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Editorial

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Educator wellness is positively related to job satisfaction—when wellness improves, burnout and turnover are reduced (Roeser et al., 2012). As a response to increased professional stress, a focus on improving educator wellness and wellbeing has emerged. In response to this focus, the *IJTL* editorial team decided to publish a Themed Issue on "Wellbeing and Wellness for Teachers, Teacher Leaders, and Teacher Educators." This issue includes six articles in which the authors attend to facets of wellbeing and wellness including common themes such as the influence of teacher stress and burnout on wellbeing and wellness, as well as the multidimensional constructs of wellbeing and wellness. This Themed Issue was intended to attract different perspectives on wellbeing for teachers, teacher educators, and teacher leaders. One of the challenges of research on teacher wellbeing is the lack of a consistent definition (White, 2024). The struggle to develop a singular definition for a complex and multi-dimensional construct is similarly faced in the research on teacher leadership (Wenner & Campbell, 2017). For this Themed Issue, we invited papers using the terms wellness and wellbeing, recognising that the former often refers to physical and social aspects of health, including mental health while the term teacher wellbeing tends to be more broadly defined and has recently been researched as a multi-dimensional construct encompassing cognitive, social, emotional, physical, occupational and other related areas (Kanold & Boogren, 2022; McCallum & Price, 2016; Ragoonaden et al, in press; Viac & Fraser, 2020).

In all six articles, the authors address teacher burnout, described as emotional, physical, and mental exhaustion; a detached mindset; and a decline in feelings of competence and ability to successfully complete work (Sokal & Eblie Trudel, 2023; Woo et al., 2022). Burnout negatively impacts teacher motivation and commitment, which leads to decreases in student learning (Shimony et al., 2022; Sokal et al., 2024). Because burnout leads to turnover, teacher retention is a mounting concern across school districts globally (Johnson et al., 2012; Matsuba & Williams, 2020; Sokal et al., 2023). The articles in this Themed Issue emphasize the urgent need to address burnout to ensure the sustainability of the teaching profession and promote wellbeing and wellness for teachers, teacher leaders, and teacher educators.

In addition, several articles in this Themed Issue explore multidimensional constructs of wellbeing and wellness. These articles attempt to identify and define such constructs despite the difficulty in doing so when considering the diverse contexts in which teachers, teacher leaders, and teacher educators enact their work, as well as the variety of roles that they adopt in fulfilling said work. First, several articles in this Themed Issue address the important dimensions of emotional and psychological wellbeing (see Fenterstock et al., 2025; Johnson et al., 2025; Kulick, 2025; Reich & Esbolt, 2025). Second, two articles draw attention to wellness through monitoring teachers' physical activities; thus, locating their inquiry within particular types of physical exercise and fitness (see Davis et al., 2025; Nevárez et al., 2025). Each of these articles offers important insights about how to improve and sustain wellbeing among teachers, teacher leaders, and teacher educators. This is particularly important, as past research reveals that a

stronger sense of teacher wellbeing positively impacts morale, job satisfaction, and motivation (Cann et al., 2022; Liu et al., 2023).

Wellbeing and Leadership Constructs

Using qualitative methods, Fenterstock et al. (2025) examine the construct of the "whole teacher" through a dual-case study of two large urban school districts in Canada and the United States. They identify four sets of interrelated conditions and systems for whole teacher development. Explaining that "conditions inform systems and systems engender conditions," the authors identify three cultural conditions: trust, innovation, and collaboration, which respectively inform three systems including coaching and mentoring, shared leadership, and formal and informal opportunities for collaboration. The findings highlight the need to redesign the work environment, or systems, to align with the school climate, or conditions. Furthermore, the authors emphasize the role of relationships, nurturing teacher growth and development, and building meaningful collaborative cultures, suggesting that these goals can be achieved by developing a shared understanding and commitment to whole teacher development while simultaneously nurturing conditions and systems to bolster teacher wellbeing.

In their article, Johnson et al. (2025) offer a novel concept for teacher leadership, which they term "self-leadership." They develop this concept from a qualitative study across seven schools in two school districts in the United States, defining self-leadership as reflecting "an innate sense of wisdom and compassion, characterized by qualities such as curiosity, calm, creativity, clarity, courage, and compassion" (p. 3). Through focus group discussions, they explore K-12 educators' perceptions of wellbeing after participating in a program designed to nurture their self-leadership using the therapeutic Internal Family Systems (IFS) approach. The authors identify the transformative impact of the program on participants and their students, the importance of designing programs led by expert facilitators using collaborative learning strategies, and the need for systemic support for these programs. Their article offers insights for integrating the IFS approach into wellbeing programs to enhance educators' ability to regulate their emotions, reduce stress, and improve educator and student relationships.

Grounding her research in critical-somatic education, Kulick (2025) examines the construct of "somatic embodied practices" through a conceptual and literature-based approach. The author employs elements of critical pedagogy, Critical Teacher Leadership, feminist epistemologies, queer theory, and abolitionist teaching to explore the impact of somatic embodied practices on teacher leadership and wellbeing. Kulick reflects deeply concerning the various impacts of such an approach, offering a valuable thematic synthesis. She employs poetic interludes throughout the article to further exemplify the power of somatic embodied practices through writing and to demonstrate how such practices can support emotional regulation, enhance relational trust, and create sustainable teaching environments. These important factors offer practical tools that can aid in sustainable leadership and wellbeing on micro and macro levels. By emphasizing these practices, teachers, teacher leaders, and teacher educators can become more attuned to their bodies, regulate emotions, and navigate responses to stress. In addition, these practices demonstrate opportunities to employ somatic embodied approaches in individual, interpersonal, organizational, community, and policy settings. As a result, Kulick highlights the importance of acknowledging the larger web that upholds and promotes wellbeing.

Finally, Reich and Esbolt (2025) use an ecologically-framed study to investigate the wellbeing of novice teachers and their mentors. Using a mixed methods design, the authors collected data through surveys, focus group discussions, and one-on-one interviews within a school district employing a large number of uncredentialed novice teachers who are simultaneously completing a teacher preparation program and teaching full-time. The district houses a Beginning Educator Development (BED) office responsible for new teacher professional learning, wellness, and community building. The authors offer a unique insight into the wellbeing of individuals who are beginning their journey as educators under potentially stressful circumstances. Reich and Esbolt found that novice teachers feel overburdened by the expectations of their position, which negatively affects their wellbeing. Moreover, uncredentialed novice teachers reported higher levels of overwhelm and under preparedness. These effects were exacerbated because the BED had little control over teacher workload, staffing and policy at individual schools despite the office's attempts to mediate these negative influences through mentoring and professional development.

Physical Wellness and Wellbeing

Using survey research, Davis et al. (2025) examine the relationship between physical activity levels and teacher burnout among high school educators. The authors utilized the International Physical Activity Questionnaire (IPAQ) and the Burnout Assessment Tool (BAT-23) to collect data from 243 teachers across three high schools in the same district. Their results indicate a significant negative correlation between physical activity and burnout, suggesting that increasing physical activity may help moderate burnout. Moreover, they found that increasing physical activity is related to a decrease in exhaustion. In other words, the more physically active the teacher, the less likely they are to report that they feel exhausted. The authors also found that participants who identify as women report more burnout while participants who identify as men report more minutes of physical activity. Further, they noticed differences among age groups with older participants reporting less emotional exhaustion with no significant difference in their reported physical activity levels, which may signal the ability to cope with and navigate stress the longer one stays in the teaching profession. Overall, these findings support the hypothesis that increased physical activity mitigates emotional exhaustion, highlighting the potential for physical fitness to decrease educator burnout. Importantly, the authors recognize the particular challenges and added professional demands for teacher leaders and signal a need for more research to understand how physical activity can mitigate stress for teachers in formal and informal leadership roles.

Throughout their critical race autoethnography, Nevárez et al. (2025) explore the connection between running and wellness. Guided by critical race theory (CRT), the authors build upon the concept of "counterspaces" as sites of possibility for wellness and wellbeing. They examine their experiences as runners though personal narrative using a CRT lens to study the relationship between running, academia, and wellness. As a result, the authors serve as both study participants and researchers, providing a unique account of the lived experiences of teacher educators of Color. They use individual and collaborative coding, and dialogic reflection to identify common themes across their experiences. The authors conclude that physical fitness can play a significant role in identity formation and negotiation, and share that running groups offered them meaningful spaces for navigating the challenges of academia. Their conceptualization of kinetic counterpaces as sites of possibility and wellbeing to counter the

shared stressors and challenges faced by critical teacher educators and critical teacher leaders offers new language and imaginative possibilities for resistance and mutual support. These critical and active spaces improved wellness for the authors, providing opportunities for support and orienting them to possibilities for better navigating the current sociopolitical climate and its added stressors and uncertainties.

Discussion and Conclusions

The articles featured in this Themed Issue have raised attention to the importance of wellness and wellbeing for teachers, teacher leaders, and teacher educators. The authors have offered insights on how to improve and grow wellness and wellbeing through physical activity, somatic practices, and innovating with therapeutic approaches.

As noted in each article, the residual impacts of the Pandemic are important when considering teacher, teacher leader, and teacher educator wellness and wellbeing. The extreme challenges to wellness and wellbeing during the Pandemic were significant, with educators facing enormous barriers to their own health and that of their families (Bradley-Levine & Bender, 2023). Compounding these personal challenges were the demands facing teachers to adopt new pedagogies and instructional supports while assisting students and their families through the new shifting learning landscape (Bradley-Levine & Bender, 2023; Harris & Jones, 2020). Moreover, attention to the maintenance of wellness and the recovery of wellbeing after the return to schools has not been adequate for many teachers. Further, there remains a paucity of research on wellness and wellbeing related to teacher leaders in particular, leaving many questions around the recovery experiences of teacher leaders left unanswered. However, the articles featured in this Themed Issue begin to address this issue.

Additionally, themes emerged across the articles highlighting the supports for teacher leader wellbeing, including the importance of strong connections among teachers, teacher leaders, and administrators, especially around a sense of support and encouragement. Aligned with our own research on wellness and wellbeing in schools (see Bradley-Levine & Bender, 2023; Cherkowski, 2018; Cherkowski & Walker, 2018), the authors featured in this Themed Issue report that teachers and teacher leaders thrive when administrators create relationships that promote professional learning, fostering collective growth and improvement. Further, the articles signal the importance of wellness and wellbeing to nurture student and teacher relationships, and the benefits to both students and teachers when wellness and wellbeing are consistently at the forefront. Finally, the authors acknowledge the critical need to recognise and address burnout with relevant and appropriate practices, and approaches for improving wellness and wellbeing. We notice an opportunity for more research on multiple approaches and practices, including attending to physical, emotional, mental, social, spiritual, cultural, and other dimensions of wellness and wellbeing that are often overlooked in research.

However, the roles and professional identities of teacher leaders are distinct from administrator roles and identities. As such, the need for and importance of wellness and wellbeing related to teacher leaders will be different than those for other educational roles. Further, while attention, supports and resources may be offered for teacher leaders in their roles, we also recognize that there are many teacher leaders who continue to work without a formal title or supports, and/or who work in districts or schools that do not or are not able to support teachers in their leadership roles. Recognizing the importance of teacher leaders in building and sustaining vibrant school cultures where teachers, students, and all members of the learning

community may thrive, it is time for more attention and support through research, practice, and policy for the wellness and wellbeing of teacher leaders. Therefore, we advocate for further research on what wellness and wellbeing mean to teacher leaders in particular, and we hope teacher leaders, as well as those who hire, mentor, and advocate for them, will find in this Themed Issue the support, encouragement, and call to action needed to pay attention to wellness and wellbeing for teacher leadership as a critical aspect of research and practice.

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