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Restoring Teacher and Principal Well-Being Is an Essential Step for Rebuilding Schools

Findings from the State of the American Teacher and State of the American Principal Surveys



KEY FINDINGS

- Teachers and principals reported worse well-being than other working adults.
- Well-being was especially poor among Hispanic/Latinx teachers, mid-career teachers, and female teachers and principals.
- Teachers and principals of color reported sources of job-related stress that were similar to those of White teachers and principals but were more likely to experience racial discrimination. Family members of students and fellow staff were often the source of racial discrimination.
- Poor well-being and adverse working conditions were associated with teachers' and principals' intentions to leave their jobs, while supportive school environments were linked to better well-being and a decreased likelihood of intentions to leave.
- Majorities of teachers and principals reported coping well with their job-related stress and intended to stay in their current jobs.
- To reduce the stress of pandemic-era teaching, teachers and principals reported wanting to focus on core job responsibilities and build positive adult relationships.

The coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic has exacerbated job-related stress for K–12 public school teachers and principals (Brackett, Cannizzaro, and Levy, 2020; CDC Foundation, 2021; McMahan et al., 2022). Teachers and principals have faced many new working conditions and challenges since March 2020, many of which are linked to increased job-related stress (Clifford and Coggshall, 2021; Kraft, Simon, and Lyon, 2020; Steiner and Woo, 2021). The return to in-person instruction has brought new challenges, such as the implementation of COVID-19 mitigation policies (e.g., mask-wearing), school staff shortages, the compounded effects of student trauma and behavior concerns, and interrupted student learning (Belsha, Asmar, and Higgins, 2022; Schwartz and Diliberti, 2022).

Principal and teacher well-being is a matter of immediate concern for principals and teachers themselves and for the students they teach. Stress on the job can negatively affect educators' physical health (Sorenson, 2007; Wolfram et al., 2013). Poor teacher wellness and mental health are linked with lower-quality student learning environments and with poorer academic and nonacademic student outcomes (Madigan and Kim, 2021; McLean and Connor, 2015).

Job-related stress also has been linked to principal and teacher absenteeism and turnover (i.e.,

mobility and attrition) and to teachers' intentions to leave their jobs (Diliberti, Schwartz, and Grant, 2021; Sorenson, 2007; Steiner and Woo, 2021). Principal and teacher turnover can have negative impacts on student academic achievement (Levin and Bradley, 2019),¹ and prepandemic research has linked demanding working conditions with teacher turnover (Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond, 2017).

Previous research suggests that educators of color report poorer well-being and are more likely to leave their jobs than their White peers (Simon and Johnson, 2015; Steiner and Woo, 2021; U.S. Department of Education, 2016; Woo and Steiner, 2022). Possible contributors to this disparity include racial microaggressions,² racial battle fatigue, feelings of isolation in a predominantly White profession, or working in schools that are likely to have organizational issues (Mahatmya et al., 2022; Rodriguez, Pham, and Goncalves, 2022; Simon and Johnson, 2015). This is troubling because all students—particularly students of color—benefit both socially and academically from having teachers of color (Carver-Thomas, 2018; Egalite, Kisida, and Winters, 2015; Gershenson et al., 2017; Grissom and Redding, 2016).

Understanding the relationships among teacher and principal well-being, perceived working conditions, and teachers' and principals' intentions to leave their current position (along with actual resignations)

is critical for pandemic recovery and for the long-term health of the principal and teacher workforces. Survey responses since March 2020 indicate that 25 to nearly 50 percent of teachers and principals are considering leaving their jobs within the next year (Steiner and Woo, 2021, National Association of Secondary School Principals, 2020). Media reports have predicted larger-than-usual rates of teacher resignations and retirements (Berkshire, 2022, Kamenetz, 2022). Moreover, there is some concern that stressful working conditions could deter some prospective educators from joining the profession (Carver-Thomas, Leung-Gagné, and Burns, 2021; Steiner and Woo, 2021).

This elevates the importance of addressing the sources of teachers’ and principals’ job-related stress to improve their well-being. Improved well-being could bolster job satisfaction and engagement and help retain educators of all backgrounds in the profession. Furthermore, improving the reputation of the teaching and principal professions might be an important lever for attracting a diverse group of future educators to the profession.

In this report, we present selected findings from the 2022 State of the American Teacher (SoT) and State of the American Principal (SoP) surveys. These findings are related to teacher and principal well-being, working conditions, and intentions to leave their jobs; we focus on these conditions among educators of color.³ This is the first of three reports from the 2022 SoT and SoP surveys.

We Surveyed Teachers, Principals, and Working Adults and Interviewed Teachers

We fielded surveys to nationally representative samples of K–12 teachers and principals through the RAND Corporation’s American Teacher Panel (ATP) and American School Leader Panel (ASLP). The surveys were conducted in January 2022, when K–12 public schools were generally providing instruction in person (Burbio, undated) and when the omicron variant caused COVID-19 case rates to spike throughout the country (Leonhardt, 2022).⁴ The SoT survey yielded 2,360 complete responses out of

4,400 eligible invitations, for a 54-percent completion rate. The SoP survey yielded 1,540 complete responses out of 3,022 eligible invitations, for a 39-percent completion rate.⁵ We occasionally refer to teachers and principals together as *educators* in this report.

The SoT and SoP surveys were oversampled to allow for nationally representative estimates of teachers and principals who identify as *people of color*, which we define as anyone who did not self-identify exclusively as White. The SoT survey additionally allows for nationally representative estimates of teachers who identify as Black or African American or Hispanic/Latinx. We sometimes report principal survey responses by race and ethnicity when we compare them with teacher responses, but we urge caution in interpreting the results because of the small principal sample sizes within specific racial/ethnic categories. Both the SoT and the SoP were weighted to ensure national representation.

To compare teachers’ and principals’ reports with those of the general working adult population, we fielded nearly identical survey questions about well-being, working conditions, and respondents’ intentions to leave their current job to a nationally representative sample of working adults in the United States using RAND’s American Life Panel (ALP).⁶

We also interviewed 60 teachers across the country, drawing on SoT survey respondents who consented to be contacted for an interview to gain deeper insight into the relationships between well-being, working conditions, and intentions to leave. Roughly two-thirds of the teachers we interviewed were teachers of color.⁷

We explored whether teachers’ and principals’ survey responses differed according to their demographic characteristics, their school context (e.g.,

Abbreviations

AANHPI	Asian American, Native Hawaiian, or Pacific Islander
ALP	American Life Panel
ASLP	American School Leader Panel
ATP	American Teacher Panel
COVID-19	coronavirus disease 2019
SoP	State of the American Principal
SoT	State of the American Teacher

school locale), or the characteristics of the students they taught.⁸ Unless otherwise noted, we discuss only differences among principal and teacher subgroups that are statistically significant at $p < 0.05$. Because the intent of this report is to provide exploratory, descriptive information rather than to test specific hypotheses, we did not make statistical adjustments for multiple comparisons.

We found that the survey responses of teachers and principals of color differed significantly from those of their White peers on some topics. These differences could be driven by several factors, including systematic differences in teaching context (Ingersoll et al., 2021; National Center for Education Statistics, 2019). For example, in our survey data, teachers of color were nearly three times as likely as White teachers to teach in schools in which a majority of students were eligible for free or reduced-price lunch. For select results, we test the robustness of significant differences across educator subgroups to adjust for observable school-level characteristics (e.g., school poverty, school racial and ethnic composition, school locale, school grade level). These regression analyses are useful for understanding drivers of differences, but we do not present regression-adjusted statistics because these adjustments might “control away” the underlying factors that contribute to the gaps and inequities we observed. Additionally, it is possible that numerous other factors unmeasured by this survey, such as financial circumstances or caregiving responsibilities, could have played a role in the differences across educator subgroups that we observe.

We integrate the interview data with the survey findings throughout the report and compare teachers’ and principals’ survey responses with those of working adults, where possible. We discuss our analytic methods in more detail and provide survey responses from the SoT, SoP, and ALP surveys in our technical documentation (Doan et al., 2022).

This Report Focuses on Educator Well-Being

We measured five aspects of well-being: frequency of experiencing job-related stress, ability to cope with job-related stress, symptoms of depression, burnout,

and resilience.⁹ We examined educators’ reports of their top-ranked sources of job-related stress, their working conditions, school-provided mental health services for staff, and their intentions to leave their jobs to understand how they relate to well-being.

We discuss levels of educator well-being in the first section of this report. In the second section, we examine factors that contribute to educator well-being, such as working conditions and sources of job-related stress. Our discussion focuses on two highly relevant working conditions that are not commonly reported at the national level: educators’ experiences of racial discrimination in their jobs and access to employer-provided mental health services for staff. The SoT and SoP surveys also asked about many other working conditions that were linked to teacher and principal job satisfaction and turnover prior to the pandemic, and that continue to be relevant, such as salary, hours worked, and perceptions of supervisor support, input in school decisionmaking, and school safety (Nguyen et al., 2019). Because these working conditions—and how they are experienced by educators of color—have been the focus of extensive prior research, we consider them only briefly in the third section of this report.

In the third section, we discuss the relationships among well-being and teachers’ and principals’ intentions to leave the profession. The fourth section focuses on strategies that educators believe could help improve their well-being. We conclude with a discussion of implications and offer recommendations for education leaders and policymakers.

This report is the first in a series of three reports that focus on timely aspects of the state of American teachers and principals during the 2021–2022 school year. The second report examines how educators are responding to two politicized topics: COVID-19 safety measures and teaching about race, racism, and bias. In that report, we examine how harassment about these controversial topics affects teachers’ and principals’ working experiences and perceptions about the school environment. Although these topics could be considered working conditions, we do not discuss them in detail in this report. The third report considers the racial and ethnic diversity of the K–12 public school teacher workforce and focuses on

potential strategies to recruit, hire, and retain teachers of color.

Educators of All Backgrounds Are Experiencing Poor Well-Being

Teachers and Principals Reported Worse Well-Being Than Other Working Adults

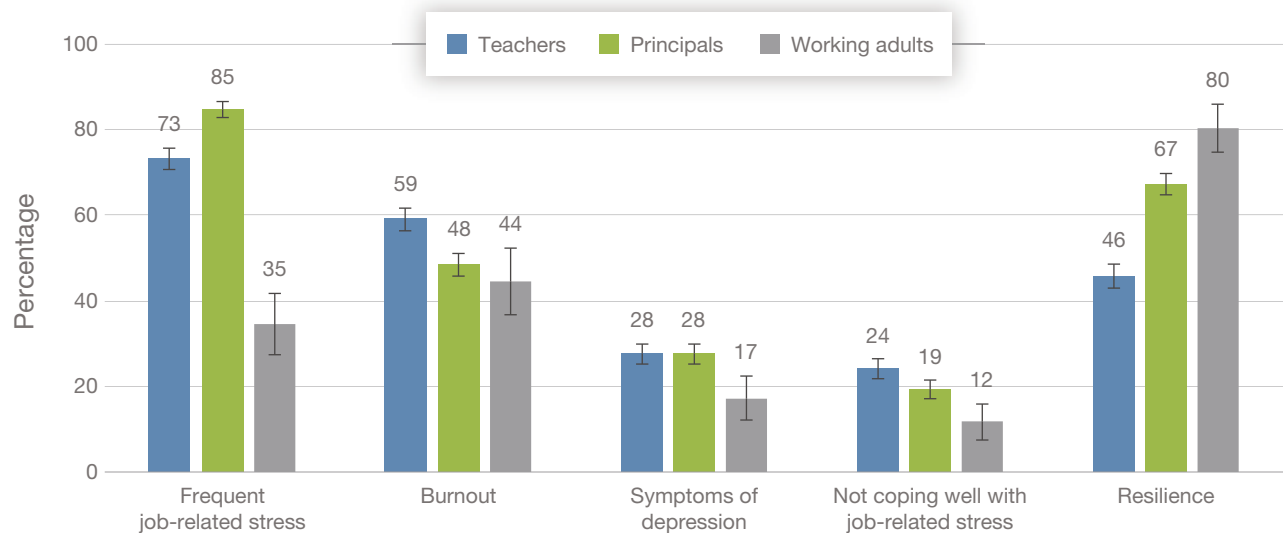
About twice as many teachers and principals reported experiencing frequent job-related stress as the general population of working adults in January 2022 (Figure 1). More teachers and principals than other working adults reported symptoms of depression and not coping well with their job-related stress. More teachers than other working adults reported burnout, and about half as many teachers reported feeling resilient to stressful events compared with other working adults. Teachers’ and principals’ experiences of job-related stress and their ability to cope with that stress are consistent with our January 2021 results.

The same educators who reported poor well-being on one of these five indicators were also more likely to report poor well-being on each of the other indicators, which is also consistent with our 2021 results. For example, 54 percent of principals who reported experiencing frequent job-related stress also reported feeling burnout, compared with only 18 percent of principals who did not report experiencing frequent stress. All measures of well-being shown in Figure 1 showed similarly large interrelationships among both principals and teachers.

Well-Being Was Especially Poor Among Hispanic/Latinx Teachers, Mid-Career Teachers, and Female Teachers

Teachers of color reported well-being that was similar to that of their White colleagues on four of the five indicators we examined (Table 1). However, teachers of color were more likely than White teachers to report experiencing symptoms of depression. Hispanic or Latinx teachers reported particularly poor well-being. One in three Hispanic or Latinx teachers experienced symptoms of depression compared with about one in four non-Hispanic or Latinx teachers,

FIGURE 1
Well-Being of Teachers, Principals, and Working Adults in January 2022



NOTE: This figure shows the percentage of teachers (dark blue), principals (green), and working adults (light blue) who reported experiencing each indicator of well-being. The vertical black bars represent the 95-percent confidence interval for each estimate. Teachers $N = 2,349$; principals $N = 1,532$; working adults $N = 500$.

a difference that remained significant after we controlled for the demographic characteristics of their schools. Greater percentages of Hispanic or Latinx teachers reported poor well-being across the other indicators in Table 1 than non-Hispanic or Latinx teachers, although these differences were not always statistically significant.

Black or African American teachers were significantly less likely to report experiencing frequent job-related stress (66 percent) than White teachers (74 percent), and Hispanic or Latinx teachers (76 percent); these differences remained significant after we controlled for the characteristics of their schools. This difference might be related to slightly higher reported rates of resilience among Black or African American teachers than among White teachers, although this difference was small and not statistically significant.

Across indicators of well-being, mid-career teachers—those with six to ten years of teaching experience—were most likely to experience poor well-being, whereas teachers with more than 20 years of experience were least likely to report poor well-being. Mid-career teachers were more likely to report symptoms of depression, frequent job-related stress, feeling less resilient, and not coping well with their job-related stress than teachers with at least 20 years of experience. Female teachers were more likely to report experiencing frequent job-related stress and less likely to report feeling resilient than their male peers, a difference that remained significant after statistically controlling for school characteristics.

The open-ended responses to this survey question suggest that caregiving responsibilities, especially caring for young children, could be a contributing factor. Some teachers explained that it was difficult to manage the demands of parenthood and teaching at the same time; in particular, the need to

find child care when their own children were ill and subject to quarantines was especially stressful. Our hypothesis is that female teachers and mid-career teachers were more likely to be in a position to be working and caregiving simultaneously throughout the pandemic than their more experienced peers (Alsharawy et al., 2021; Steiner and Woo, 2021).

Female Principals Were More Likely to Experience Frequent Job-Related Stress and Burnout Than Male Principals

Female principals were more likely to report experiencing frequent job-related stress and burnout than male principals. This difference remained significant after we statistically controlled for school characteristics and is consistent with our January 2021 findings. We did not ask about caregiving or other family responsibilities in the survey, but we hypothesize that these factors might play a role. There is evidence that women have experienced greater distress during the pandemic than men—in part because of family and caregiving responsibilities (Alsharawy et al., 2021).

Principals of color were more likely to report symptoms of depression than White principals, but this difference was no longer statistically significant after we controlled for school characteristics. This is also consistent with our January 2021 findings and might be related to school context. Principals of color are generally more likely to lead schools in urban locales and schools in which 75 percent or more of the student population is experiencing poverty (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019). This could suggest that a more challenging school environment (or other factors not measured in our survey) might have contributed to more principals of color reporting symptoms of depression than White principals.

Teachers of color were more likely than White teachers to report experiencing symptoms of depression.

TABLE 1

Teacher-Reported Well-Being, by Race/Ethnicity, Gender, and Years of Experience

Subgroup	Burnout (%)	Symptoms of Depression (%)	Frequent Job-Related Stress (%)	Not Coping Well (%)	Resilience (%)
Total	59	28	73	24	46
Race/ethnicity					
White (base category)	59	26	74	24	46
Person of color	61	33*	71	26	44
Black or African American	60	29	66*	22	49
Hispanic or Latinx	63	36*	76	28	41
AANHPI	58	34*	66*	27	42
Other race/ethnicity	59	33	68	29	39
Gender					
Male (base category)	54	24	59	20	55
Female	61	29	78*	25*	43*
Years of experience					
1–5 years	58	27	70	24	44
6–10 years	65*	36*	76*	31*	40*
11–20 years	59	29*	77*	27*	46
21 or more years (base category)	57	20	69	17	50

NOTE: This table shows the percentage of teachers reporting on each of the five indicators of well-being, based on their survey responses, with responses disaggregated by teacher race/ethnicity, gender, and years of experience. "Person of color" is an aggregate category that includes all respondents who do not identify as White. "Other race/ethnicity" is an aggregate category that includes all respondents who did not identify in any of the other race or ethnicity categories. Asterisks indicate that the percentage of teachers reporting that indicator of well-being is significantly different, at the $p < 0.05$ level, from base category teachers. $N = 2,349$.

Teachers and Principals of Color Reported Sources of Job-Related Stress That Were Similar to Those of White Teachers and Principals, but Were More Likely to Experience Racial Discrimination

Supporting Students' Academic Learning Was a Top-Ranked Source of Job-Related Stress for Teachers; Staffing Was a Top Source of Stress for Principals

We looked at the stressors that principals and teachers ranked as the first-, second-, and third-greatest sources of job-related stress (Table 2). For principals,

staffing rose to the top, followed by supporting teachers' and staff members' mental health and well-being and supporting students' academic learning because of lost instructional time because of the pandemic. These topics were consistent regardless of a principal's race and ethnicity. Nearly half of teachers ranked supporting students' academic learning as one of their top-three sources of job-related stress, and about one-quarter selected managing student behavior, taking on extra work because of staff shortages, supporting student mental health and well-being, and their salary being too low (Table 2). These responses are consistent with the results of other national surveys conducted throughout the pandemic and well documented concerns about teacher mental health and student learning (Rickles et al., 2021; Steiner and Woo, 2021; Woo and Steiner, 2022).

TABLE 2

Principals' and Teachers' Top-Ranked Sources of Job-Related Stress, by Race and Ethnicity

Source of Job-Related Stress	All (%)	White (%)	Person of Color (%)	Black or African American (%)	Hispanic or Latinx (%)	AANHPI (%)	Other (%)
Principals							
Staffing teaching and nonteaching positions at my school	56	57	52*	52	54	47	48
Supporting teachers' and staff's mental health and well-being	44	46	36*	36*	39	38	35*
Supporting students' academic learning because of lost instructional time during COVID	34	33	39*	42*	38	40	33
Supporting students' mental health and well-being	32	33	29	26*	29	23	39
Implementing COVID-19 mitigation strategies	31	32	29	28	31	39	25
Teachers							
Supporting my students' academic learning because they have lost instructional time during the COVID-19 pandemic	47	48	45	45	45	51	39
Managing student behavior	29	30	24*	25	24*	25	24
Taking on extra work because of staff shortages	25	25	24	21	25	24	24
Supporting students' mental health and well-being	24	25	20*	19*	23	21	9*
I spend too many hours working	23	24	21	19*	20	25	26
My salary being too low	23	22	26*	31*	26	22	19
Implementing COVID-19 mitigation measures (e.g., mask-wearing, COVID-19 testing)	22	22	22	22	23	20	20
Feeling like the goals and expectations of the school are unattainable	20	21	19	20	20	14*	20

NOTE: This table shows the top sources of job-related stress principals and teachers selected among their top three job-related stressors. For parsimony, the table is restricted to sources selected by 20 percent or more of principals and teachers as being among their top three job-related stressors. Asterisks indicate that the percentage of teachers or principals of color selecting that source as a top-three source of stress is significantly different, at the $p < 0.05$ level, from the percentage of White teachers or principals selecting it as a source of stress. Teachers $N = 2,349$; Principals $N = 1,532$. Sample sizes for (1) AANHPI principals and (2) principals of other races and ethnicities are less than 100, and these results should be interpreted with caution.

Two-thirds of the teachers we interviewed reported that the extra responsibilities they took on during the pandemic involved covering classes or taking additional students in their own classrooms as the result of staff shortages. As one teacher remarked, “When they cannot find someone [to substitute] . . . we have to take those students into our

classes. That is very stressful.” About one-third of the teachers we interviewed who took on extra work said that doing so caused them stress or frustration, in part related to pay. In the words of one teacher, “[T]hese are not the real hours that we work. Our pay does not reflect the amount of work that we pour into this job. . . .”

Teachers' top job-related stressors did not vary much by teacher race and ethnicity (Table 2), but there were some notable differences. Teachers who identified as Black or African American were more likely to rank their salary being too low and less likely to rank spending too many hours working among their top three job-related stressors than White teachers were, although the differences are small in magnitude. Dissatisfaction with pay among teachers of color predates the pandemic (Boser, 2011). Otherwise, there were few differences by teacher and school characteristics among the job-related stressors selected by more than 20 percent of teachers.¹⁰

Potential stressors that did not rise to the top for most principals included changes in instructional mode, ensuring that teachers have technology for remote learning, school budget decisions, limited decisionmaking authority, lack of adequate professional development, and the number of teachers who might resign this year. For most teachers, switching instructional mode (e.g., from remote to in person) and the format in which they were teaching (e.g., remote or in person) did not rise to the top.

Most Educators Reported Access to Mental Health Services, but Some Questioned The Helpfulness of Those Services

About 80 percent of the principals and 65 percent of the teachers we surveyed reported access to some mental health services through their employers.¹¹ The remainder of teachers and principals reported no access to employer-provided mental health services or did not know whether they had access to such services. Access to some services (or awareness of such access) appears to be less widespread among teachers than in the general working population. About one-third of teachers reported access to counseling, compared with about half of employed adults. More Black or African American teachers (70 percent versus 63 percent) and Black or African American principals (83 percent versus 77 percent) reported access to at least one of the mental health supports we asked about than their non-Black or African American peers. The difference for teachers remained statisti-

cally significant after we controlled for school characteristics, but the difference for principals did not.

We did not ask about the helpfulness of mental health supports in the survey, but (1) our interviews with teachers and (2) principals' open-ended survey responses to the question about awareness of employer-provided mental health supports shed light on whether they found them helpful. A slight majority of interviewed teachers who discussed this topic felt that the wellness supports provided by their employers were not helpful because the teachers did not have confidence that the supports were anonymous or confidential, the supports did not address their needs, teachers did not have enough time to use them, or using them would take time away from self-care activities they found more useful. One teacher noted, "They offer things like wellness programs and mindfulness activities . . . those things are not helpful. . . . They were adding things to my plate just to check a box." In their open-ended survey responses, some principals reported difficulty finding supports that adequately met their needs. For example, one principal noted that their employee assistance plan included only three free sessions with a counselor, while another principal said that their benefits did not include counseling sessions.

Instead, most of the teachers we interviewed sought informal supports to help them cope with their job-related stress, such as social support from colleagues, family members, and friends; self-defined boundaries for work-life balance; and self-care activities. For example, one teacher who reported coping well with their job-related stress said, "I work with an incredible group of people who provide a sounding board to vent, to talk things through, to problem-solve." Some principals also sought informal support from colleagues, family members, and friends because they lacked formal supports in their districts. Some teachers we interviewed did report that other school-provided supports that did not directly address mental health—such as professional development related to technology use or a mentor to provide learning support in the classroom—were helpful because they directly addressed their job-related stressors.

Nearly Half of Principals of Color and One-Third of Teachers of Color Experienced Racial Discrimination at School

In January 2022, 48 percent of principals of color and 36 percent of teachers of color indicated that they had experienced at least one of the incidents of racial discrimination we asked about in their schools during the 2021–2022 school year.¹² Across the different types of racial discrimination listed in Table 3, teachers and principals of color were two to three times more likely to report experiencing racial discrimination than their White peers. These differences remained after we statistically controlled for school characteristics. About half of Black or African American principals and teachers and AANHPI principals and teachers reported experiencing at least one of the types of racial discrimination we asked about in their schools during the 2021–2022 school year. Just under one-half of Hispanic or Latinx principals and about one-third of Hispanic or Latinx teachers reported experiencing at least one of these types of racial discrimination in their schools.

The specific incidents of racial discrimination experienced by principals and teachers varied across their racial and ethnic identities (Table 3). For example, more AANHPI educators reported that people assumed that they were foreigners because of their racial or ethnic identity than Hispanic or Latinx or Black or African American educators. More Black or African American principals and teachers said that people were uncomfortable approaching them

Teachers and principals of color were two to three times more likely to report experiencing racial discrimination than their White peers.

because of their race than their AANHPI or Hispanic or Latinx peers did.

Teachers and principals of color who reported working in schools in which at least half the teaching staff were people of color were less likely to report experiencing at least one incident of racial discrimination than their peers of color who reported working in schools in which more than half of the teaching staff was White,¹³ a finding that is consistent with other research (Frank et al., 2021; Grooms, Mahatmya, and Johnson, 2021).¹⁴ Only one-third of teachers and principals in our survey who identified as people of color reported that at least half of the teaching staff in their schools were people of color.

These findings are not new. Educators of color experienced racial discrimination—particularly being held to different standards than their White colleagues—long before the pandemic, and educators’ specific experiences of racial discrimination varied based on their race or ethnicity (Carver-Thomas, 2018). Although educators’ experiences vary greatly, qualitative research conducted prior to the pandemic suggests that some Black or African American teachers reported being pigeonholed as disciplinarians, some Hispanic or Latinx teachers felt that they were treated as inferior to their White colleagues, and some Asian American teachers (particularly women) felt that they were perceived as foreigners because of their race (Brockenbrough, 2015; Endo, 2015; Griffin, 2018).

Fellow Staff Were Frequently the Source of Racial Discrimination Experienced by Teachers, While Family Members of Students Were Frequently the Source of Racial Discrimination Experienced by Principals

Seventy percent of principals who experienced racial discrimination indicated that parents and family members of students were the source. Fifty-six percent of teachers who experienced such discrimination reported that fellow staff were the source. The reported source varied greatly by role (principal or teacher) and the specific incident (Figure 2 and Figure 3). For example, teachers and principals reported fellow staff and administrators as the source

TABLE 3

Principals' and Teachers' Reported Experiences of Discrimination Based on Their Race or Ethnicity in Their Day-to-Day School Experiences

Types of Discrimination	All (%)	White (%)	Person of Color (%)	Black or African American (%)	Hispanic or Latinx (%)	AANHPI (%)	Other (%)
Principals							
Experienced 1+ incident of discrimination based on race or ethnicity	25	19	48*	56*	42*	52*	34*
Because of my race or ethnicity, people assumed that I am a foreigner	3	1	10*	4*	18*	24*	7
I am held to a different set of standards and expectations than my peers because of my race or ethnicity	11	5	30*	40*	24*	26*	15*
I have been singled out to perform additional tasks because of my race or ethnicity	6	3	18*	24*	17*	13*	7
I have experienced online or in-person harassment because of my race or ethnicity	9	7	14*	17*	11	12	11
I have experienced verbal or nonverbal microaggressions at my school because of my race or ethnicity	15	11	31*	36*	30*	25*	22*
People acted as though they were uncomfortable approaching me because of my race or ethnicity	12	8	28*	39*	19*	16	21*
Teachers							
Experienced 1+ incident of discrimination based on race or ethnicity	16	10	36*	44*	30*	46*	31*
Because of my race or ethnicity, people assumed that I am a foreigner	4	1	13*	5*	15*	30*	10*
I am held to a different set of standards and expectations than my peers because of my race or ethnicity	7	4	18*	23*	14*	20*	16*
I have been singled out to perform additional tasks because of my race or ethnicity	4	2	14*	19*	12*	14*	13*
I have experienced online or in-person harassment because of my race or ethnicity	4	3	7*	7*	6*	12*	9*
I have experienced verbal or nonverbal microaggressions at my school because of my race or ethnicity	9	6	19*	25*	14*	25*	21*
People acted as though they were uncomfortable approaching me because of my race or ethnicity	7	5	17*	26*	10*	21*	14*

NOTE: This table shows teachers' and principals' reports of discrimination based on their race or ethnicity in their day-to-day school experiences during the 2021–2022 school year. Asterisks indicate that the percentage of teachers or principals of color experiencing that type of discrimination is significantly different, at the $p < 0.05$ level, from the percentage of White teachers or principals. Teachers $N = 2,338$; principals $N = 1,518$. Sample sizes for (1) AANHPI principals and (2) principals of other races and ethnicities are all less than 100, and these results should be interpreted with caution.

of racial discrimination related to the workplace (i.e., performance of additional tasks at work, being held to a different set of standards and expectations by peers). These results should be interpreted cautiously. The survey did not ask how many people were the sources of these incidents of racial discrimination. We do not know, for example, whether a principal experienced racial discrimination repeatedly from a few parents or infrequently from most parents in their school.

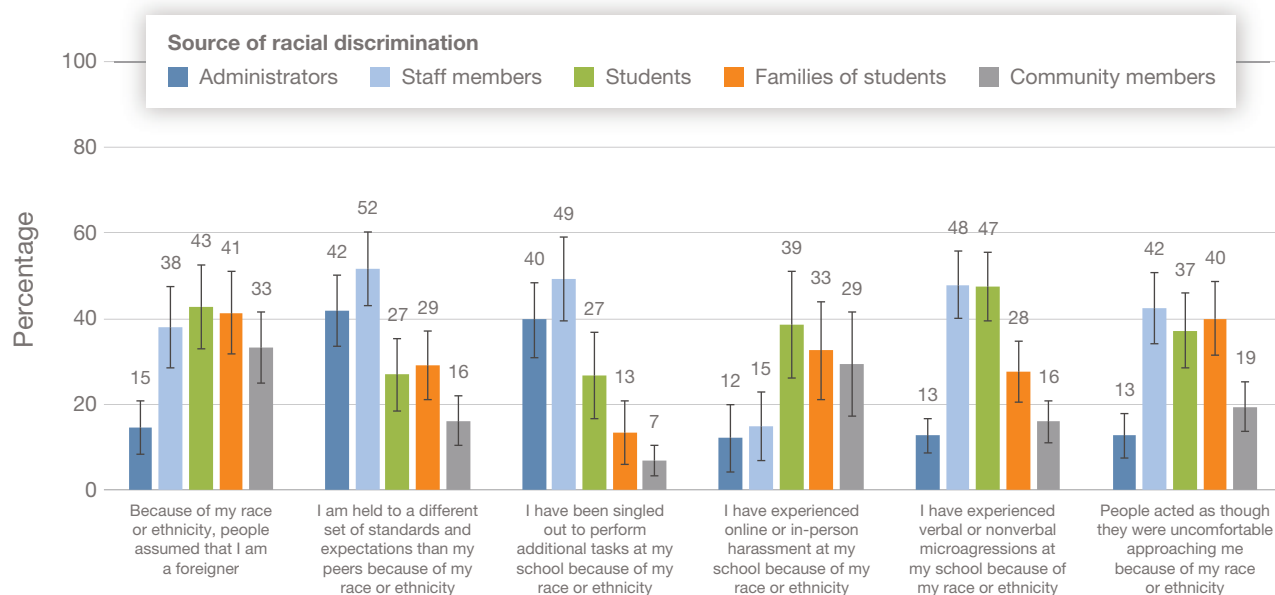
Our interviews provide both some insight into teachers’ experiences with racial discrimination and also a reminder that relationships and school environments matter. One teacher of color who described having a strong positive relationship with their school principal said, “[My principal] uses my perspective as an advantage. I’m happy to do it; I think it’s something that they can use to their benefit.” Other teachers of color reported hearing their school leaders make offensive remarks about students or teachers of color, feeling tokenized, or being held responsible for teaching about race. As one teacher said, “[T]here’s a huge responsibility to

be the person to teach about race. . . . I can’t speak for all African Americans.”

Poor Well-Being and Adverse Working Conditions Were Associated with Intentions to Leave

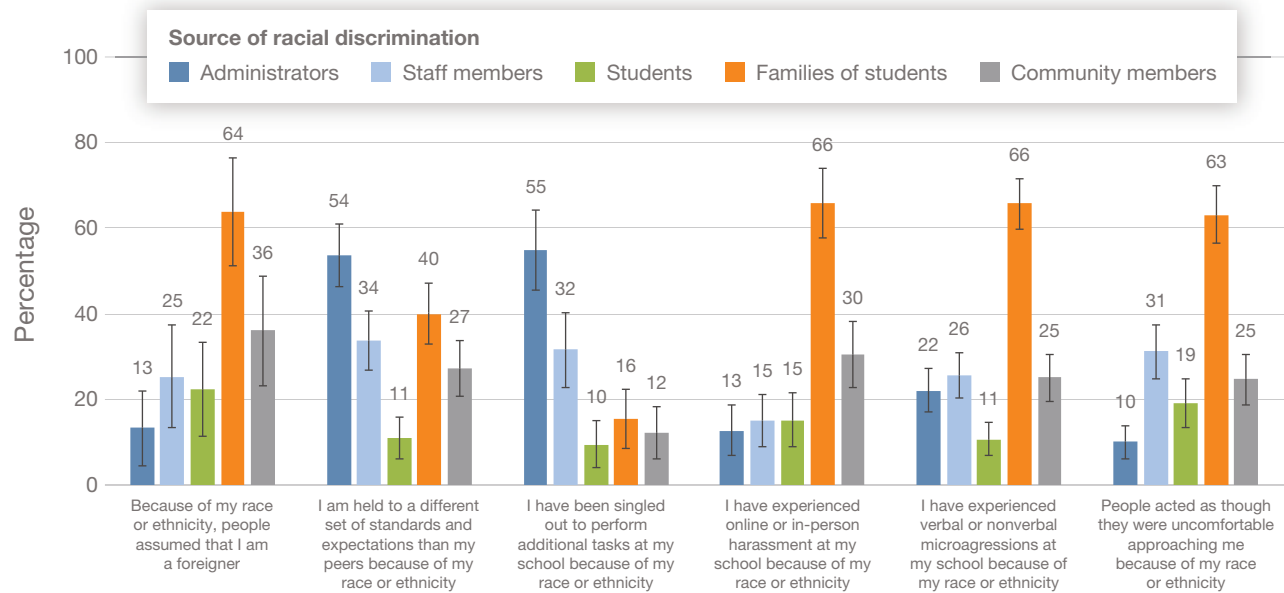
Understanding how the indicators of well-being we examine in this study are linked to working conditions and teachers and principals’ intentions to leave their jobs—both before the pandemic and as of January 2022—can help education leaders and policy-makers improve educator welfare in their localities.¹⁵ We conducted regression analyses to examine these relationships and statistically controlled for educator demographics and observable school characteristics.¹⁶ We discuss the relationships between the well-being indicators and working conditions we measured and intentions to leave in the following sections.

FIGURE 2
Teacher-Reported Sources of Racial Discrimination



NOTE: This figure shows the reported sources of each incident of racial discrimination among any teacher of any race or ethnicity who indicated that they experienced specific incidents of discrimination based on their race or ethnicity at least once in their day-to-day school experience during the 2021–2022 school year. *N* = 2,338.

FIGURE 3
Principal-Reported Sources of Racial Discrimination



NOTE: This figure shows the reported sources of each incident of racial discrimination among any principal of any race or ethnicity who indicated that they experienced specific incidents of discrimination based on their race or ethnicity at least once in their day-to-day school experience during the 2021–2022 school year. *N* = 1,518.

Teachers’ and Principals’ Intentions to Leave Their Jobs Might Reflect Pandemic-Related Job Dissatisfaction Rather Than Predict Actual Turnover

In January 2022, about one-third of teachers and principals reported that they were likely to leave their current teaching or principal job by the end of the 2021–2022 school year; this figure is up from about one-quarter of teachers and 15 percent of principals in January 2021.¹⁷ Most of these educators were unlikely to leave before the pandemic but said that they were likely to leave their job before the end of the 2021–2022 school year.

Forty-one percent of teachers of color reported that they intended to leave their jobs before the end of the 2021–2022 school year, compared with 31 percent of White teachers, a statistically significant difference that remained after controlling for school characteristics. We did not find a similar difference for principals. About 40 percent of Black or African American teachers, Hispanic or Latinx teachers, and AANHPI

teachers were considering leaving their jobs, compared with about 30 percent of White teachers.

Although these rates are concerning, we hypothesize that they reflect some teachers’ and principals’ job dissatisfaction rather than a major disruption in the workforce. Although teachers who state an intention to leave are more likely to resign than those who do not state such an intention, intentions to leave are an imperfect predictor of whether educators actually resign. One pre-pandemic estimate found that one-third of teachers who stated an intention to leave resigned within the next year (Nguyen et al., 2022).

We purchased data from Dun & Bradstreet to estimate principal turnover from fall 2020 to fall 2021 at roughly 14 percent, which is consistent with pre-pandemic trends (Goldring and Taie, 2018). We estimated that only 19 percent of principals who reported on an ASLP survey that they intended to leave their jobs before the end of the 2020–2021 school year resigned by fall 2021.¹⁸ More principals who intended to leave their jobs resigned than those who did not intend to leave, but the difference was not statistically significant.

Of course, we do not yet know whether teacher and principal turnover from the 2021–2022 school year will reflect pre-pandemic trends.

We believe that this survey question captures some of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on educators' job satisfaction. This inference is consistent with other research (Kaufman, Diliberti and Hamilton, 2022; Zamarro et al., 2021) and is supported by our teacher interviews. Half of the teachers we interviewed attributed their dissatisfaction with their jobs and their desire to leave to factors related to the pandemic and reported that constant changes in COVID-19 mitigation policies negatively affected their job satisfaction. As one teacher said, "Coming back in person happened incredibly quickly. . . . I didn't feel safe, but I didn't feel comfortable saying that."

Although we interpret educators' responses about their intentions to leave as an expression of job dissatisfaction, we recognize that some educators who are experiencing poor well-being and are dissatisfied with their jobs might not have plans to leave. For example, some teachers we interviewed mentioned that they could not afford to leave their jobs, others said that they did not know how else to use their teaching degrees, and some worried about forgoing all the benefits—such as retirement funds—that they had accrued. In our interviews, teachers who were dissatisfied with their jobs but still planning to stay commonly cited that their dedication to working with students kept them in their jobs, even though pandemic conditions have made teaching more challenging. One teacher put it this way: "When you're in teaching, you're not in teaching for the money, you're in it because you want to help kids. . . . If I can help one child get excited about learning something new, then it's worth it."

Harassment and Racial Discrimination, Along with Other Factors, Was Linked to Poor Teacher and Principal Well-Being

Teachers and principals who experienced racial discrimination; who experienced harassment about COVID-19 vaccination or masking policies or teaching on race, racism, and bias; or who reported expo-

sure to school violence were more likely to experience poor well-being and less likely to feel resilient to stressful events (Table 4).

These patterns held true for both teachers of color and their White peers after controlling for school characteristics. For principals of color and White principals, experiencing racial discrimination or harassment about politicized topics was significantly linked to symptoms of depression and to not coping well with job-related stress; the relationships between these experiences and burnout and frequent job-related stress were directionally similar but not statistically significant.

Forty-three percent of teachers and 35 percent of principals who reported experiencing racial discrimination reported symptoms of depression, compared with 25 percent of their teacher and principal peers who did not experience racial discrimination, which is a statistically significant difference. As we reported in the previous section of this report, a majority of the educators who experienced racial discrimination were people of color. The negative effect of racial discrimination on mental health and well-being is well documented (Reed, undated).

Teachers of color and White teachers who reported having to assume extra responsibilities at work because of staffing shortages were also more likely to report poor well-being. Teachers and principals of color and their White peers who reported working, on average, more than 40 hours per week were significantly more likely to report frequent job-related stress and teachers were more likely to report difficulty coping with their job-related stress. Rates of frequent job-related stress were especially high (85 percent) among teachers working more than 40 hours per week, regardless of background characteristics.

Well-Being—and Working Conditions Associated with Well-Being—Were Predictive of Teachers' and Principals' Intentions to Leave

Teachers and principals who experienced frequent job-related stress, burnout, symptoms of depression, and who were not coping well with their job-related

TABLE 4

Relationships Between Educator-Reported Working Conditions and Well-Being

Working conditions	Burnout		Frequent Job-Related Stress		Depression		Not Coping Well		Lack of Resilience	
Work more than 40 hours per week			+	+			+			
More responsibilities due to staffing shortages (teachers only)	+		+		+		+			
Salary less than \$50,000 (teachers) or \$100,000 (principals)				+						
Exposure to school violence	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Harassed 1+ times regarding school COVID-19 safety policies	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Harassed 1+ times regarding teaching about race, racism, and bias	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+		+
Experienced 1+ incidents of racial discrimination	+				+	+	+	+	+	
Received administrator support (teachers only)	-		-		-		-		-	
Reported active involvement in school or district decisionmaking	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Access to 1+ employer-provided mental health supports	-				-		-	-	-	-

= teachers = principals

NOTES: The symbols in each cell denote the direction and statistical significance of the estimated relationship. Red plus signs indicate that a given working condition (row) is significantly associated with an increased likelihood that the respondent reported a given indicator of negative well-being (column). Green minus symbols indicate that a given working condition (row) is significantly associated with a decreased likelihood that the respondent reported a given indicator of negative well-being (column). Blank cells indicate that there is no statistically significant relationship. In this table, we reverse-code the indicator of resilience to be “lack of resilience” in order to be directionally consistent with the other indicators of well-being. Each cell represents the result of a separate regression model where the column variable was regressed on the row variable, controlling for observable school characteristics (urbanicity, school poverty, school enrollment of non-white students, school grade level) and educator characteristics (race/ethnicity, gender, experience, and subject taught). While each column variable is regressed on each row variable separately, we restrict our analysis to the 1,905 teachers and 1,372 principals who had non-missing values for all indicators of well-being, working conditions, and covariates so that each regression is conducted on a consistent sample of respondents.


stress were more likely to indicate that they intended to leave their jobs, regardless of their background characteristics (Table 5). This is consistent with our January 2021 findings.

Harassment about politicized topics, racial discrimination, and exposure to school violence were also significantly positively related to teachers’ and principals’ intentions to leave their current jobs. Prin-

cipals who reported frequent exposure to incidents of violence in their schools were 11 percentage points (43 percent versus 32 percent) more likely to consider leaving their jobs. Relatively lower salaries were linked to intentions to leave (but not to well-being) for teachers and to frequent job-related stress and intentions to leave for principals. These relationships held for teachers and principals of color and their White peers.

TABLE 5

Relationships Between Educator-Reported Indicators of Well-Being, Working Conditions, and Intentions to Leave

	Intentions to Leave					
	Before or Since the Pandemic		Before the Pandemic		Since the Pandemic	
						
Indicators of well-being						
Burnout	+	+	+	+	+	+
Frequent job-related stress	+	+			+	+
Symptoms of depression	+	+		+	+	+
Not coping well	+	+	+		+	+
Lack of resilience	+	+			+	+
Working conditions						
Work more than 40 hours per week				+		
More responsibilities due to staffing shortages (teachers only)	+				+	
Salary less than \$50,000 (teachers) or \$100,000 (principals)	+			+	+	
Exposure to school violence	+	+			+	+
Harassed 1+ times regarding school COVID-19 safety policies	+	+			+	+
Harassed 1+ times regarding teaching about race, racism, and bias					+	
Experienced 1+ incidents of racial discrimination	+	+	+	+	+	+
Received administrator support (teachers only)	-		-		-	
Reported active involvement in school or district decisionmaking	-	-	-		-	-
Access to 1+ employer-provided mental health supports	-					

 = teachers  = principals

NOTES: The symbols in each cell denote the direction and statistical significance of the estimated relationship. Red plus signs indicate that a given indicator of negative well-being or working condition (row) is significantly associated with an increased likelihood that the respondent indicated that they intended to leave their job at the end of the year (column). Green negative symbols indicate that a given indicator of negative well-being or working condition (row) is significantly associated with a decreased likelihood that the respondent indicated that they intended to leave their job at the end of the year (column). Blank cells indicate that there is no statistically significant relationship. In this table, we reverse-code the indicator of resilience to be “lack of resilience” in order to be directionally consistent with the other indicators of well-being. While each column variable is regressed on each row variable separately, we restrict our analysis to the 1,905 teachers and 1,372 principals who had non-missing values for all indicators of well-being, working conditions, and covariates so that each regression is conducted on a consistent sample of respondents. Any intention to leave represents intentions to leave either before the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic or since the COVID-19 pandemic.

Most of the indicators of well-being and working conditions we measured were significantly linked to teachers' and principals' stated intention of leaving their job since the beginning of the pandemic, but not before. Our data do not directly address why this might be the case, but suggest that, for many teachers and principals of color and their White peers, their intentions to leave their jobs appear to be closely related to dissatisfaction with pandemic-era working conditions (e.g., taking on extra work because of staffing shortages). Burnout and experiences of racial discrimination were both linked to teachers' and principals' intentions to leave both before and since the COVID-19 pandemic, which suggests, consistent with prior research, that these conditions predate the pandemic.

Supportive School Environments Were Linked to Better Well-Being and Decreased Likelihood of Intentions to Leave

Teachers and principals who reported working conditions indicative of supportive environments in their schools were less likely to report poor well-being and intentions to leave their jobs than their peers who did not report such conditions (Tables 4 and 5). Educators who agreed that they were “actively involved” in school or district decisionmaking were significantly less likely to report poor well-being and intentions to leave their jobs. Access to at least one employer-provided mental health support (e.g., counseling, employee assistance programs, peer support groups) was linked to better well-being for teachers and to the ability to cope with job-related stress and resilience when faced with stressful events for principals. Teachers who indicated that they had access to at least one mental health support were significantly

less likely to report intending to leave their jobs than teachers who did not indicate having access to such supports. Once again, these relationships held across teacher and principal background characteristics.

Our interviews confirm that positive school climates—particularly positive adult relationships—were key sources of job satisfaction and reasons many teachers stay. As one teacher said, “It’s [the reason I stay:] the school climate. I have good relationships with my administrators. . . . I work with teachers from different grade levels—I know everyone . . . we have relationships built. That makes a big difference.” Another factor linked to positive school climate is staff engagement with school decisionmaking (Goddard, 2001; Schweig, 2014). About one-half of the teachers and three-quarters of the principals in our sample reported that they were actively involved in making decisions in their school or district.

To Reduce Stress, Teachers and Principals Desire the Ability to Focus on Core Job Responsibilities and Build Positive Adult Relationships

Majorities of Teachers and Principals Are Coping Well with Their Job-Related Stress and Intend to Stay in Their Current Jobs

Although many teachers and principals reported experiencing poor well-being and difficult working conditions, it is also the case that many educators reported coping well with their job-related stress, intending to stay in their jobs, and finding joy in their work, even during these difficult times. More

Many educators are coping well with their job-related stress, intend to stay in their jobs, and find joy in their work, even during these difficult times.

than two-thirds of teachers and principals who reported experiencing frequent job-related stress reported that they were coping well. Teachers' and principals' ability to cope with job-related stress did not significantly differ across their demographic characteristics or the characteristics of the schools in which they worked.

About two-thirds of principals and one-half of teachers reported that they felt resilient to stressful events, with similar rates of resilience among principals (65 percent) and teachers (60 percent) who reported experiencing frequent job-related stress. Female teachers were less likely than male teachers to report feeling resilient to stressful events, and principals in urban schools and elementary schools were less likely to report resilience than their peers in nonurban and secondary schools.

Moreover, about two-thirds of teachers and principals said that they were unlikely to leave their current jobs before the end of the school year. Of course, as we discussed in the prior section, some educators who report intending to stay in their jobs do decide to resign, just as some who intend to resign do not do so. And some educators who stay in their jobs might do so because they feel they have no other choice.

Our qualitative data shed some light on strategies that helped educators cope with their job-related stress and remain in their current jobs. Principals and teachers both reported that positive school environments and strong relationships with their colleagues were sources of support in stressful times. Most of the teachers we interviewed who discussed coping strategies described efforts to maintain work-life balance—such as by not taking work home—while a few sought professional therapy. Many teachers we interviewed (even those who were stressed about their jobs) emphasized that they love teaching. For many of these teachers, it is the context in which they are teaching that is stressful rather than teaching itself. One teacher put it this way: “It has nothing to do with the teaching. I love being in the classroom. I love being with my students, but it has been an exhausting experience.”

Focusing on Core Job Responsibilities, Working Fewer Hours per Week, and Earning More Pay Could Help Keep Teachers and Principals in Their Jobs

We asked the teachers and principals who intended to leave their jobs what would lead them to reconsider. Focusing on core job responsibilities, working fewer hours per week, and earning more pay were top-ranked reasons for principals and teachers (Table 6). Nearly one-half of principals and about one-third of teachers who were considering leaving ranked focusing on core job responsibilities—instructional leadership and instructing students—as one of the top three reasons they would consider staying in their job.¹⁹

The amount of time teachers spend instructing students has declined during the pandemic, while time spent on nonteaching duties (e.g., planning, paperwork) has increased (Jones et al., 2021). Despite the importance of instructional leadership as a core principal responsibility (Grissom, Egalite, and Lindsay, 2021), our survey data suggest that principals have spent less time on instructional leadership during the pandemic. Sixty percent of principals rated having too many duties in addition to instructional leadership as one of their top-three reasons for considering leaving their jobs.

In the survey, teachers' top-ranked reason they might reconsider—which was selected by sixty-three percent—was more pay. Even though most of the teachers who discussed this topic in interviews said that more pay would not necessarily reduce their job-related stress, it could persuade some of them to remain in their jobs. Increasing pay is considered an important policy lever for improving teacher retention, and low pay is often a key factor in teachers' decisions to leave their jobs (Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond, 2017; Diliberti, Schwartz, and Grant, 2021). As one teacher we interviewed said, “We're not paid what we're worth. . . . No one wants to go into this profession because the pay is terrible and the demands are way too much.”

TABLE 6

Top-Ranked Reasons to Stay Among Teachers and Principals Who Said That They Are Likely to Leave Their Jobs

Reasons to Stay	All (%)	White (%)	Person of Color (%)	Black or African American (%)	Hispanic or Latinx (%)	AANHPI (%)	Other (%)
Principals							
Spending more time on activities relating to instructional leadership	46	45	50	42	61	68	47
Working fewer hours per week	42	43	40	39	27	46	56
More teachers or staff (e.g., teaching assistants, paraprofessionals, counselors)	42	43	34	28*	42	22	52
More pay	37	35	43	50	53	38	14*
More support (e.g., coaching, mentoring, professional development)	26	24	31	31	45	32	13
More decisionmaking authority (e.g., fewer district or state directives)	24	22	31	37	19	34	25
Less encroachment of national political issues in the running of my school	21	23	12*	10*	14	22	7
Teachers							
More pay	63	61	69	74*	68	66	51
Spending less time on nonteaching duties (e.g., meetings, paperwork, bus duty)	36	37	32	42	24*	28	35
Smaller class sizes	33	33	31	23	37	27	40
Working fewer hours per week	29	31	24	22	23	28	35

NOTE: This table shows the reasons principals and teachers who were considering leaving their jobs might stay. Respondents were asked to select the top three reasons they would consider staying. For parsimony, the table is restricted only to reasons to stay selected by 20 percent or more principals and teachers as among their top three reasons. Asterisks indicate that the percentage of teachers selecting that source as a top three reason they would consider staying in their jobs is significantly different, at the $p < 0.05$ level, from the percentage of White teachers selecting it as a top reason to leave. Responses shown in this table come from the 478 teachers and 300 principals who indicated that they were either “unlikely to leave before [the COVID-19 pandemic], but likely now” or “likely to leave both before [the COVID-19 pandemic] and now” to the intentions to leave item. Sample sizes for (1) Asian American, Native Hawaiian, or Pacific Islander (AANHPI) teachers, (2) teachers of other races and ethnicities, (3) Black or African American principals, (4) Hispanic or Latinx principals, (5) AANHPI principals, and (6) principals of other races and ethnicities are all less than 100, and these results should be interpreted with caution.

To Make Teaching Less Stressful During the Pandemic, Teachers Asked for Realistic Expectations

Realistic expectations of what teachers and students can accomplish during this time, and the supports to achieve those goals, were the main things that would make pandemic-era teaching less stressful, according to the teachers we interviewed. Although teachers desired realistic expectations and more supports before the pandemic (Greenberg, Brown, and Abenavoli, 2016), most of the teachers we interviewed said that the pandemic has made it more difficult to

do their jobs well. According to one teacher, “COVID has made teaching harder.”

For example, as we have discussed elsewhere in this report, staffing shortages have made it more difficult for teachers to take time off or to maintain their planning periods, and helping students cope with the trauma of the pandemic required more time and training than teachers currently have. Enforcing COVID-19-mitigation policies, such as mask-wearing, was time-consuming and stressful for many teachers we interviewed. One teacher said, “In all of my 29 years, I have never felt like my plate has been so full.”

Repairing educator well-being is essential for pandemic recovery and for the long-term health of the principal and teacher workforce.

When asked what supports for coping with job-related stress would be most helpful, teachers cited supports and resources to manage students' behavioral, social, emotional, and academic challenges, as well as more time for planning and rest. Many teachers we interviewed also desired more staff—such as paraprofessionals, teaching assistants, behavioral interventionists, and even parent volunteers—both schoolwide and in their classrooms.

Implications

Our results indicate that teacher and principal well-being in the third school year of the COVID-19 pandemic is poor. Teachers and principals who are people of color or female and mid-career teachers reported experiencing worse well-being than their peers. Twenty percent of principals and 35 percent of teachers reported that they did not have access to employer-provided mental health supports or did not know whether they had such access. For many principals and teachers, the supports to which they did have access were not helpful or convenient or were too limited to address their needs.

Principals and teachers reported a host of job-related stressors—including worries about student academic achievement and well-being, poor student behavior, and staffing concerns—some of which were salient before the pandemic, while others are unique to the pandemic era. Principals and teachers of color reported similar job-related stressors to those of their White colleagues and similar access to mental health

supports from their employers. Racial discrimination, however, was more commonly experienced by educators of color. About half of teachers and principals of color reported experiencing racial discrimination, most of which came from either their colleagues or family members of students.

Moreover, educators who experienced poor well-being were more likely to indicate that they intended to leave their jobs. Poor well-being and adverse working conditions were largely linked to educators' intentions to leave since the beginning of the pandemic, but not before. These patterns held for teachers and principals of color and for their White peers. Taken together, we interpret these findings as indications of the many ways in which pandemic-era teaching conditions have eroded principal and teacher well-being.

The link between well-being and intentions to leave provides a compelling reason to address the working conditions that are related to well-being. Doing so could improve educator retention and encourage new educators to join the profession. However, positive educator well-being should be an end in and of itself. Poor well-being is linked to a variety of negative physical and mental health outcomes. It is also linked to lower levels of professional engagement and absenteeism, which have negative effects on students. Thus, repairing educator well-being is essential for pandemic recovery and for the long-term health of the principal and teacher workforce.

Although it is not clear how the pandemic will continue to evolve and affect schools in the future, there may be actions that could alleviate some of these stressors in the short term. Some of the working conditions that are linked to poor well-being—notably racial discrimination of teachers of color—were concerns prior to the pandemic. They might have been exacerbated by pandemic-era political tensions and should be addressed with haste.

Despite the prevalence of reported job-related stress and concerning signals about educator well-being, it is clear from our data that many educators are managing their stress and find joy in their work. Large majorities of teachers and principals—about 75 percent—reported that they are coping well with the stress of their jobs. About two-thirds of principals and one-half of teachers reported that they feel resilient to stressful events. Black or African American

teachers were slightly more likely to report feeling resilient.

According to the teachers and principals in our samples, positive school environments and strong relationships with colleagues were key sources of support in these stressful times. Although many of the teachers we interviewed were stressed about their jobs, they emphasized that they love teaching. Many of these teachers shared that their teaching conditions—rather than the work teaching itself—are what they find to be stressful.

We offer three recommendations for district leaders and education policymakers. Although this report focuses on principals' and teachers' well-being during the 2021–2022 school year—the third school year of the COVID-19 pandemic—we recognize that job-related stress and challenging working conditions predate the pandemic and will continue to evolve as the country recovers.

Alleviate Educators' Sources of Job-Related Stress

District leaders should take action to alleviate principals' and teachers' top sources of job-related stress, where possible, in ways that allow teachers and principals to focus on their core job responsibilities of instructing students and instructional leadership. District leaders could, for example, expand tutoring programs, invest in summer school, or hire additional staff (e.g., paraprofessionals or teaching assistants) to assist with small-group or individual instruction. Although tutoring programs can be difficult to implement on a large scale, recruiting high school or college students or volunteers might be a cost-effective strategy for implementation at scale (Kraft and Falken, 2021; Kraft et al., forthcoming).

Although hiring for certain teaching and staff positions might be difficult in the short term, district leaders should consider ways to expedite hiring to fill positions, along with long-term strategies for developing local talent, such as partnerships or “grow-your-own” programs (Huguet et al., 2021). As possible, district leaders could consider hiring more support staff—such as counselors, behavioral interventionists, or nurses—to help teachers address stu-

District leaders should avoid the appearance of treating wellness as a superficial or short-term problem.

dent behavior and mental health concerns and more teaching assistants or paraprofessionals to provide more adult support in the classroom. A unique choice experiment suggests that hiring additional staff is a strategy highly valued by teachers and, depending on the role, can be a cost-effective strategy (Lovison and Mo, 2022).

Offer Mental Health and Well-Being Supports That Are Tailored to Educators' Needs

Our findings suggest that access to employer-provided mental health supports is linked to lower levels of job-related stress and higher levels of resilience for principals and teachers. Although majorities of principals and teachers reported access to some mental health supports through their employers, large minorities reported no access to such supports and about one in ten did not know whether they had such access. Districts that do offer such supports should (1) ensure that teachers and principals know about them and (2) address barriers to access that are relevant in their districts, such as long wait times for counseling sessions. Districts that do not offer mental health or well-being supports should consider doing so. In the absence of employer-provided supports, the onus is on educators to seek out their own supports.

District leaders should also avoid the appearance of treating wellness as a superficial or short-term problem (Santoro and Price, 2021). Involving teachers and principals in the design of mental health and well-being supports is critical because educators' needs, and the supports that they perceive to be help-

ful, will vary. For example, teachers and principals who identify as people of color, female teachers and principals, or mid-career teachers—groups that reported less positive well-being—could have different needs or preferences for support than their peers.

Develop Positive Adult Relationships and Supportive Environments Within School Communities

We found that working conditions indicative of supportive environments—such as being actively involved in decisionmaking and supervisor support—were linked with better well-being and with a decreased likelihood of leaving. Teachers and principals both described positive relationships with their colleagues as mental health supports that helped them cope with the stress of their jobs. At the same time, teachers of color who experienced racial discrimination reported that their colleagues were often the source, and principals of color reported that family members of students were often the source, although we do not know how many individuals were responsible for these actions.

District and school leaders cannot expect that staff will organically build positive relationships with each other and with the other adults in their school community. Teachers of color in particular can sometimes feel isolated, particularly when working in an environment where they do not share a racial identity with most other staff (Patrick and Santelli, 2022). Our interviews with teachers demonstrate that the climate of their schools—which is often set by school administrators—can dictate whether racial differences become a point of tension and conflict or a source of celebration and comfort.

Many district and school leaders already work hard to build supportive environments and should build on their success. Leaders who have not made adult relationships a priority could consider transfer-

ring the strategies they use to build positive student-staff relationships to focus on adults (Turnaround for Children, 2020b). They might also consider actions that could foster camaraderie among staff—such as intentional opportunities for social interactions or assigned seating during staff meetings—to foster relationships among different groups of staff, along with actions that could build relationships among staff and family members of students—such as parent volunteering—that might have been suspended during the pandemic.

Addressing instances of harassment about politicized topics and racial discrimination in schools is likely to be challenging. Professional learning opportunities to help teachers and principals reflect on their own cultural lenses and biases are rare and are not a strong focus of most principals' training experiences (Doan et al., 2022; Woo et al., 2022). Our interviews suggest that such professional learning cannot stand on its own but requires strong relationships for educators to feel comfortable enough to learn from each other.

In conclusion, we urge education leaders and policymakers to recognize that improving educator well-being is a system-level effort. Many of the recommendations we suggest in this report are directed to district and school leaders, who are themselves experiencing high levels of job-related stress or other indicators of poor well-being. Although district leaders might be in the best position to address educator well-being in their districts, we call on other stakeholders, such as state education agencies or organizations providing technical assistance, to provide districts with guidance on strategies to strengthen educator well-being that they can adapt for their local contexts (Turnaround for Children, 2020a; Greater Good in Education, undated). This support might also involve providing opportunities for districts to network and share promising practices.

Notes

¹ Although teacher turnover often has negative effects on student achievement, some scholars have argued that turnover can have positive effects on student achievement in cases in which ineffective teachers are the ones leaving (Borman and Dowling, 2008).

² Sue et al. (2007, p. 273) defines *racial microaggressions* as “brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, and environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults to the target person or group.”

³ Because this report updates our 2021 SoT findings, we recycle some text from that report when we describe our methods (Steiner and Woo, 2021).

⁴ Although this research did not directly address the impacts of the omicron spike in January 2022 on schools, another important piece of context for this research is that the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on schools and communities vary considerably. Schools and communities that are experiencing poverty and in which large proportions of Black and Brown individuals reside were disproportionately negatively affected by increases in COVID-19 case rates (National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences, undated).

⁵ We administered parallel sets of questions to teachers and principals about well-being, working conditions, and intentions to leave, with minor wording changes to reflect differences in role. We used the same questions as those in the 2021 SoT survey to facilitate comparisons where possible.

⁶ The wording of the ALP questions was the same as that of the questions in the SoT and SoP surveys, with minor wording changes (e.g., “your job” instead of “your teaching job”).

⁷ We intentionally sampled teachers who indicated that they were considering leaving their current teaching job, who indicated that they were not coping well with their job-related stress but were not planning to leave their job, or who reported frequent job-related stress but were coping well with their job-related stress and were not planning to leave their job.

⁸ We examined teacher and principal survey responses for differences by the following respondent characteristics: gender (male or female) and race and ethnicity (White; Black or African American; Hispanic or Latinx; Asian American, Native Hawaiian, or Pacific Islander [AANHPI]; other race or ethnicity; and person of color). We also examined survey responses by the following school characteristics: locale (urban or not urban), high poverty (which we define as schools in which more than 50 percent of enrolled students received free or reduced-price meals), and majority students of color (which we define as schools in which more than 50 percent of enrolled students are identified as non-White).

⁹ In this report, *frequent job-related stress* refers to the percentage of respondents who indicated “often” or “always” to the following question: “Since the beginning of the 2021–2022 school year, how often has your work been stressful?” We determined that teachers experienced *difficulty in coping well with job-related stress* if teachers responded “1 (not well at all)” or “2” on a five-point scale in response to the question, “How well are you coping with the stress of your job right now?” *Symptoms of depression* refers to the percentage of respondents with Patient Health Ques-

tionnaire-2 (PHQ-2) scores of 3 or above. PHQ-2 scores were determined by asking respondents to use a scale of 0 = not at all, 1 = several days, 2 = more than half the days, and 3 = nearly every day to report the frequency of the following events: (1) little interest or pleasure in doing things, and (2) feeling down, depressed, or hopeless (Kroenke, Spitzer, and Williams, 2003). We calculated a PHQ-2 score for each respondent by summing their values across both items, resulting in a minimum score of zero (i.e., a respondent selecting “not at all” for both items) to six (i.e., a respondent selecting “nearly every day” for both items). *Burnout* refers to the percentage of teachers who selected “somewhat agree” or “strongly agree” to at least two of the following four statements: (1) “The stress and disappointments involved in [my job] aren’t really worth it,” (2) “I don’t seem to have as much enthusiasm now as I did when I began [my job],” (3) “I look forward to [my job] in the future,” (4) “I am glad I selected [my job] as a career.” Statements 3 and 4 were reverse-coded so the directionality of the items was consistent. We defined *resilience* as the percentage of respondents who indicated that they “agree” or “strongly agree” to both of the following statements: (1) “I tend to bounce back quickly after hard times” and (2) “It does not take me long to recover from a stressful event.”

¹⁰ Teachers in schools that served large percentages of students of color were more likely to rank taking on extra work because of staff shortages among their top three stressors than teachers who worked in schools that served smaller percentages of students of color. Male teachers were more likely to rank managing student behavior as one of their top three stressors than female teachers were.

¹¹ We asked about the following mental health and well-being supports in the SoT and SoP surveys: employee assistance programs; mental health care services, such as counseling; wellness activities, such as yoga, mindfulness, or meditation; explicit, sincere encouragement and support from school or district leaders to use paid time off for mental health days; and school-based peer support groups. Respondents were instructed to select all that applied or select one of the following responses: “There are no mental health supports available to me” or “I don’t know.” In the survey, we defined an employee assistance program (EAP) as a confidential service typically provided by employers to employees. EAPs are often phone-based services: The employee calls the service, describes the concern, and is connected with a counselor or other professional.

¹² The survey question about discrimination based on race or ethnicity was composed of the following six items: “People acted as though they were uncomfortable approaching me because of my race or ethnicity;” “Because of my race or ethnicity, people assumed that I am a foreigner;” “I have experienced online or in-person harassment (emotional, verbal, or physical) at my school because of my race or ethnicity;” “I have experienced verbal or nonverbal microaggressions at my school because of my race or ethnicity;” “I have been singled out to perform additional tasks (e.g., lead discussions of diversity, counsel students) at my school because of my race or ethnicity;” and “I am held to a different set of standards and expectations than my peers because of my race or ethnicity.”

¹³ Current secondary data on the racial and ethnic composition of teaching staff and school leaders were not available, so we asked teachers and principals to report the percentage of the teaching staff in their buildings who were people of color (i.e.,

none, 1–25 percent, 26–50 percent, 51–75 percent, 76–100 percent). We also asked teachers to report the race and ethnicity of their school principals. We recognize that these are imperfect measures because they are self-reports that ask respondents to make assumptions about the racial and ethnic identities of their colleagues.

¹⁴ Teachers of color who reported that their school administrator shared their racial/ethnic identity were less likely to report experiencing racial discrimination than were teachers of color who reported that their administrator did not share their racial or ethnic identity (a difference of 14 percentage points). Similarly, teachers and principals of color who reported that more than 50 percent of the teachers in their school were people of color were less likely to report experiencing racial discrimination than teachers and principals of color who reported that less than 50 percent of the teachers in their school were people of color (differences of 18 percentage points for teachers and 26 percentage points for principals).

¹⁵ We measured intentions to leave with the following question: “What is the likelihood that you will leave your job at your school by the end of the current school year (2021–2022), compared with the likelihood you would have left your job before the COVID-19 pandemic?” Responses were: “Likely to leave before the COVID-19 pandemic, but unlikely now;” “Unlikely to leave before, but likely now;” “Likely to leave both before and now;” and “Unlikely to leave both before and now.” We present responses for teachers and principals who said that they were likely to leave at all, likely to leave both before and since the COVID-19 pandemic, and likely to leave only since the COVID-19 pandemic.

¹⁶ We did not regress the indicators of well-being onto themselves.

¹⁷ We asked teachers and principals about how likely they were to leave their current teaching or principal job before the end of the 2021–2022 school year. This question intentionally aims to capture any departure and does not distinguish among the many nuances of why educators might leave their job (e.g., voluntary or involuntary departures) or whether the departure results in the respondent taking a new teaching or principal position or leaving the profession entirely.

¹⁸ We were able to compare the survey responses of roughly 800 principals who are members of the ASLP and who answered a survey question about their intention to leave their principal jobs before the end of the 2020–2021 school year with Dun & Bradstreet data on actual principal turnover. The wording of this fall 2020 survey question was the same as that used in the 2022 SoP survey (Kaufman et al., 2020). Twelve percent of principals who responded that they did not intend to leave actually did leave before the end of the 2020–2021 school year.

¹⁹ The teacher survey item was “spending less time on non-teaching duties” and the principal item was “spending more time on instructional leadership.”

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About This Report

In this report, we draw on January 2022 surveys of teachers from the American Teacher Panel (ATP) and surveys of principals from the American School Leader Panel (ASLP). The ATP is a nationally representative sample of more than 22,000 teachers across the United States. The ASLP is a nationally representative sample of more than 8,000 principals from across the United States. The ATP and ASLP are two of three survey panels that comprise the American Educator Panels, which are nationally representative samples of teachers, school leaders, and district leaders across the country. For more information about any one of the survey panels, visit www.rand.org/aep.

For technical information about the surveys and analysis in this report, please see *State of the American Teacher and State of the American Principal Surveys: 2022 Technical Documentation and Survey Results* (RR-A1108-3, www.rand.org/t/RR1108-3). If you are interested in using AEP data for your own surveys or analysis or in reading other publications related to the American Educator Panel, please email aep@rand.org or visit www.rand.org/aep.

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