

## Spotlight on Success Seattle Public Schools (Washington, USA)

*District-level work is supported, in part, by the National Association of Chronic Disease Directors through the National Initiative to Advance Health in K-12 Education by Preventing Chronic Disease and Promoting Healthy Behaviors Project.*



### Advancing Staff Well-Being Through Systems-Level Support

Seattle Public Schools (SPS) has taken a thoughtful, coordinated approach to supporting staff well-being by aligning district policies, professional learning, and daily practices to improve staff climate, retention, and culture. The work is grounded in a long-term strategy supported by district leadership, multiple cross-departmental committees, and a clear vision for continuous improvement.

To create lasting change, the district started by establishing regular feedback loops, partnerships, and shared leadership structures. Key strategies included:

- Mini-grants to help schools improve staff lounges, create wellness rooms, and fund care items or release time using substitutes.
- A strong committee infrastructure, including the Employee Mental Health Committee and the District Leadership Team for Staff Wellness, with paid participation for different roles.
- Clear alignment with other district initiatives (e.g., retention and climate surveys) to break down silos.
- Regular data review on retention, Employee Assistance Program (EAP) use, [Smart Health](#) engagement, and staff climate to adjust supports and tell a stronger story of impact.

By creating common tools and processes, the district made it easier for school leaders and staff to access resources and build wellness into their ongoing improvement plans.

SPS offered staff development tied to wellness and relational capacity through events like Time, Responsibility, and Incentive (TRI) Day, [Real Pro](#) (a resilience series offered in partnership with the University of Washington's Center for Child and Family Well-Being), and online learning platforms.



The district also offered curated wellness tools, coaching opportunities, and conflict resolution training to school leaders. Examples included:

- Partnerships with the [Alliance for a Healthier Generation](#), [Space Between](#), and others
- TRI Day sessions on staff connection, managing burnout, and practicing self-regulation

This ongoing professional development helps school and central office staff build more authentic, connected, and emotionally healthy work environments.

SPS knows culture change is about creating a sense of belonging. Through its “Sunshine Committee” and broader district recognition systems, SPS embedded joy and appreciation into daily life. Examples include:

- Monthly recognitions like the “Beacon of Hope” awards and themed celebrations like “Most Valuable Team Player”
- Internal newsletters with space for peer shout-outs, team accomplishments, and celebration of staff culture

These efforts supported both social connectedness and shared leadership, giving voice to the full range of school and central office staff. Seattle Public Schools is showing what’s possible when staff wellness is not an add-on but a core part of district infrastructure — a culture where wellbeing is truly led by all.

*This project is supported by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) as part of a financial assistance award totaling \$400,000 with 100 percent funded by CDC/HHS. The contents are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of, nor an endorsement, by CDC/HHS, or the U.S. Government.*



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