



Introduction

Purpose

- This study explores the experiences of Early Care Education (ECE) leaders with goal setting and wellness coaching.

Intervention

- We present early findings from a 10-week intervention designed to enhance physical, psychological, and professional well-being among Oklahoma ECE leaders.
- This research examines Head Start (HS) leaders' goal-setting experiences during coaching sessions, focusing on their personal and operational goals.

Methodology

Participants: 51 demographically diverse ECE leaders from 14 Head Start centers (HS).

Procedure:

- Paired wellness coaches (also demographically diverse) trained in the "Coaching for Context" model with ECE leaders at HS centers.
- Conducted three 60-minute sessions over 10 weeks, focusing on goal setting, progress review, and ongoing wellness.
- Guided leaders in setting SMART goals and documented progress.
- Audio-recorded two coaching sessions per center.

Data Analysis:

- Thematic analysis** identified key themes related to goal setting, wellness coaching, and their impact on ECE leaders.
- Data sources:** Focus group interviews, coaching session recordings and coaching documents.

***This study is part of the Happy Teacher Project and is funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.**

Happy Teacher Wellness Intervention

- Happy Teacher Wellness Intervention** was designed by considering the importance of holistic wellness (including **physical, psychological, and professional**, which we refer to as P³ wellness)
- The intervention was implemented over a 10-week period focusing on wellness, incorporating multiple elements: wearable devices (i.e., Fitbit), online modules for self-directed activities, coaching, and a dedicated room for respite (i.e., wellness room)
- Each center was randomly assigned to one of these five tiers (Tiers 0 to 4; Tier 0 as business as usual).
- In total, 468 educators participated throughout three cohorts (Spring 23, Fall 23, Spring 24) from 44 urban and rural HS centers in Oklahoma.
- 24 group-interviews were conducted with participants (n=63) via Zoom

	Weekly Theme for Modules
Week 1	Professional wellbeing for leaders: An overview
Week 2	Mindfulness
Week 3	Effective communication skills
Week 4	Recognizing your leadership style
Week 5	Dealing with change
Week 6	Conflict resolution
Week 7	Motivational interviewing
Week 8	Offering social-emotional support
Week 9	Motivating employees
Week 10	Empathy building

Preliminary Findings from Data Analysis

- Alignment with best practices:** Effective goal setting in ECE involves aligning goals with established standards and guidelines to ensure high-quality educational outcomes.
- Prioritizing open communication:** Open and transparent communication is essential for effective goal setting, as it helps to manage expectations, facilitate organizational transitions, and build a supportive environment for ECE leaders.
- Promoting professional well-being:** Promoting professional well-being and educational opportunities is critical for ECE leaders' effectiveness.
- Fostering psychological well-being:** Addressing stress, burnout, and other psychological challenges among ECE staff is essential for creating a positive and productive work environment.
- Addressing practical constraints:** ECE leaders must be mindful of practical constraints, such as limited resources, time constraints, and regulatory requirements, when setting and achieving goals.

Implications

- Preliminary findings suggest that a comprehensive approach integrating goal setting and professional wellness coaching can enhance the well-being and performance of ECE leaders. This, in turn, has the potential to positively impact staff support and educational quality within ECE programs, ultimately benefiting the children served. These findings align with emerging research on the efficacy of this wellness model in various educational settings.
- Organizations should consider investing in professional development and creating supportive environments. Policymakers should support initiatives that promote ECE leader's well-being and the quality of early childhood education.



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References

