



# WELLNESS

AND

*Safety*



VOLUME XXXVI, NO. 4

SCHOOLS INSURANCE  
AUTHORITY

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## GLOBAL DAY OF UNPLUGGING RETURNS MARCH 6–7, 2026

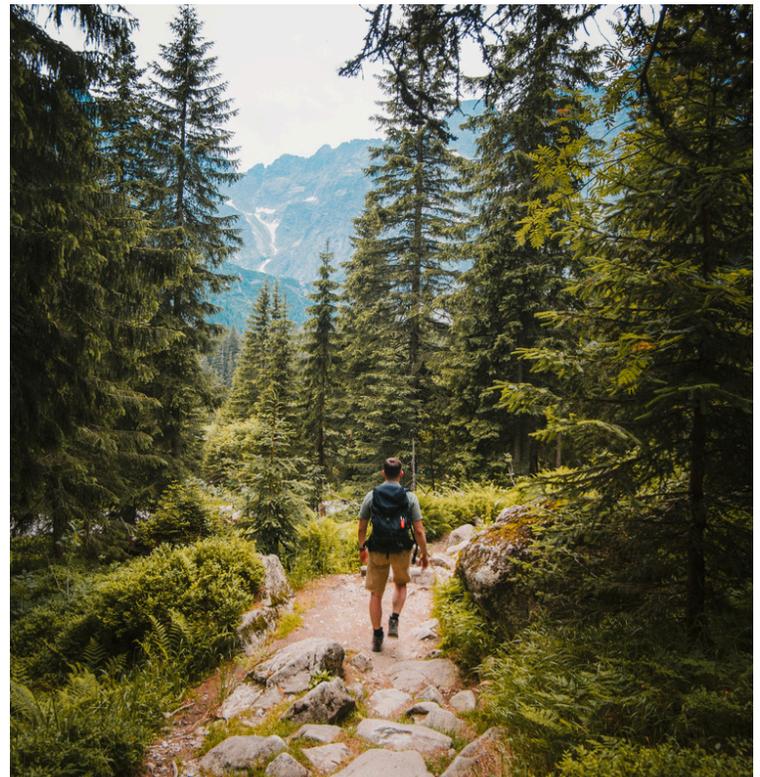
Global Day of Unplugging (GDU) returns March 6–7, 2026, marking its 17th annual invitation to pause our screens and reconnect with ourselves, one another, and the world around us.

Held each year on the first weekend of March, GDU is a worldwide 24-hour digital pause encouraging people to power down devices and power up real-life connection. Participants can unplug for one hour or the full day, solo or with others. There is no perfect way to unplug, just your way.

More than an awareness day, Global Day of Unplugging is part of a year-round program dedicated to digital wellbeing. Through ongoing resources and community engagement, the organization supports people in unplugging with intention and gathering with purpose.

Why does it matter now? In a time of constant stimulation, deep division, and rising loneliness, many people feel disconnected, not just from others, but from themselves. GDU '26 offers a collective pause to step away from the doomscroll, reconnect face-to-face, practice presence, and remember what helps us feel human.

Mark your calendar for March 6–7, 2026 and consider how you'll unplug. Find more information at: [Global Day of Unplugging](#)



## SLEEP: THE NEW POWER MOVE

### *April is National Sleep Month*

Once upon a time, running on four hours of sleep was something to brag about. We would say, “I’ll sleep when I’m dead,” while chugging coffee and feeling completely fried. Good news, that era is officially over.

Today, investing in sleep is seen as smart, powerful, and even cool. Being well-rested is now a sign that you value your health, your focus, and your overall well-being. And since April is National Sleep Month, it’s the perfect time to give sleep the spotlight it deserves. *(Continued on page 2)*



Running on empty was once worn as a point of pride. Now we know better. Research consistently shows that getting enough sleep supports:

- Sharper thinking and better memory
- Improved mood and emotional resilience
- Stronger immune health
- Better performance at work and in daily life

Sleep is now recognized as a powerful form of self-respect and self-care. In fact, studies show Americans spend nearly \$1,000 a year to improve their sleep, investing in mattresses, blackout curtains, white noise machines, and sleep trackers. Why? Because when you are well rested, you not only feel better, you function better, with sharper focus, steadier energy, and a healthier outlook each day.

Believe it or not, sleep has become such a wellness priority that people are even booking entire vacations centered around rest. From sleep-focused hotel rooms to guided relaxation and tech-free retreats, rest is stepping into the spotlight as a top wellness trend.

While most of us aren't booking a sleep retreat anytime soon, the takeaway is simple: you don't need a luxury getaway, fancy gadgets, or expensive retreats to invest in better sleep. Small, consistent changes at home can make a big difference.

Ready to treat your sleep like the self-care superstar it is? Bring the luxury home by trying one or two of these simple, expert-backed tips tonight.

### Cool It Down

Aim for a bedroom temperature between 60–70°F to support deeper sleep.

### Dim the Lights

Lower lighting 30–60 minutes before bed to signal your body that it's time to wind down.

### Power Down Screens

Try saying goodnight to phones and tablets 30-60 minutes before sleep.

### Create a Calm Space

Declutter your bedroom, use blackout curtains, and consider white noise or calming sounds.

### Stick to a Schedule

Going to bed and waking up at the same time each day helps regulate your body clock.

### Clear Your Mind

Journaling, deep breathing, or soothing music can help quiet a busy brain.

In a world that is always “on,” choosing rest is a quiet act of strength. Better sleep supports clearer focus, steadier moods, and better days for you and those around you. This National Sleep Month, give yourself permission to slow down, set your phone to Do Not Disturb, fluff the pillow, and make rest a priority. Taking care of yourself allows you to show up as your best self, at work and beyond.

Sweet dreams!

Source: [Total Wellness](#)



# STUDENT PRIVACY: A CORE DISTRICT RESPONSIBILITY



## *Managing risk, compliance, and trust in today's digital schools*

*Gustavo Mastroianni, SIA Chief Information Security Officer*

Privacy in K–12 education has become both more complicated and more important. School districts now rely on a dense ecosystem of student information systems, learning management platforms, assessment tools, classroom apps, devices, security systems, and communication services. These tools can improve teaching and operations, but they also expand the amount of sensitive data collected about children and the number of parties who may access it. For districts, privacy is no longer a niche compliance topic. It's a core requirement for trust, safety, and effective learning.

Districts collect a wide range of personally identifiable information (PII) and “education records” data. This includes obvious identifiers (name, date of birth, student ID, address) and highly sensitive information such as Academic records, grades, assessments, IEP/504 details, attendance, discipline, behavioral notes and more. Children are a uniquely vulnerable population because they typically cannot provide meaningful consent. The consequences of such exposure can be long-lasting, including identity theft, stalking risks, discrimination, reputational harm, and the loss of trust in school institutions responsible for safeguarding their information.

K–12 privacy compliance in the U.S. isn't governed by one simple law. Districts often operate under a mix of federal and state rules. Key challenges include different definitions of protected data, complex consent requirements (when and how consent is needed for disclosure), and State-level student data privacy laws that may exceed federal requirements. A frequent problem is “compliance drift”: a district may be compliant in one system (e.g.: student records) but not in another (e.g.: classroom apps or analytics tools), because the rules are interpreted differently across departments.



Many privacy problems stem from collecting too much data and keeping it too long. Districts often retain data “just in case,” but that increases breach impact and complicates records management. Common retention risks, such as former students' accounts remaining active and staff accounts that persist after separation can become a problem without a clear retention policy.

Privacy and cybersecurity are tightly linked. Even with strong privacy policies, a breach can expose sensitive student and staff data. Common threats include phishing emails targeting staff credentials, ransomware that exfiltrates data before encryption, and weak access controls (shared accounts, no MFA). When an incident occurs, districts face difficult questions: What was accessed? Was it exfiltrated? Who must be notified and when? How should families be informed in plain language? A privacy program without an incident response plan is incomplete. Even with limited staff, districts can reduce privacy risk significantly by implementing a few foundational practices, such as training staff annually, defining retention and deletion rules, and implementing role-based access and MFA.

K–12 privacy is ultimately about safeguarding students while enabling learning. The biggest risks often come from complexity: too many tools, unclear data flows, inconsistent practices, and limited oversight. Districts that build a strong privacy program, one that is transparent, practical, and aligned with safety and equity, will not only reduce legal and operational risk, but also strengthen trust with students, staff, and families.





## ERGONOMIC TOOLBOX TIPS

*Lita Chang, B.S., SIA Ergonomist*

In today's busy workday, it's easy to stay seated for hours without realizing the strain it can place on your body. Taking regular breaks is an important part of maintaining comfort, preventing injury, and supporting long-term productivity. Small changes throughout the day can make a big difference in your overall well-being.

Here are a few ergonomic ways to build healthy breaks into your routine:

- **Follow the 20-20-20 rule:** every 20 minutes, get up, look at something 20 feet away for at least 20 seconds to reduce eye strain and fatigue.
- **Alternate between sitting and standing:** Try a 2:1 ratio (sit 30 minutes, stand 15) or a 1:1 ratio (sit 30, stand 30).
- **Stretching:** Add simple neck stretches and shoulder rolls to reduce muscle tension and improve posture.
- **Movement:** Take short walks or do light exercise to boost circulation, increase energy, and ease stiffness.
- **Mindfulness:** Practice deep breathing or short meditation exercises to reduce stress and support mental wellness.

Regular breaks aren't just a pause; they're an investment in your health. By listening to your body and moving often, you can create a safer, more comfortable, and more productive work environment every day.

*Watch for more tips in future Wellness & Safety editions.*



## SPOTLIGHT ON...



## ATWATER: MAKING WELLNESS A PRIORITY

Strong schools start with healthy, supported educators and Atwater recently made wellness a priority in a fun and meaningful way. To support those who care for students every day, the district paused busy schedules to focus on health and well-being. The district was able to purchase prizes, food, and other materials to create a fun and engaging day with the financial support from the SIA Golden Carrot funds.

The idea was sparked by Michele McCabe, Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources, who proposed a Health and Wellness event designed to re-energize educators. The timing allowed the district to connect with a large group of staff while they were already on campus, making participation easy and accessible.



The result was a lively, interactive event full of positive energy. Staff visited a **"Hydration and Nutrition" Station**, where simple tips highlighted how healthy fuel and hydration can power long school days. Nearby, the **"Renew and Refresh" Station** added an extra dose of fun, where participants spun a prize wheel and completed simple exercises for a chance to spin again, bringing movement, laughter, and smiles to the event.

While the focus was on certificated staff, classified employees, administrators, and supervisors on campus were encouraged to join in as well, reinforcing that wellness truly is for everyone.

Kudos to Michele and the HR team for investing in employee well-being. Building a healthier, happier and more productive school community benefits staff and students alike.

- *Cart safety is essential to prevent injuries*



## GOLF CART SAFETY: PROTECTING STAFF, STUDENTS, AND PROPERTY



Golf carts and utility carts are commonly used to transport people, tools, and materials on school campuses. While carts may vary by type and purpose, the following safety practices apply to all cart operations and are essential for preventing injuries and property damage.

### Authorized Use & Training

- Golf and utility carts should be operated **only by authorized district staff**.
- Employees must receive training in the **safe operation of carts** prior to use.
- All operators should possess a **valid driver's license**.

### Safe Operation

- Operate carts attentively and responsibly. Avoid distractions such as **texting, reading, eating, or reaching for objects** while driving.
- Do not operate carts on a public roadway except when **crossing a street**.
- Always operate the vehicle from the **driver's seat only**.
- Check blind spots before turning.
- Look carefully behind the cart before backing up. **Back-up alarms are strongly recommended**.
- Reduce speed when turning, traveling through doorways, or operating in congested areas. Avoid sudden starts, stops, or sharp turns.
- Drive straight up and down slopes to reduce the risk of rollover.
- Use extra caution during **inclement weather** or poor visibility.

### Equipment & Maintenance

Carts should be equipped with appropriate safety features, including:

- Lights and headlights
- Horns
- Seat belts
- Mirrors

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(Continued from Page 5)



### Passenger & Load Safety

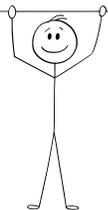
- Allow **one passenger per seat**, and ensure passengers remain seated while the vehicle is in motion.
- Never allow riders in the **cargo area**.
- Do not move the cart until all passengers are properly seated.
- Know the vehicle's weight capacity and **never exceed it**.
- Secure all cargo and tools before transport.
- Do not allow items to extend beyond the sides of the cart.
- Flag loads that extend more than **three feet** from the rear of the vehicle.

### Parking & Security

- **Never leave keys** in an unattended cart.
- Always **set the parking brake** when parked.
- Do not park carts where they **may block** emergency equipment, pedestrian walkways, doorways, intersections, or normal traffic flow.
- **Store carts indoors** during nights, weekends, and holidays when possible.
- Secure carts with a **cable and lock** or equivalent locking device when not in use.

Training for district staff who operate golf carts and utility carts is available online through **SIA-sponsored Public School Works**.

SAFETY FIRST



## PREPARE NOW TO PREVENT HEAT ILLNESS



Heat illness is a serious medical condition that occurs when the body is unable to release excess heat and cool itself effectively. To protect district staff who may work in areas exposed to high heat, proactive measures are required.

All California employers are required to maintain a Heat Illness Prevention Plan that includes measures for both indoor and outdoor locations. This plan must outline procedures for providing drinking water, access to shade and cool-down areas, high-heat protocols, emergency response, and employee acclimatization. Employees are also required to complete appropriate heat illness prevention training.

### Outdoor Heat Illness Activation

Supervisors of employees working outside must monitor weather conditions and plan ahead when temperatures are expected to exceed 80 degrees Fahrenheit.

### Indoor Heat Illness Triggers

New indoor heat illness prevention regulations took effect in July 2024. These regulations require employers to monitor indoor temperatures or heat index values and implement protective measures when temperatures reach or exceed 87°F. If employees wear clothing that restricts heat removal or work near high radiant heat sources, controls must be implemented at 82°F. Within member districts, areas that may be affected include kitchens, warehouses, mechanic shops, and storage containers.

### Control Measures

Districts must use appropriate control measures to reduce the risk of heat illness. These may include:

- **Engineering controls**, such as cooling fans, increased natural ventilation, or reflective barriers to reduce radiant heat.
- **Administrative controls**, including modifying work schedules, mandatory rest breaks, or procedures to limit heat exposure.
- **Personal protective equipment**, such as cooling vests or neck wraps, when appropriate.

The selection of control measures should be based on environmental conditions and feasibility. (Continued On Page 7)

- *SIA offers district growth and learning opportunities*

## What You Can Do



(Continued from Page 6)

To help protect yourself, your staff, and your coworkers, everyone has a role to play in preventing heat illness:

- Become familiar with your district's Heat Illness Prevention Plan.
- Complete required training and ensure your staff do the same.
- Practice prevention strategies:
  - Drink water frequently and limit caffeine.
  - Avoid overexertion.
  - Take regular breaks in cool or shaded areas.
  - Allow time to acclimate when starting new tasks or positions involving heat exposure. All employees should also acclimate during heat waves.
- Learn to recognize the symptoms of heat illness.
- Watch for signs of heat illness in coworkers and establish a buddy system, especially when working alone.
- Understand and follow your district's emergency response procedures.

Following heat illness regulations and district procedures is essential not only for employee health and safety, but also for maintaining a productive and safe work environment.

### Resources for Members

Many SIA member districts use Public School Works (PSW) to meet training requirements. PSW offers two California-specific courses:

- Heat Illness Prevention Training for Supervisors – California
- Heat Illness Awareness – California

Additional heat illness prevention resources including a plan template, brochures, posters, and more are available on the [SIA website](#). You may also visit the [Cal/OSHA](#) website for further guidance and information.



## CERTIFIED SCHOOL RISK MANAGER PROGRAM BEGINS IN MAY

SIA continues to offer our member district staff the opportunity to increase their school risk management skills through the Certified School Risk Manager (CSRM) program. The course will be in-person at that SIA office.

The five-class program provides participants with in-depth knowledge, terminology, and philosophy of the risk management process as it relates to schools. Participants will learn how to better protect their schools against unplanned losses and to effectively maintain budget integrity.

Upon completion of the five classes and successfully passing associated exams, participants will receive the CSRM designation. The CSRM coursework can be spread out over a period of three years and courses can be taken just for the educational benefits.

The fee for the classes is waived for SIA member district employees. If you would like to attend, you may register [here](#).

The course schedule for 2026 is:

May 14 – **Fundamentals of Risk Management**

June 11 – **Measuring School Risks**

July 30 – **Handling School Risks**

September 3 – **Funding School Risks**

October 29 – **Administering School Risks**

## UPCOMING SIA LEADERSHIP ACADEMY TRAININGS

**Managing Chaos, Creating Coherence – March 20<sup>th</sup> & 27<sup>th</sup>**

Enhance your personal ability to manage stress and anxiety, build emotional resilience, communicate with ease and clarity, and improve overall well-being.

**Navigating Change in Shifting Times – April 14<sup>th</sup>**

Explore how to adapt, stay resilient, and lead with purpose even when times are uncertain.

For more information and to register, visit the [SIA website calendar](#)

- *Free Virtual Trainings*
- *Mindful Musings*

# FREE VIRTUAL TRAININGS TO ENHANCE YOUR LIFE



SIA provides the staff of our member districts with virtual training on a variety of topics that apply to both personal and professional life. All trainings are conducted by Optum, SIA's Employee Assistance Program (EAP). To learn more or register for any of the training courses listed below, click the course title or contact [tfranco@sia-jpa.org](mailto:tfranco@sia-jpa.org). You also can join our [email list](#) to learn of future events at SIA – [Schools Insurance Authority](#) ([sia-jpa.org](http://sia-jpa.org)).



## MARCH

3/3	<a href="#">Business Etiquette</a>	5:30-6:30pm
3/4	<a href="#">Building Awareness and Practical Strategies for Supporting Neurodivergent Family and Friends</a>	5:30-6:30pm
3/9	<a href="#">How to Build Workplace Motivation and Morale</a>	5:30-6:30pm
3/11	<a href="#">How to Make Better Decisions with Critical Thinking</a>	12:00-1:00pm
3/11	<a href="#">How to Make Better Decisions with Critical Thinking</a>	5:30-6:30pm
3/17	<a href="#">Suicide Prevention</a>	5:30-6:30pm
3/18	<a href="#">Five Steps to Healthier Eating</a>	5:30-6:30pm
3/19	<a href="#">Resilience: Beyond the Basics</a>	5:30-6:30pm
3/23	<a href="#">Quitting Smoking</a>	5:30-6:30pm
3/24	<a href="#">How to Create Passion and Motivation in the Workplace</a>	5:30-6:30pm

## APRIL

4/7	<a href="#">How to Improve Communication Skills for Employees</a>	5:30-6:30pm
4/8	<a href="#">How to Make the Most of Feedback</a>	5:30-6:30pm
4/13	<a href="#">Preventing Sexual Harassment, Employee</a>	5:30-6:30pm
4/15	<a href="#">Substance Use Disorder in the Workplace, Employee</a>	5:30-6:30pm
4/16	<a href="#">Positive Parenting</a>	5:30-6:30pm
4/21	<a href="#">Men's Mental Health</a>	5:30-6:30pm
4/22	<a href="#">How to Navigate Workplace Uncertainty</a>	5:30-6:30pm
4/27	<a href="#">How to Overcome Negativity in the Workplace</a>	12:00-1:00pm
4/27	<a href="#">How to Overcome Negativity in the Workplace</a>	5:30-6:30pm
4/28	<a href="#">Mindfulness</a>	5:30-6:30pm



*Naps are nutrition for the soul.*

Wellness & Safety is published by the Schools Insurance Authority, P.O. Box 276710, Sacramento, CA 95827-6710, (916) 364-1281, 1-877-SIA-KIDS. *Parts of this newsletter were created with the assistance of artificial intelligence (AI). All content has been reviewed by a human prior to publication.* The SIA is a joint powers authority, composed of 43 members, that collectively provides workers' compensation, liability, property, and health benefit insurance coverage on behalf of its member districts. The SIA school districts are: Arcohe, Atwater, Buckeye, Camino, Center, Central Sierra ROP, El Dorado Co. Off. Ed., El Dorado High, Elk Grove, Elverta, Folsom-Cordova, Galt Elem., Galt High, Gold Oak, Gold Trail, Hayward, Indian Diggings, Latrobe, Manzanita, Merced City, Modesto City, Mother Lode, Natomas, Natomas Charter, North Bay SIA, Oroville City, Oroville High, Palermo Elementary, Paradise, Pioneer, Placerville, Pollock Pines, Rescue, River Delta, Robla, Sac. City, Sac. Co. Off. Ed., San Juan, Shasta-Trinity SIG, Silver Fork, Twin Rivers, Visions in Education Charter, and Woodland. SIA Officers: Executive Director — Brooks Rice; President — Wendy Frederickson, El Dorado COE; Vice President — Kristen Coates, Elk Grove USD; Secretary — Ryan DiGiulio, Twin Rivers USD. Newsletter: Lyn Poll, Prevention Services; Priscila Gonzales, Prevention Services.