



The Creative Curriculum[®]
Implementation and
Ecosystem Engagement
(CCIEE) Study Shows
Positive Effects on
Educator Well-Being



Independent Randomized Controlled Trial

This brief summarizes findings from *The Creative Curriculum*® Implementation and Ecosystem Engagement (CCIEE) study, a randomized controlled trial independently conducted by the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER).ⁱ

Executive Summary

Program leaders understand that educator morale matters, but it is rarely measured directly. The CCIEE study examined educator experience alongside classroom and child outcomes. Using a validated measure of educator burnout (the Maslach Burnout Inventory – Educators Survey), the study found that educators in the treatment classrooms reported

- significantly higher levels of personal accomplishment and energy,
- feeling significantly less fatigued, and
- greater amounts of energy and enthusiasm for their work

when compared to educators in the control classrooms.

Together, these findings suggest that educator well-being is not peripheral to instructional improvement but part of the infrastructure that sustains implementation, retention, and child outcomes.

What Is the CCIEE Study?

The CCIEE study used a cluster-randomized design across two New Jersey state-funded preschool districts that included both public and private programs.

Coaches and teachers were randomly assigned to a treatment or control group.

- **Treatment:** Teachers implementing *The Creative Curriculum*® and using the full *Teaching Strategies*® ecosystem including synchronous (live) virtual and asynchronous (on-demand) professional development aligned with the *Teaching Strategies*® ecosystem, plus ongoing coaching supports, and the *GOLD*® assessment system.
- **Control:** The control group had business-as-usual access to *The Creative Curriculum*® and may or may not have had access to or used the digital tools. All the control group users also used *GOLD*® as the assessment tool.ⁱⁱ

Teacher retention was tracked across the 3-year study period, and child outcomes were measured via growth (*GOLD*®) and via pre-post external assessments in year 3 (Fall 2023–Spring 2024).

What Was Measured

Educator well-being was assessed using the Maslach Burnout Inventory – Educators Survey (MBI-ES), a widely used instrument that measures

- Personal Accomplishment (sense of competence and impact),
- Emotional Exhaustion (feeling drained or overextended), and
- Depersonalization (emotional distancing from students).

These measures were collected at follow-up.

Key Finding: Stronger Educator Energy and Professional Accomplishment

Teachers in the treatment group reported significantly higher levels of personal accomplishment (see Figure 1). They were more likely to describe feeling energetic, exhilarated after working with students, and that they had done their jobs effectively multiple times during a given week. They were also less likely to report feeling emotional exhaustion (see Figure 2).ⁱⁱⁱ They felt less fatigued or “at the end of their rope.” This reflects more than job satisfaction. It reflects professional vitality—the energy and confidence that shape daily classroom interactions.

Figure 1. Personal Accomplishment

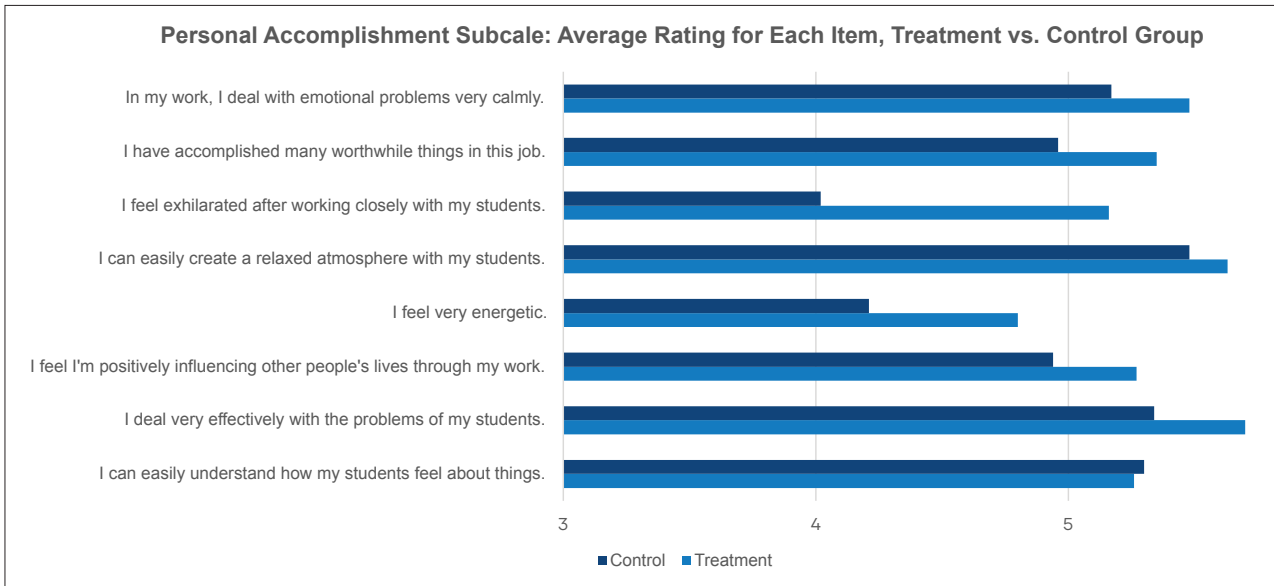
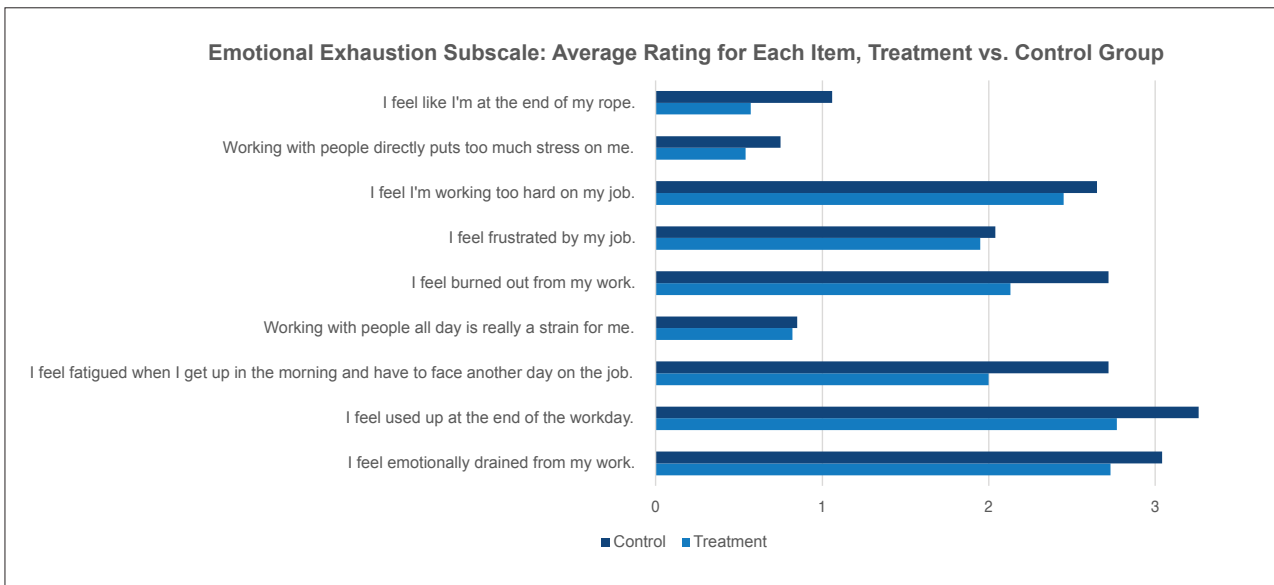


Figure 2. Emotional Exhaustion



Why Educator Well-Being Matters

Early childhood educators work in environments characterized by emotional intensity, instructional expectations, staffing instability, and lingering post-pandemic pressures. Research consistently links educator stress to classroom climate, instructional interactions, and workforce turnover. The CCIEE study provides rare evidence that professional learning conditions can influence how educators experience their work, not only how they deliver instruction. When educators feel supported and energized, children experience more consistent, responsive interactions.

For program leaders, educator well-being is not simply a morale issue—it is a program quality issue. Educators who feel capable, valued, and supported are more likely to remain in their roles, build stronger relationships with children and families, and sustain the instructional routines that support learning. By strengthening the conditions that shape teacher experience, including professional learning, coaching, and alignment of expectations, school leaders can directly influence both workforce stability and the day-to-day experiences children have in the classroom.

Additional Context: Curriculum Usability

Across both treatment and control classrooms, more than 90% of teachers reported that *The Creative Curriculum*® was easy to implement, and 91% reported that it was engaging for students.^{iv} Both groups exclusively implemented *The Creative Curriculum*®. This matters for interpretation. The differences observed in educator well-being did not emerge because one group had access to a more usable curriculum. Instead, the distinguishing factor was the addition of intentionally aligned professional learning and coaching supports layered onto curriculum use, accessed through the *Teaching Strategies*® ecosystem.

For program leaders, this reinforces a key insight: a strong curriculum creates stability, but educator experience is shaped by how that curriculum is supported and activated.

What This Means for Program Leaders

Educator well-being is not separate from instructional improvement: it is part of it.

The study suggests several practical actions for program leaders who want to support educator well-being as a key component of quality early childhood education.

- Invest in structured, sustained professional learning that supports daily instructional practice.
- Protect time for coaching and professional reflection.
- Treat educator retention as a leading indicator of program health.
- Monitor educator experience alongside instructional outcomes.

When educators feel supported, energized, and effective, the investment in their well-being supports retention, stabilizes classrooms, and reinforces the developmental gains observed in children.

Disclosure

This brief presents selected findings from the published NIEER CCIEE working paper and does not introduce new analyses.

Study at a Glance

Design – Independent evaluation with an embedded cluster randomized controlled trial (RCT)

Study period – Three full program years, spanning Fall 2021 through Spring 2024

Intervention

- Treatment classrooms: Access to *Teaching Strategies'* digital ecosystem (*Creative Curriculum Cloud, GOLD, Professional Development Teacher Membership (PDTM)*), current print curriculum kits, additional synchronous professional development opportunities and enhanced coaching
- Control classrooms: Access to *Teaching Strategies'* digital ecosystem without additional synchronous PD/coaching opportunities; some classrooms had older versions of print curriculum.

Context

- NJ state-funded preschool programs with consistent, relatively high levels of structural quality
- Preschool classrooms (ages 3–5 years) in public schools and private provider child care centers
- Diverse population of children and families served by the districts in the study

Sample*

- Treatment/intervention arm
 - 2 districts
 - 14 sites
 - 62 classrooms
 - 240 children
- Control arm
 - 2 districts (same as treatment districts)
 - 12 sites
 - 63 classrooms
 - 237 children
- Child characteristics
 - Age
 - 43% age 3
 - 57% age 4
 - Race/Ethnicity
 - 39% Black
 - 53% Hispanic
 - 8% Asian, white, or other race/ethnicity
 - 43% Multilingual learners (majority bilingual English–Spanish)
 - 6% have an IEP

Measures

- Teacher
 - Retention
 - Well-being/burnout
 - *SmartTeach* platform engagement
 - PD attendance
- Classroom
 - Quality
 - Curriculum fidelity
- Child
 - Social-Emotional
 - Executive Function
 - Creativity
 - Cognitive
 - Language
 - Literacy
 - Mathematics

*Count with follow-up measurements

Endnotes

- i Nores, M., E. Harmeyer & W.S. Barnett (2026). *Teaching Strategies' Creative Curriculum Implementation and Ecosystem Engagement Study (CCIEE)*. Research Report. New Brunswick, NJ: National Institute for Early Education Research.
- ii The study used a clustered randomized controlled trial (RCT) design. In practical terms, this means that groups of educators (in this case, coaches and the teachers they supported) were randomly assigned to either receive enhanced professional learning supports (treatment) or continue with existing practices (control). Random assignment helps ensure that differences observed between groups are attributable to the intervention rather than pre-existing differences. Because assignment occurred at the coach level rather than the individual teacher level, the design is referred to as "clustered." This approach reflects how professional development is typically delivered in real-world district settings and strengthens confidence in the credibility of the findings.
- iii Each statement on the Maslach Burnout Inventory is rated on a 7-point scale, where each value has the following meaning: 0 - Never, 1 - A few times a year or less, 2 - Once a month or less, 3 - A few times a month, 4 - Once a week, 5 - A few times a week, 6 - Every day.
- iv At follow-up, teachers completed a survey assessing their perceptions of the curriculum's implementation and effectiveness. Teachers rated statements related to ease of implementation, student engagement, academic skill development, and the extent to which the curriculum meets the needs of diverse learners. Responses were recorded on a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. We report the percentage of teachers who agreed or strongly agreed with each statement.

Explore More Results

To view more results from *The Creative Curriculum*® Implementation and Ecosystem Engagement (CCIEE) Study visit [this link](#) or scan the QR code below.

