



# Managing Stress and Nurturing Resilience

## Exploring the Potential of Stress Management Workshops to Help Early Childhood Educators

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**H**aving a qualified, stable, and healthy workforce is a critical component of a thriving early care and education (ECE) system. However, ECE educators—especially those who are women of color—have long encountered low wages and a lack of benefits, coupled with a physically demanding and stressful work environment.<sup>1</sup> Burnout and teacher turnover are common in the ECE field, which can make it challenging for child care centers to hire and retain educators and can create an unstable environment for children. During the COVID-19 pandemic, this challenge intensified because educators faced heightened physical, emotional, and financial stress, which highlights a real need for the ECE field to make educator well-being a larger priority.<sup>2</sup> Efforts to strengthen ECE workforce retention and stability—and ultimately improve child well-being and development—should focus on educator psychological well-being, since it is crucial for both.<sup>3</sup>

This brief presents the results of a mixed-methods study—conducted by MDRC and MEF Associates as part of the Expanding Children’s Early Learning (ExCEL) Quality project—that explored the feasibility of offering a series of stress management workshops to educators, educators’ per-



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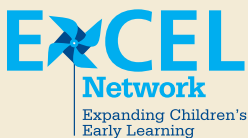
ceptions of those workshops, and the overall mental health and well-being of educators who participated in the study. (See Box 1.) The workshops were offered to educators (that is, teachers and administrators) from Head Start and community-based ECE centers during the 2020-2021 school year, which coincided with the COVID-19 pandemic. The workshops aimed to help educators understand and respond to the many stressors they faced: Workshop topics included the identification of stressors inside and outside the classroom, burnout and compassion fatigue, self-care, and family engagement.

The study was guided by two research questions:

1. How did educators fare during the COVID-19 pandemic (in terms of their mental health and well-being), and what support did centers provide to educators at the time?
2. Did teachers participate in the stress management workshops? If so, what were their perceptions of it?

To answer these questions, the ExCEL Quality team collected workshop attendance data, surveyed teachers and center administrators, and conducted qualitative interviews with center administrators.

### Box 1. The ExCEL Quality Project



Funded by Arnold Ventures and part of the Expanding Children's Early Learning (ExCEL) Network, the ExCEL Quality: Improving Preschool Instruction Through Curricula, Coaching, and Training project was conducted by MDRC in partnership with MEF Associates and RTI International. It aimed to build evidence about the following subjects:

- how different teacher practices and features of classroom quality promote children's learning and development
- whether different types of support are more helpful for strengthening teacher practices and features of classroom quality, for centers and teachers with different levels of readiness

During the 2019-2020 school year, 53 early care and education centers — including both Head Start and community-based child care centers in four metropolitan areas — participated in the project. The centers were randomly assigned to either implement one of two curricular models, supported by ongoing training and coaching on the curriculum, or to continue with "preschool as usual." During the 2020-2021 school year, centers that had originally been assigned to the control group were offered materials for the curriculum of their choice.

## Stress Management Workshops

The ExCEL Quality project provided two types of support to centers during the 2020-2021 school year: stress management workshops and technical assistance for curriculum implementation.<sup>4</sup> This brief focuses on the workshops.

Throughout the 2020-2021 school year, the ExCEL Quality team offered stress management workshops to participating teachers and administrators. The team's decision to focus on stress management was based on results from a prepandemic survey in which center directors indicated that teachers' health and well-being was a priority for them. In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, this priority became even more salient. As such, the workshops were intended to help teachers and administrators understand and respond to the many stressors they faced as ECE educators during the pandemic.

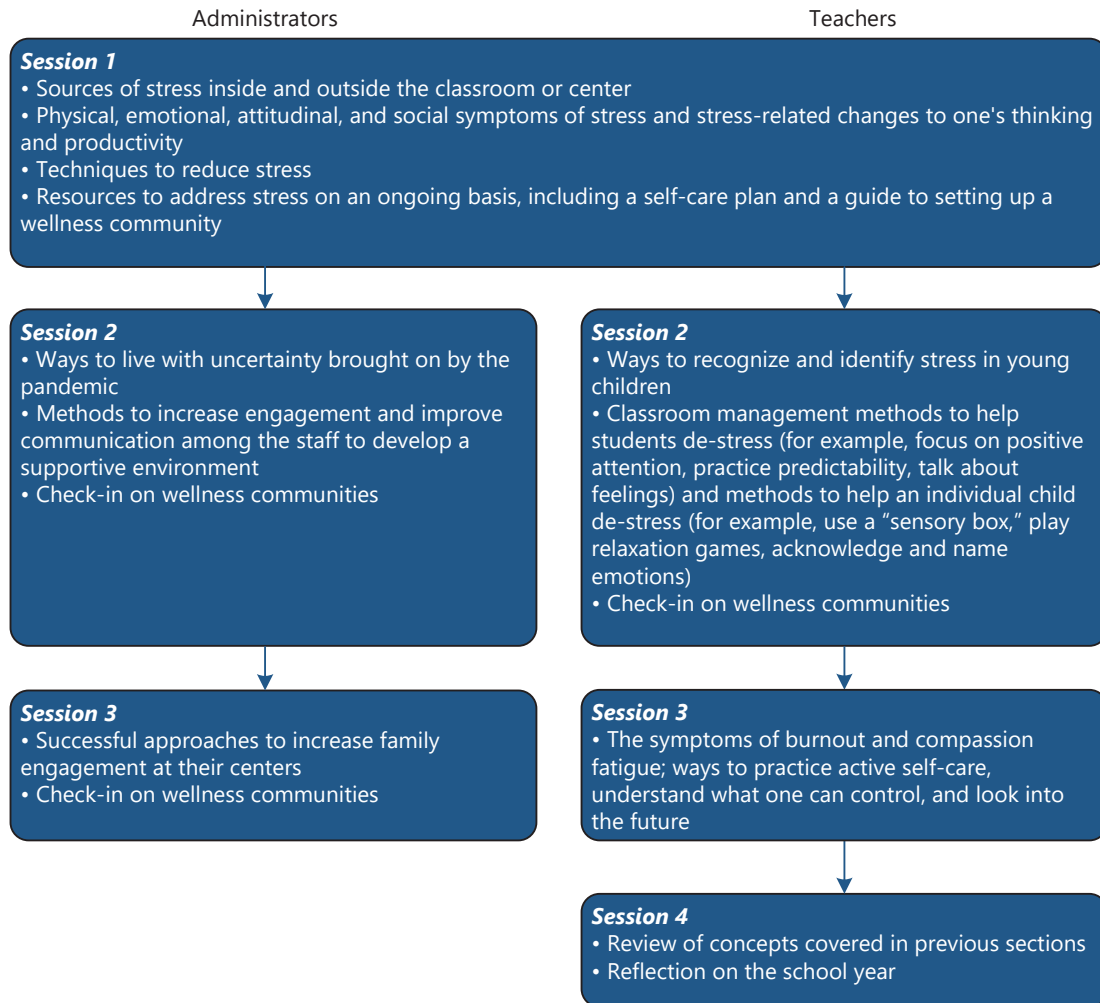
The ExCEL Quality team held four workshops for teachers (in October or November 2020, January 2021, March 2021, and May 2021) and three workshops for administrators (in October or November 2020, January 2021, and March 2021). The workshops were virtual and were an hour long.<sup>5</sup> The team offered more than one date and time for each workshop to accommodate different time zones and center schedules, particularly for teachers. For instance, in the fall, the team hosted workshops for teachers on the 20th, 21st, 22nd, and 24th of October and on the 13th of November, allowing teachers to sign up for the date that worked best for them — either individually or with their fellow staff members. The team also encouraged educators to attend by reminding them in emails and (for administrators) during phone check-ins.

Workshops were led by a member of the research team and were interactive and discussion based. Any ideas offered by teachers during the workshops were compiled and shared with the broader group of participants so that teachers could learn from their peers in other metropolitan areas (for instance, they could see a list of ways to de-stress). During the workshops, educators were encouraged to set up a “wellness community” in their center. Administrators in particular were encouraged to carve out dedicated time and space for staff members to come together to identify work-related stress, share how they were managing it, and get support from one another. At the end of each workshop, participants were invited to stay for an optional “de-stress practice” where the workshop facilitator led the group in a breathing exercise or relaxation technique. Figure 1 outlines the content covered in each stress management workshop.

## Study Design, Sample, and Data Sources

The study took place in 31 community-based ECE centers and Head Start centers during the 2020-2021 school year. Centers were recruited from four metropolitan areas in four states across the United States. Most of the centers had participated in the ExCEL Quality cluster-randomized controlled study of two curricular and professional development models during the previous school year, as described in Box 1.<sup>6</sup>

**Figure 1. Stress Management Workshop Content**



In August 2020, the team contacted all ExCEL Quality centers about the opportunity to receive stress management workshops and to gauge their interest in participating. Out of the original 53 ExCEL Quality centers, 26 agreed to participate in this continuation study. One umbrella organization asked to expand the opportunity to 5 additional centers that had not previously participated in ExCEL Quality, resulting in a total sample of 31 centers: 16 Head Start centers, 13 community-based centers, and 2 centers that had Head Start–child care partnerships.<sup>7</sup>

Center administrators agreed that they would attend curricular technical assistance sessions and that they – and teachers from their centers – would participate in stress management workshops. The team did not provide any curriculum-focused professional development services to teachers during the 2020-2021 school year.

## The Study Sample

The sample consists of 138 lead and assistant teachers and 36 administrators from the 31 centers that were offered the stress management workshops.

Seventy-three percent of the participating teachers reported being in a lead or colead teacher role. Teachers were predominantly female (95 percent) and had diverse racial-ethnic backgrounds (40 percent non-Hispanic Black, 31 percent non-Hispanic White, and 22 percent Hispanic or Latinx).<sup>8</sup> On average, they had 9 years of experience teaching preschoolers, with a minimum of 1 year and a maximum of 45 years. Thirty-six percent had a bachelor's degree or higher and 67 percent had a degree or certificate in ECE.

Center administrators were also predominantly female (97 percent). Fifty-two percent of the administrators were non-Hispanic Black, 29 percent were non-Hispanic White, and 13 percent were Hispanic or Latinx. Thirty-eight percent had a master's degree or higher and 75 percent had a degree in ECE. On average, they had 12 years of experience as administrators (with a minimum of 1 year and a maximum of 40 years) and 7 years of experience teaching preschoolers (with a minimum of 0 years and a maximum of 23 years).

## Data Sources

The data sources used in this brief are qualitative interviews, stress management workshop attendance sheets, and teacher and administrator surveys.

**QUALITATIVE INTERVIEWS.** Between January and June 2021, the research team interviewed 31 administrators from 30 centers.<sup>9</sup> The interviews were conducted via Zoom using a semistructured interview protocol and each administrator was interviewed up to two times. Interview topics included the COVID-19 pandemic's effect on center operations, staffing and staff well-being, family engagement, enrollment, remote and in-person learning, and child interactions.

**WORKSHOP ATTENDANCE SHEETS.** At each stress management workshop, the ExCEL Quality team recorded who was in attendance. The team counted the number of sessions attended by each teacher in the sample. If teachers never appeared on attendance sheets, they were assumed to have attended zero sessions.

**TEACHER AND ADMINISTRATOR SURVEYS.** Teachers and administrators completed surveys in November and December 2020 and from April to June 2021. Seventy-eight teachers (68 percent) completed the fall survey and 86 teachers (74 percent) completed the spring survey.<sup>10</sup> Twenty-seven administrators (87 percent) completed the fall survey and 24 administrators (80 percent) completed the spring survey.<sup>11</sup> Both surveys collected information on educator background characteristics, psychological well-being (using scales assessing symptoms of burnout, depression, and anxiety), and social support. The spring survey also collected educators' perceptions of the stress management workshops.

## Findings

This brief describes two overarching topics associated with the research questions: (1) the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on educators' mental health and well-being at the time of the study and the types of support centers were providing, and (2) teachers' participation in and perception of the stress management workshops.

### ECE Educator Well-Being

Data on educators' well-being came from two sources: teacher surveys and interviews with center administrators.

#### Teachers' Reports of Their Well-Being

In fall 2020, teachers completed several widely used and validated measures of mental health via the teacher surveys, reporting on their symptoms of burnout, depression, and anxiety, and the degree to which they had social support.

Compared with samples of ECE teachers that were collected before the COVID-19 pandemic, teachers in the ExCEL Quality sample generally appeared to report more symptoms of burnout. Burnout was calculated using the emotional exhaustion subscale of the Maslach Burnout Inventory-Educators Survey, in which scores can range from 0 to 54. The average burnout score in the ExCEL Quality sample was 18.2 in the fall of 2020. However, the average burnout score for a sample of Massachusetts teachers in spring 2018 was 11.3; another sample of ECE teachers from three different states, assessed before the pandemic, scored between 9.5 and 11.4.<sup>12</sup>

Similarly, teachers in the ExCEL Quality sample seemed to experience more symptoms of depression. The average depression score for teachers in the fall of 2020 (calculated using the 10-item version of the Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale, in which scores can range from 0 to 30) was 10.1. Average depression scores that were calculated for two samples of center-based ECE teachers before the pandemic — one from a midwestern state and another from a midwestern metropolitan area — were 5.2 and 6.7 respectively.<sup>13</sup> A score of 10 or higher indicates a person has depression.<sup>14</sup> Using this metric, members of the ExCEL Quality sample were depressed, on average, while members of the samples studied before the pandemic were not.

Although the team was not able to find reports on preschool teachers' anxiety before the pandemic that used the anxiety measure collected in this study, the teachers in the ExCEL Quality sample appear to have been more likely to experience symptoms of anxiety than the general population before the pandemic. For example, in a national study from 2019, 84 percent of respondents experienced minimal or no symptoms of anxiety (as calculated using the Generalized Anxiety Disorder 7-item screener), while in the ExCEL Quality sample, only 40 percent of respondents experienced minimal or no symptoms of anxiety.<sup>15</sup>

However, the ExCEL Quality sample members had a similar amount of social support as other samples from before the pandemic. Using the National Institutes of Health Toolbox Social Relationships Scale – in which scores can range from 8 to 40 – the ExCEL Quality sample members’ mean scores for emotional support (having someone available to talk to about problems or for advice) and instrumental support (having someone who could help with daily tasks) were 31.5 and 28.1, respectively. These scores are close to the mean scores found in an Internet panel sample that was designed to be nationally representative in terms of age, race and gender (29.9 and 29.2, respectively).<sup>16</sup>

### Administrator Perceptions of Educator Well-Being

Qualitative interviews with administrators were transcribed and data were coded and analyzed using qualitative analytic methods to identify themes.<sup>17</sup>

Most administrators said that they or their staff experienced stress, anxiety, or other mental health concerns during the 2020-2021 school year, and some administrators mentioned their staff experiencing burnout, distraction, and fatigue. One administrator described how the pandemic amplified the feelings educators already experienced:

Caregiving itself is a very stressful position to be in. It’s quite easy to get burnt-out – even in the best of times, without having to deal with [a] pandemic. And I think that it’s been very difficult for staff members and teachers to not feel that way sooner and easier than they would in any other times.

However, many administrators also reported that they or their staff were doing well when asked about the effect of the pandemic on their well-being and engagement in their work. One administrator said that “overall, [her] staff [were] present and healthy” while another said, “They’ve been pretty good . . . they’ve still been engaged, they’ve been doing their work.” Another administrator described how staff members adapted to the changes brought on by the pandemic:

Overall, I think that the staff adapted very well. I’ll be honest, I was extremely nervous going into the school year with the unknown of how it would look because we are so structured in ritual and how we do things, and then we have to totally modify everything about our day . . . . Parents can’t come in, and we have to keep the children distanced apart, and sanitizing everything throughout the day. . . . But I felt like that anxiety was definitely released as the year went [on] . . . it felt okay, it felt normal, to be kind of frank. . . . The children adapted [to] wearing masks all day. The staff adapted . . . we all adapted very well.

### Stressors Experienced by Educators

Administrators described four main stressors for staff members at their centers.

- **THE PANDEMIC.** The most common stressor was the COVID-19 pandemic. Staff members were worried about the unknown, experienced constant changes caused by the pandemic, or were concerned about catching the virus.

- **INCREASED RESPONSIBILITIES.** Some administrators mentioned that staffing shortages and role changes were a source of stress. They had to take on new roles, more work, or additional responsibilities outside their normal jobs and deal with understaffing and turnover. Others described the burden of additional paperwork, management, and cleaning.
- **VIRTUAL LEARNING AND REMOTE WORK.** Some staff members were stressed about virtual teaching and juggling work-life balance while working from home, which ECE teachers and administrators had not typically done before the pandemic. Parents had to balance the time spent managing their children's care and virtual learning at home with their own work, and others who did not have much experience engaging with technology needed to learn a new way of teaching.
- **REDUCED PEER-TO-PEER ENGAGEMENT.** Some administrators said that social distancing requirements and quarantining had a negative effect on themselves or their staff. Reducing or eliminating in-person engagement with children, parents, or other staff members was stressful for educators, particularly when they were used to frequently engaging with parents and working closely with children.

Aside from COVID-related stressors, a few administrators said that educators typically also dealt with restless children and end-of-year burnout.

### Support for Educators

Administrators discussed the informal and formal support that their centers provided to educators during the study to bolster their well-being. Many administrators said colleagues supported one another in several ways, such as listening to and empathizing with others, picking up shifts for others, helping with tasks, and offering words of encouragement. One administrator said,

One of the things that I've just tried to do is just be there for the teaching staff, hear them out. Let them know that I'm there for them and empathizing and sympathizing with them, and allowing them to have their human moments. Letting them know that I'm human as well, and that I get it, and I understand. And just being there to offer their support to them—I think that's really important.

Many administrators also said their centers provided activities and perks to support mental and physical health, such as yoga classes, mindfulness courses, treats or meals, and fun activities or excursions. Other centers offered training sessions on mental health. In addition to this support, some administrators mentioned their centers offered access to therapists or other mental health consultants.

Something else our agency did this year was they really . . . focused on the mental health of the staff, as well as the children and families. But we have every month where staff can sign up to get mental health consultation from one of our partners. And it's completely confidential, they can go during work hours, so they don't have to feel like . . . they don't have to take off work to do it. It's just a little bit of time during your work hours, where at work, we provide a place for you to go.



Some administrators said that their center established policies and procedures that encouraged staff members to take time off when they were sick or feeling burnt-out, use their paid time off, and take breaks when needed. Some administrators also said that their center adjusted schedules to support staff well-being by extending breaks, providing extended paid leave, shortening the center's hours, and closing when there were COVID exposures. A few administrators said that reduced enrollment and smaller class sizes helped staff members' well-being by allowing teachers to focus their energy on a smaller group of children.

## Participation in and Perceptions of the Stress Management Workshops

Most teachers attended one or more stress management workshops. Of the 138 lead and assistant teachers who were invited to participate in all four stress management workshops, 72.5 percent attended at least one.<sup>18</sup> More than one-half of teachers (55.8 percent) attended one or two of the available workshops, while a smaller subset (16.7 percent) attended three or four. Teachers attended, on average, 1.3 workshops. There was a drop-off in attendance over time; the first workshop had the highest attendance rate (50.7 percent), and the final workshop had the lowest attendance rate (17.4 percent).

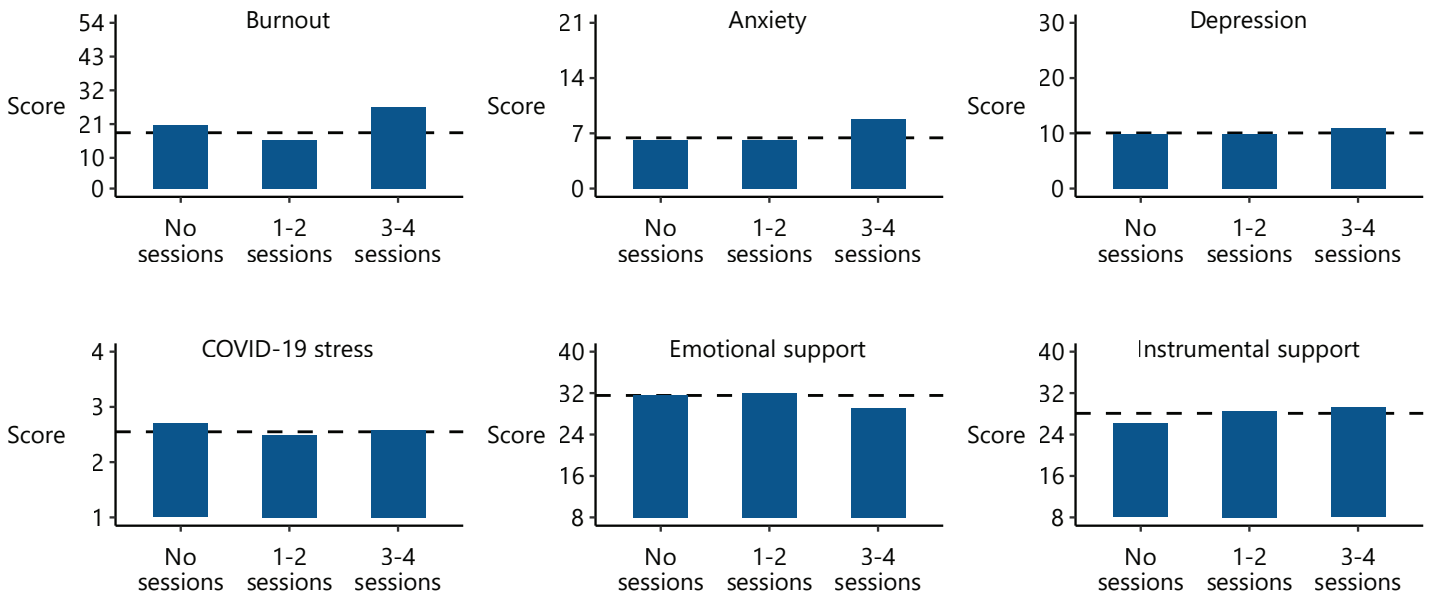
Notably, teachers who attended three or four stress management workshops appear to report, on average, higher burnout, anxiety, and depression scores in the fall than teachers who attended fewer workshops. (See Figure 2.) For example, teachers who attended no workshops and teachers who attended some workshops reported an average anxiety score of 6.1 (out of a potential total of 21 on the Generalized Anxiety Disorder 7-item screener), while teachers who attended most of the workshops reported an average anxiety score of 8.8. These findings suggest that the teachers who had reported worse psychological well-being in the fall — as assessed by measures of burnout, anxiety, and depression — had been potentially more in need of the stress management workshops and appeared to make a greater effort to attend them.

Teachers who attended most of the workshops had reported that they had slightly less emotional support, but slightly more instrumental support, than teachers who attended some or no workshops. It may be that teachers who had reported having less emotional support were looking to get it from the workshops and therefore attended more of them. And teachers who had more instrumental support might have had more time to attend the workshops.

### Educator Perceptions of Stress Management Workshops

Both teachers and administrators had positive perceptions of the workshops and of the strategies and tools that were provided. Using a five-point agreement scale, 80.6 percent of teachers stated they agreed or strongly agreed that the workshop information was helpful (not shown) and 77.6 percent of teachers said they agreed or strongly agreed that they had used strategies and tools provided in the workshops. (See Figure 3.) Administrators had even more positive views about the workshops, with 94.4 percent stating they agreed or strongly agreed that the workshop information was helpful (not shown) and 83.3 percent stating they agreed or strongly agreed that they had used strategies and tools provided in the workshops.

**Figure 2. Average Psychological Well-Being, Stress, and Support Scores for Teachers in Fall 2020, by Participation Rate**



SOURCE: Fall teacher survey and workshop attendance sheets.

NOTES: In each chart, the dashed line represents the average score among all attendance groups.

The burnout score is the sum of nine items from the emotional exhaustion subscale of the Maslach Burnout Inventory-Educators Survey. Possible scores range from 0 to 54.

The anxiety score is the sum of seven items from the Generalized Anxiety Disorder seven-item screener. Possible scores range from 0 to 21.

The depression score is the sum of 10 items from the Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale. Possible scores range from 0 to 30.

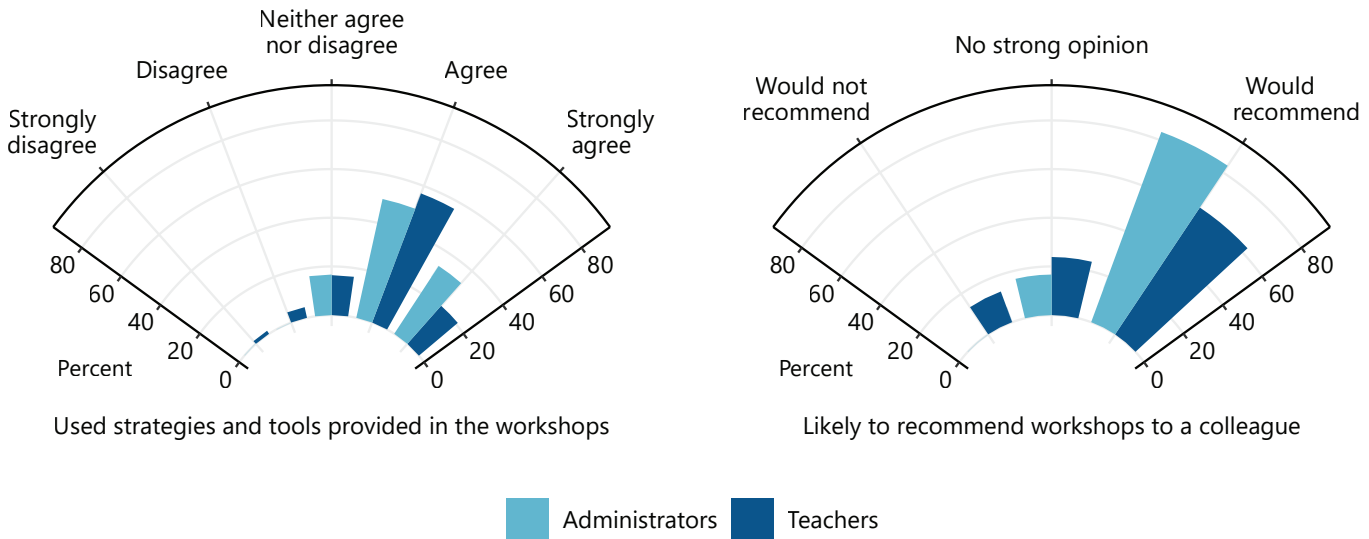
The COVID-19 stress score is the mean of seven items from the PEER COVID-19 ECE Family Survey. Possible scores range from 1 to 4.

The emotional support score is the sum of eight items from the National Institutes of Health Toolbox Social Relationships Scale. Possible scores range from 8 to 40.

The instrumental support score is the sum of eight items from the National Institutes of Health Toolbox Social Relationships Scale. Possible scores range from 8 to 40.

Teachers and administrators were asked in the spring surveys whether they would recommend the stress management workshops to a colleague. Sixty-seven teachers and 18 administrators responded with a number that indicated how likely they were to recommend the workshops, ranging from 0 (“extremely unlikely”) to 10 (“extremely likely”). Responses to this question are shown in Figure 3. Sixty-three percent of teachers chose a number from 7 to 10, indicating a high likelihood that they would recommend the workshops to a colleague. Administrators were more positive, with 83.3 percent choosing a number from 7 to 10, and the remaining 16.7 percent choosing between 4 and 6.

**Figure 3. Teacher and Administrator Perceptions of the Stress Management Workshops**



SOURCE: Spring teacher and administrator surveys.

NOTE: Teachers and administrators were asked whether they used the strategies and tools provided in the workshops using a five-point agreement scale that ranged from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree.” They were also asked how likely they were to recommend the workshops to a colleague, using an 11-point agreement scale that ranged from 0 (“extremely unlikely”) to 10 (“extremely likely”). Educators who chose a number from 0 to 3 were categorized as “would not recommend,” educators who chose a number from 4 to 6 were categorized as “no strong opinion,” and educators who chose a number from 7 to 10 were categorized as “would recommend.”

### Wellness Communities

The spring survey asked administrators and teachers about their experiences creating a wellness community, since the workshops provided guidance for setting one up; 16 administrators and 78 teachers responded. Using a five-point agreement scale, 68.8 percent of the administrators agreed or strongly agreed that they had created a wellness community. However, only 48.7 percent of teachers who responded to that survey item agreed that a wellness community had been created in their center. Of those teachers, 52.6 percent stated that they had often or always participated in their wellness community and 34.2 percent stated they had participated sometimes. Additionally, 63.2 percent of those teachers reported that the wellness community was either very or extremely helpful while 21.1 percent said it was moderately helpful.

### Conclusion

It is well known that educators in the ECE workforce have historically experienced stressful, low-paying jobs and that the COVID-19 pandemic only exacerbated these circumstances, particu-

larly in the first school year following the start of the pandemic.<sup>19</sup> Interviews with administrators during this time period paint a relatively bleak picture of the burnout, fatigue, stress, and anxiety experienced by many educators, which was corroborated by teachers' responses in widely used measures of psychological well-being. Administrators pointed to specific pandemic-related stressors like having fewer opportunities to engage with others due to social distancing or quarantining and increased responsibilities like cleaning more and facilitating remote learning. Administrators highlighted some bright spots, though, showing that their staff members' experiences of and reactions to these stressors varied. Further, many centers appeared to pay close attention to educators' psychological well-being by providing informal support like time to talk or vent and formal support like access to mental health consultants.

It is within this context that the ExCEL Quality team provided a series of stress management workshops to both teachers and center administrators, with the goal of helping educators navigate the especially challenging 2020-2021 school year. Although the workshops were implemented with a small sample of ECE centers, the findings suggest they are a promising way to support ECE educators. On average, teachers attended at least one session. Teachers who had reported lower well-being scores early in the school year tended to be more likely to attend. Most teachers thought the workshop information was beneficial, reported using the strategies and tools that were provided as part of the workshops, and were likely to recommend the workshops to a colleague. Collectively, these findings suggest that teachers are interested in attending virtual stress management workshops like the kind that were provided in this study, especially teachers who are struggling with their psychological well-being. These results are important given the literature demonstrating a clear need to promote the well-being of the ECE workforce, and research showing that more emotionally exhausted and stressed teachers are likely to have lower-quality interactions with children.<sup>20</sup>

During the stress management workshops, educators were advised to create a wellness community within their centers. Interestingly, although many of the administrators who were interviewed talked about providing informal support that was in line with the creation of a wellness community, in the spring survey only about one-half of teachers and two-thirds of administrators said they thought their center did indeed create such a community. Most of those teachers thought it was at least moderately helpful. Together, these findings suggest that administrators needed more explicit support in the workshops to create an active wellness community.

Future research with larger samples is needed to formally evaluate the implementation and effectiveness of stress management workshops like the ones provided here. This study shows that a series of stress management workshops have the potential to be one component to building a qualified, healthy, and stable ECE workforce.

## Notes and References

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2. Mark Nagasawa, “COVID-19 and Early Childhood Workforce Emotional Well-Being: An Exploratory Investigation,” paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (April 9, 2021); Nancy L. Swigonski, Brandy James, Whitley Wynns, and Kara Casavan, “Physical, Mental, and Financial Stress Impacts of COVID-19 on Early Childhood Educators,” *Early Childhood Education Journal* 49, 5 (2021): 799–806.
3. Tamara Cumming, “Early Childhood Educators’ Well-Being: An Updated Review of the Literature,” *Early Childhood Education Journal* 45, 5 (2017): 583–593; Kyong-Ah Kwon, Shinyoung Jeon, Lieny Jeon, Sherri Castle, “The Role of Teachers’ Depressive Symptoms in Classroom Quality and Child Developmental Outcomes in Early Head Start Programs,” *Learning and Individual Differences* 74, 101,748 (2019); Rapid Survey Project, “Who Is Providing for Child Care Providers?” (website: <https://rapidsurveyproject.com/our-research/who-is-providing-for-child-care-providers>, 2021); Katherine M. Zinsser, Craig S. Bailey, Timothy W. Curby, Susanne A. Denham, and Hideko H. Bassett, “Exploring the Predictable Classroom: Preschool Teacher Stress, Emotional Supportiveness, and Students’ Social-Emotional Behavior in Private and Head Start Classrooms,” *HS Dialog: The Research to Practice Journal for the Early Childhood Field* 16, 2 (2013): 90–108.
4. Concurrently, during the 2020-2021 school year, the ExCEL Quality team offered center administrators ongoing technical assistance with curriculum implementation, which had been the focus of a curricular and professional development intervention that most of the centers in the study had received the previous year. The goal of the technical assistance was to support centers’ ability to continue implementing the curricular models in their classrooms. Administrators were offered monthly curriculum support workshops on how to best support classroom management and children’s learning through curriculum implementation, as well as optional office hours to receive technical assistance between workshops.
5. The first workshop session for administrators was one and a half hours long.
6. For more information on the ExCEL Quality study, see Amy Taub, Michelle Maier, and JoAnn Hsueh, “Changes in Preschool Classroom Quality: The Timing of Rating Matters” (New York: MDRC, 2023).
7. Head Start centers receive funding from the Administration of Children and Families to carry out the Head Start program, which aims to support children’s development and growth by providing services that are focused on early learning and development, health, and family well-being. Community-based centers are stand-alone child care centers set up in the community that are neither school-based nor Head Start-based. In some cases, Head Start centers may partner with community-based centers to allocate some Head Start seats to providers in the community through Head Start–child care partnerships.
8. The Office of Management and Budget defines “Hispanic or Latino” as a person of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin regardless of race. In recent years, some research publications and other sources have started using “Hispanic or Latinx” as a gender-neutral reference to this population.

9. One of the 31 centers that participated in the ExCEL Quality study did not have a center administrator at the time of the interviews, so only 30 centers are represented by the interviews. Two different administrators were interviewed from another center due to staff changes between the first and second interviews, resulting in the ExCEL Quality team interviewing 31 center administrators.
10. The denominator used to calculate response rates is the number of teachers who were invited to participate in the survey. In the fall, 115 teachers were invited to take the survey; in the spring, 117 teachers were invited.
11. The denominator used to calculate response rates is the number of administrators who were invited to participate in the survey. The number of administrators who were invited to participate was slightly lower than the number of centers in the study. In the fall, 31 administrators were invited to take the survey; in the spring, 30 administrators were invited.
12. See Madelyn Gardner, Emily C. Hanno, Stephanie M. Jones, and Nonie K. Lesaux, “Exploring Early Educator Burnout and Process Quality in a Statewide Sample,” *Journal of School Psychology* 99 (2023): 101,214; Amy M. Roberts, Jennifer LoCasale-Crouch, Bridget K. Hamre, and Faiza M. Jamil, “Preschool Teachers’ Self-Efficacy, Burnout, and Stress in Online Professional Development: A Mixed Methods Approach to Understand Change,” *Journal of Early Childhood Teacher Education* 41, 3 (2020): 262–283. The mean burnout scores reported in these papers were rescaled to align with the calculation used by the ExCEL Quality team.
13. Amy M. Roberts, Kathleen C. Gallagher, Alexandra M. Daro, Iheoma U. Iruka, and Susan L. Sarver, “Workforce Well-Being: Personal and Workplace Contributions to Early Educators’ Depression Across Settings,” *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology* 61 (2019): 4–12; Kyong-Ah Kwon, Timothy G. Ford, Alicia L. Salvatore, Ken Randall, Lieny Jeon, Adrien Malek-Lasater, Natalie Ellis, Mia S. Kile, Diane M. Horm, Sun Geun Kim, and Minkyung Han, “Neglected Elements of a High-Quality Early Childhood Workforce: Whole Teacher Well-Being and Working Conditions,” *Early Childhood Education Journal* 50, 1 (2022): 157–168.
14. See Thröstur Björgvinsson, Sarah J. Kertz, Joe S. Bigda-Peyton, Katrina L. McCoy, and Idan M. Aderka, “Psychometric Properties of the CES-D-10 in a Psychiatric Sample,” *Assessment* 20, 4 (2013): 429–436. Researchers have also used a cutoff score of 8 to indicate clinical depression using this measure. The statement that scores for the ExCEL Quality sample are above the cutoff while scores for the samples from before the pandemic are below the cutoff, on average, remains the same whether a cutoff of 8 or 10 is used.
15. Emily P. Terlizzi, and Maria A. Villarroel, “Symptoms of Generalized Anxiety Disorder Among Adults: United States, 2019” September (Hyattsville, MD: National Center for Health Statistics, 2020).
16. Jill Cyranowski, Nicholas Zill, Rita Bode, Zeeshan Butt, Morgen Kelly, Paul Pilkonis, John Salsman, and David Cella, “Assessing Social Support, Companionship, and Distress: National Institute of Health (NIH) Toolbox Adult Social Relationship Scales,” *Health Psychology* 32, 3 (2013): 293–301.
17. The team used the following conventions for the qualitative results: “A few” means fewer than 20 percent of respondents, “some” means 20 to 49 percent of respondents, “many” means 50 to 74 percent of respondents, and “most” means 75 to 100 percent of respondents. The team removed filler words like “um,” “you know,” or repeated uses of “and” from quotes presented in this brief for clarity.
18. Due to some missing attendance data for administrators, attendance information is reported for teachers only.
19. Nagasawa (2021); Swigonski, James, Wynns, and Casavan (2021); Whitebook, McLean, Austin, and Edwards (2018).

20. Arya Ansari, Robert C. Pianta, Jessica V. Whittaker, Virginia E. Vitiello, and Erik A. Ruzek, "Persistence and Convergence: The End of Kindergarten Outcomes of Pre-K Graduates and Their Nonattending Peers," *Developmental Psychology* 56, 11 (2020): 2027–2039; Anna J. Markowitz, Deiby Mayaris Cubides Mateus, and Kennedy Weisner, "Linking Early Educator Wellbeing to Classroom Interactions and Teacher Turnover," *Early Childhood Research Quarterly* 67 (2024): 283–294.

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