prevention**. When educators and staff are supported, they are better equipped to show up for students with empathy and consistency. Supporting students through crises can be emotionally

demanding. Recognizing and addressing educator stress, secondary trauma, and compassion fatigue is critical to sustain effective prevention work. Schools that invest in peer connection, reflective practice, and restorative workplace culture not only promote staff well-being but also strengthen their collective capacity to respond to student needs with consistency and care.

District and school leaders are encouraged to:

- Provide suicide prevention [training](#) to support staff in recognizing warning signs and responding with care
- Highlight help-seeking resources ([988](#), [Oregon's Youthline](#), [The Trevor Project](#), [Trans Lifeline](#)) as well as local and school-based pathways for support, including on websites and in common spaces
- Use [people-first, stigma-reducing language](#) in all communications
- Integrate [restorative practices](#) that promote trust, accountability, and healthier workplace culture, helping reduce burnout and strengthen teams
- Prioritize [employee well-being](#) at a systems level, moving beyond individual self-care to create workplaces where staff feel valued, respected, and supported

Together, these steps strengthen both student safety and staff resilience. Schools can access tools and resources for suicide prevention at [ODE Adi's Act webpage](#).

Employee Wellness Spotlight: North Powder School District's Wellness Focus

North Powder School District knows a simple truth: **"We must nourish, to flourish."** Our commitment to staff wellness isn't just a poster on the wall—it's the foundation of everything we do. We believe that a staff who feels cared for is a staff ready to tackle any obstacle and bring their best selves into the school, ensuring that well-being trickles down to our students. This dedication shines through our creative initiatives, developed directly from staff feedback on needs like mental health, sleep, and movement. We start each in service focusing on wellness and partnering with area businesses to support us in this venture. This year, we enjoyed a variety of wellness activities together — from bowling, to yoga, and an opportunity to try a sound-healing session, to creating our own desk-buddy plants. We also purchased walking shoes for each staff member and treated everyone to a refreshing healthy smoothie. Throughout the year, we have a variety of wellness opportunities, including **Wellness Mondays**—a sacred, meeting-free space for yoga, fitness, healthy meals, and goal setting, to name a few, to the legendary **Woot Woot Wagon** delivering healthy, surprise snacks, we make care a daily practice. Best of all, staff can recharge in our dedicated **Staff Wellness Room**, complete with a relaxing massage chair, exercise gear, or even check out paddleboards and kayaks! By

investing in our educators' health, we ensure they are fully equipped and energized to do the most important work: supporting our students in their learning continuum. We appreciate the grant opportunities through Oregon Well-Being Trust!

How are you Elevating Education-System Employee Wellness?

We'd love to continue to hear from you to acknowledge the creative ways school districts, ESDs and communities are elevating employee wellness in their districts. If you are interested in being featured in future communications, please reach out to Nat Jacobs at ode.healthyschools@ode.oregon.gov.