

The Empowered Educator

An 11-week online cohort to support teacher retention, resilience, and well-being in education



The Empowered Educator helps school leaders nurture and retain their strongest teachers—by helping them feel and teach at their best.

When educators have support to shift from “sticking it out” into teaching in a way that’s both sustaining and sustainable, students have better outcomes, schools cultivate better learning environments, and principals can sleep better at night.

WHY THE EMPOWERED EDUCATOR?

Because stress and instability don’t have to be inevitable.

School leaders everywhere feel the strain and pressure of issues like teacher burnout and high turnover rates.

“Burnout” has become a common buzzword in our field for a reason—it’s rampant. The cumulative impact of late-night grading sessions and weekend lesson plans, the stress of managing a diverse set of student needs, and the energy spent maintaining an engaging and safe classroom environment can lead teachers to question their long-term role in education.

When turnover follows closely on the heels of burnout, school leaders feel the squeeze.

Teacher turnover is not only disruptive to students but also destabilizing for the school community. Each departure means the loss of a mentor to students, an experienced colleague to other educators, and a skilled professional that principals could previously count on. Those are the priceless teachers that are increasingly difficult to replace, yet school leaders find themselves once again in the continuous (and costly) cycle of recruiting, hiring, and onboarding new educators.

“ This course should become mandatory for all teachers!

“I have learned so much and am already seeing wonderful results, not only in my personal life, but also in my lesson planning and in my co-worker interactions at school.”

A teacher at Archdiocese of Washington Catholic Schools



SARAH DUGAN

Founder & CEO of
Teach Learn Thrive

“I help teachers fall back in love with teaching.”

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K-12 educators represent the #1 most burned-out profession in the nation, with a 14% higher burnout rate than health care and the military.

Gallup, 2022

Poor well-being is predictive of teachers' and principals' intentions to leave the profession, with nearly 60% of teachers with 6-20 years of experience planning to leave the profession soon.

RAND, 2022; National Education Association, 2022

Supportive school environments are linked to better well-being and increased retention.

RAND, 2022

More than 300,000 teachers quit their jobs between 2020 - 2022.

There are now 567,000 fewer teachers than there were before the pandemic.

Wall Street Journal, 2022; Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2022

These issues are all rooted in systemic issues facing our education ecosystem, and it's too much to ask for school leaders to continue facing this challenging landscape on their own.

The good news is that school leaders like you can take manageable, concrete steps toward creating a happier, healthier, and more sustainable school culture—and it starts with bringing in some support.

Inside the Empowered Educator

Nurturing our educators isn't simply about preventing burnout—it's about fostering a supportive, resilient, and dynamic learning environment for everyone, and The Empowered Educator program is here to help you lead the charge.



While many professional development programs focus on pedagogy and curriculum design, programs that strengthen teachers' emotional health and resilience are a major missing piece. **The Empowered Educator's research-based curriculum directly addresses teacher well-being by providing a confidential space in which participants can connect with peers, be supported in overcoming challenges, and gain tools that improve their personal well-being, physically, spiritually, and emotionally.**

HOW THE PROGRAM WORKS:

Through Teach Learn Thrive, I partner with school leaders to offer The Empowered Educator program to K-12 teachers at a variety of independent schools in the D.C. area and beyond.

You sponsor slots in the program for selected educators, and I curate each program cohort, provide program materials, and facilitate live sessions for teachers.

COHORT SUPPORT: Each cohort consists of a small group of up to 20 educators. Cohorts are curated to include teachers from a variety of similar schools (i.e. Catholic elementary schools; independent high schools), allowing educators to build connections through their commonalities while also being able to share candidly with one another.

LIVE SESSIONS: Participants gather for 11 weekly, 75-minute online sessions to learn research-backed concepts about resilience and well-being, explore how to put them into practice in their professional and personal lives, and dive deeper with “hot seats” to connect and problem-solve.

POWERFUL EXERCISES: A comprehensive course guidebook, journal, and resources (mailed personally to every educator!) offer reflective exercises to explore the week's topic and get their thoughts down on paper. Our sessions never feel like “another meeting” for teachers—they're interactive, impactful, and inspiring.

EXPERT FACILITATION: When teachers get talking, transformative insights are inevitable! I facilitate an active, engaged group so that every educator can ask questions, swap ideas with their peers, discover new lightbulb moments, and request additional resources.

The Empowered Educator Curriculum

11 WEEKS TO GREATER WELL-BEING (AND JOY IN THE WORK)!

While well-being and emotional resilience may appear to be “softer” aspects of teaching, The Empowered Educator’s curriculum is grounded in research and designed for real impact... for teachers and ultimately students.

The strategies we explore aren't simply suggestions or feel-good advice, but are proven techniques and practices designed to enhance resilience and meaningfully reduce stress. In a profession as demanding as teaching, whole-self well-being isn't just a luxury—it's a necessity for sustainable success.

THE 11 WEEK CURRICULUM INCLUDES:

Defining personal resilience, understanding influential factors

Self-assessing personal resilience; identifying our own influential factors; envisioning our improved joy & resilience

Defining personal values and purpose as an educator

Hot Seat: Supporting peers in achieving goals and managing challenges

Understanding the body’s stress response cycle and pinpointing ways to “complete the cycle”

Determining routines for wellness and evaluating our emotional needs

Mastering our time, setting realistic boundaries, and ‘scheduling’ wellness



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I left the program with clear ideas about changes I am going to make to become a better educator and a more healthy person.

This course inspired me to be more creative in my approach to teaching. **The collaboration with my classmates gave me some very tangible ideas about how to reach and engage my students both academically and social-emotionally.** It also gave me tools to understand my own needs, which, in turn, helps me to better engage and motivate my students.

Sarah is a great example of a teacher who truly cared about all of us in the program and respected our ideas. She created a safe environment where we were all able to share ideas and struggles in a very honest way, without feeling judged. The break-out sessions were always fruitful, and I learned to listen more thoughtfully, both to my peers and to my own thoughts and feelings.

Colleen W., grades 3 - 8 math teacher, Maryland

The Empowered Educator's Impact



By fostering educator resilience, the Empowered Educator program aims to contribute to higher teacher retention and more stable, less stressful educational environments for both educators and students.

Investing in teacher well-being creates a positive (and compounding!) ripple effect within school communities.

Happier, healthier teachers create happier, healthier learning environments that support better student outcomes.

Reduced teacher turnover preserves precious expertise and resources, saving an average of \$4,000 - \$20,000 every time a teacher would otherwise need to be replaced (Learning Policy Institute, 2017).

And higher teacher retention contributes to more sustainable school staffing, freeing principals and educators up to do more of what you do best—with less stress and scrambling.

Teachers leave the program not only more resilient and satisfied in their role, but also better equipped to manage their stress, work effectively, and contribute positively to their school community. Participants report:

- ★ **Enhanced resilience and self-awareness:** With a clear understanding of what resilience is and how it influences their professional and personal lives, educators can implement strategies that make teaching much more sustainable.
- ★ **Clearer sense of purpose:** Reconnecting with the values and purpose that initially called them to teach, educators can more joyfully refuel their professional motivation and satisfaction. (And positive teacher mental health has a demonstrated connection to student mental health!)
- ★ **Improved problem-solving skills:** Hot seat sessions give teachers the opportunity to support each other in overcoming challenges and achieving goals, enhancing their sense of collaboration and community with other educators.
- ★ **Better stress management:** Understanding the body's stress response cycle helps teachers identify practical ways to manage their stress and can offer insights into supporting their students' needs as well.
- ★ **Improved time management:** Teachers who can adeptly prioritize tasks, make the most of their time, and cultivate more balance in their work-life integration are healthier, happier, and more effective educators.
- ★ **Established wellness routines and sustainable wellness strategies:** Not only are teachers equipped to maintain their well-being after the course ends, many are inspired to adapt and share their learnings with their students.

About Sarah Dugan



Founder of
Teach Learn Thrive



COACH + PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT CREATOR FOR TEACHERS

Throughout my 10 years as a middle school English Language-Arts teacher, I fought burnout on and off for a decade. Without a culture that prioritized teachers' personal wellbeing, I—like so many—would spend entire weekends grading essays, then feel exhausted instead of refreshed on Monday morning.

I adored my students, reveled in the content, and delighted in pushing students beyond their perceived limits, but I struggled with guilt for not ever feeling like I did enough.

Now as a coach, I'm thankful the conversation about educator resilience is no longer the elephant in the faculty room, so I can provide teachers opportunities for personal renewal as they continue their courageous work. I'm also conscious of the increasing pressures that school leaders face, and I aim to support their needs as well by contributing to a more stable, less stressful school environment.

As a trained instructional coach who uses Cognitive Coaching™, Adaptive Schools, and other facilitation techniques, my skills are also informed by 10 years of educational leadership experience. (So yes, I have led a LOT of meetings with teachers, and I know how to do so efficiently!)

Above all, I share in your vision of a world where educators feel appreciated, understood, and cared for, and I'm here to support your goals.

NEXT STEPS

You're invited to enroll your teachers in *The Empowered Educator*, so that they can stay and thrive in your classrooms for years to come.

The investment for each educator enrolled is \$800, and schools can select one or many teachers to invite to participate.

Please contact me at sarah@teach-learn-thrive.com to explore the possibility of bringing the program to your teachers or discuss how we can craft the program to meet your needs.