



Global experts, including the World Health Organization and International Labour Organization, recognize that workplace wellbeing is a shared responsibility among individual employees, their employers, and the unions/associations representing the employees.

In our work with school districts across Canada, the Well at Work team has found that successful workplace wellbeing initiatives provide authentic, ongoing opportunities for employee input, include unions as partners, and work to address the issues affecting wellbeing. Beginning with the lens of shared responsibility moves the conversation away from a position of blame or waiting for someone else to solve the problem, towards one of engagement where everyone sees their role in contributing to a healthy, welcoming, and supportive workplace.

## Improving workplace wellbeing involves

Individual actions that employees take to support their own wellbeing and the wellbeing of others. Individual actions to support personal wellbeing might include:

- Exercising, eating well, getting enough sleep, managing stress effectively.
- Building strong social support networks, including with colleagues.
- Checking in with our colleagues regularly and offering support when they appear to be struggling.
- Accessing benefits as necessary to support our physical and mental health.

Collaborative actions where groups of employees act to support workplace wellbeing and create positive workplace cultures. Collaborative actions might include:

- Working collaboratively with colleagues in different roles to solve problems.
- Learning together through a book club or inquiry group.
- Recognizing and appreciating our colleagues' contributions.
- Creating shared "community agreements" around how to interact with each other.
- Creating opportunities to connect with each other through walking meetings and social events.

Systemic actions by the school district to support workplace wellbeing such as updates to policies, practices, priorities and structures such as:

- Reviewing all district policies and processes through a wellbeing lens, for example establishing guidelines around after-hours emails.
- Ensuring opportunities for authentic employee engagement, for example, through employee-employer working groups.
- Collecting workplace wellbeing data (e.g. Guarding Minds at Work) and using it to identify and address issues.

Recent research shows that systemic strategies aimed at improving the workplace environment and increasing opportunities for workers' voice and participation in workplace decision making are among the most effective strategies for enhancing workplace wellbeing.<sup>1</sup> As William Flemming writes:<sup>2</sup>

*"It turns out the most effective way to improve employee mental health is by reducing stress, rather than adding new ways to cope with it."*