

Strategies for Prioritizing Educator Wellbeing and Overcoming Initiative Fatigue

Ensure Coherence: “Working Smarter” Initiative Inventory Protocol
(Adapted from the Social, Emotional, and Behavior Academy)

DIRECTIONS

1. Identify and list all existing school or district initiatives. Consider all areas, including academic, social-emotional, disciplinary, professional development, educator mentorship, etc.
2. Identify and list any additional initiatives or programs that have been a salient part of the school/district culture, even if they are not currently in place.
3. Examine the lists. Categorize initiatives and look for alignments, redundancies, or contradictions between initiatives.

Existing District or School Initiatives	Additional Salient Initiatives or Programs from Recent Years

Reflection Questions

- What alignments do you notice between initiatives? Where are there opportunities to highlight similarities or ways in which initiatives support each other?
- What redundancies do you notice? Where are there opportunities to streamline or phase out initiatives?
- What contradictions do you notice? Do any initiatives work against or challenge the goals of each other?

Communicating Initiatives

1. What is the vision/mission/priority?
2. What are the initiatives that support the vision/mission/priority?
3. How do these initiatives align?
4. What is the “elevator pitch”? – what’s the long version?
 1. How can we keep these two communication bites consistent to reinforce the alignment and the message of initiatives supporting priorities?
 2. What’s the educators’ role? What’s within their circle of control? How can we communicate this very clearly so everyone knows what the expectations are?
 3. What can we transparently remove from educators’ plates? How can we communicate this clearly and consistently?

Make it Participatory: Active Listening Protocol
(taken from [Greater Good In Education \[2020\]](#))

DIRECTIONS

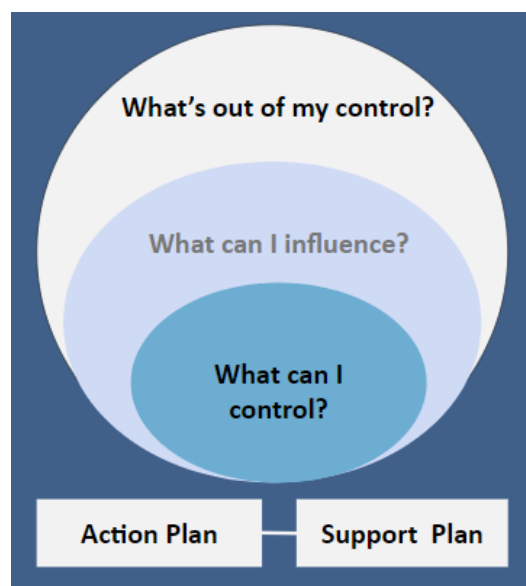
1. Find a place where you can talk with a conversation partner without interruption or distraction. Invite them to share what’s on their mind. As they do so, try to follow the steps below. You don’t need to cover every step, but the more you do cover, the more effective the practice is likely to be.
2. Paraphrase. Once the other person has finished expressing a thought, paraphrase what they said to make sure you understand and to show that you are paying attention. Helpful ways to paraphrase include “What I hear you saying is...” “It sounds like...” and “If I understand you right...”
3. Ask questions. When appropriate, ask questions to encourage the other person to elaborate on their thoughts and feelings. Avoid jumping to conclusions about what the other person means. Instead ask questions to clarify their meaning, such as, “When you say ____, do you mean ____?”
4. Express empathy. If the other person voices negative feelings, strive to validate these feelings rather than questioning or defending against them. For example, if the speaker expresses frustration, try to consider why they feel that way, regardless of whether you think that feeling is justified or whether you would feel that way yourself were you in their position. You might respond, “I can sense that you’re feeling frustrated,” and even “I can understand how that situation could cause frustration.”
5. Use engaged body language. Show that you are engaged and interested by making eye contact, nodding, facing the other person, and maintaining an open and relaxed body posture. Avoid attending to distractions in your environment or checking your phone. Be mindful of your facial expressions: Avoid expressions that might communicate disapproval or disgust.

6. Avoid judgement. Your goal is to understand the other person's perspective and accept it for what it is, even if you disagree with it. Try not to interrupt with counter-arguments or mentally prepare a rebuttal while the other person is speaking.
7. Avoid giving advice. Problem-solving is likely to be more effective after both conversation partners understand one another's perspective and feel heard. Moving too quickly into advice-giving can be counterproductive.

Enhance your Communication: Circles of Control protocol (adapted from [Franklin Covey Circle of Influence \[2023\]](#) and [Making Caring Common \[2023\]](#), Harvard Graduate School of Education)

DIRECTIONS - In your role, consider...

1. What's out of my control? Identify and consider external barriers and challenges.
 - *Possible barriers and challenges: misconceptions, negative perceptions, etc.*
2. What can I influence? Define and communicate the initiative and realistic, relevant goals.
 - *Clarify the roles and expectations of team members.*
 - *Identify and secure resources and supports. Consider what team members need to successfully achieve expectations.*
 - *Provide opportunities for questions, feedback, generating solutions to challenges.*
3. What can I control? Develop an action plan with specific actions and timelines. Create a plan for identifying and obtaining supports to successfully complete your action plan.
 - *Clearly define and communicate measurable actions and achievable timelines.*
 - *Prepare a list of resources and supports to help identify barriers and overcome challenges.*



Concern:	
What do I not have control over?	
What can I influence?	
What can I control?	

Reflection Questions

- In what ways do team members understand the initiative and their role in achieving defined goals?
- What opportunities are there for team members to collaborate and support one another?
- How will goal progress be monitored and communicated with the team?
- What opportunities and supports will the team have for identifying successes and addressing challenges?

Additional Resources

EdWeek (June 2022): [Stress, Burnout, Depression: Teachers and Principals Are Not Doing Well, New Data Shows](#)

EdWeek (May 2021): [Stress, Anxiety, Initiative Fatigue... Oh My! Perhaps It's Time to 'De-Implement'?](#)

EdSurge (October 2021): [Schools Can Change, but Only When Leaders Learn How to Listen](#)

Carrie Rosebrock Blog (November 2022): [Initiative Fatigue + Time Poverty = Staff Burnout](#)

Tools & Training

This resource was created for the EDC Solutions webinar [Fall Check-In: Prioritizing Educator Wellbeing and Overcoming Initiative Fatigue](#). Follow the link to access the recording.

EDC Solutions offers [Educator Wellness](#) training for teachers, support staff, and leaders to provide strategies and knowledge around the ways in which individuals can prioritize wellness, and how district and school systems can better support these efforts. A quick guide to the workshop series is [available for download](#).