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Preventing Teacher Stress and Burnout in an Urban Arts Secondary School Context

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Preventing Teacher Stress and Burnout in an Urban Arts Secondary School Context

by

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CHAPTER ONE

Research Rationale and Context

Introduction

Stress and burnout pervade among public school teachers and are heightened in urban schools, where job demands are often high and resources low. Teacher stress and burnout, leading to turnover, is known to be especially high for early career teachers. Many studies have been done that isolate possible contributing factors such as: supervisory support, the classroom emotional climate, student behavior, pupil teacher ratio, access to resources, teacher temporal intelligence, district budgets, job demands and effective classroom practices. Oftentimes, there are multiple contributing factors over periods of time leading to teachers experiencing burnout and consequently leaving the field. In this project, I seek the perspectives of teachers who have worked at an urban arts school to learn how to prevent stress and burnout by looking at contributing factors and strategies to combat them. My research question is: *What are teacher perspectives on preventing stress and burnout at an urban arts school?*

Chapter Overview

This chapter will first discuss my rationale for exploring the prevention of teacher stress and burnout in an urban arts school context. This research question has significant implications for increasing the longevity of one's teaching career, the quality of their experience while teaching and their effectiveness as a teacher. It can also lead to a strengthening in the communities that have been weakened by high teacher turnover. Next, I will provide historical context for contemporary issues of stress and burnout, and personal context that includes my

own transformative educational experiences that have led to a passion for this topic. Finally, I will review my research question and prepare the reader for the literature review that follows in Chapter 2.

Context and Rationale for Research

American public schools currently spend millions of dollars on plans to reduce teacher turnover and to revive the enthusiasm and passion in teachers who have lost their motivation to teach. Based on this information, we can assume and acknowledge that teaching is a high stress and vulnerable profession that demands dedication and resilience. In fact, teaching is often characterized by a much-higher-than-average rate of turnover due to the high stress environment. These rates are slightly lower than those for other semi professionals such as nursing and social work (Etzioni, 1969; Price, 1977). As stated by Dairrai Doliber, an eighth grade social studies teacher in the Detroit-metro area, "My very first class they said, 'Look around, the teacher turnover rate is extremely high. Within three to five years more than 50% of you guys are going to be out of teaching.' We're all looking around at each other like, that's not going to be me and yet the majority of the people I graduate with aren't teaching anymore for various reasons (as cited in MacLaughlin, 2018)." Typically, those who enter teaching can expect to be underpaid, undervalued and overworked (Whitaker, 2007). Although there is sometimes money available for teacher support, in times of diminished funding and resources for public education, there is constant negotiation on how these monies should be spent.

At the heart of many urban schools is the debate on how funds should be allocated. When funding is low, teaching positions are often sacrificed to stay within budget. This creates a higher workload for the remaining teachers and contributes to work related stress in many different

ways. In some cases, the threat of budget cuts causes teachers to grow weary of the instability

and leave on their own accord. While teacher turnover is often seen as a problem, it is sometimes

viewed as a benefit, especially when teachers have more years of experience and higher paying

salaries. According to Maxfield, when teachers leave the profession on their own, school districts

usually replace them with first year teachers, thereby maintaining a reduced annual budget

(2009). However, teacher turnover can also present an organizational problem for public schools.

When teachers quit, the school districts lose the investments they have made in professional

development, workshops, equity training, in-services, and other teacher activities. The impact is

greater the longer the tenure. When districts replace these teachers with first year teachers, they

have to start over from the beginning (Maxfield, 2009). This process is costly and takes money

that may be better allocated for student resources. The issue of burnout is exacerbated when

veteran teachers are replaced with new teachers, who are leaving the profession at a much higher

rate. According to Ingersoll, Merrill and Stuckley, 15% (about half a million) teachers leave the

profession every year and more than 41% of teachers leave the profession within five years of

starting (2014). This presents as a problem because although there is a cost benefit in replacing a

veteran teacher with a new teacher, if new teachers are leaving faster, it creates an unstable

environment for the students and other staff.

Transformative Educational Experiences

My personal interest in the prevention of teacher burnout and turnover stems from my

own experiences at an urban arts school. I began working for my district in the fall of 2014. I had

been working in immigration law so it was a shift in pace and subject matter. I remember a

distinct moment as I was saying goodbye to my office on the 34th floor of a prestigious law firm

in downtown Minneapolis. I was filled with excitement to be shifting careers from law to education. I was certain that being a teacher would feel more rewarding and fulfilling. I looked forward to my days ahead as an adult educating our youth. Although my vision was somewhat self-important, it was also centered on the idea that teaching was going to be "easy" compared to working in law.

In October 2014, I was offered a position at an urban arts school as the Dance Specialist. The school year typically started the Tuesday after labor day, however, I was hired October 17th. I later learned the district had forgotten to post my position, along with a few others, before the school year began. Although it made no difference to me at the time, it was an awkward transition for the students because they had been working with short term subs until my position had been filled. In reflection, years later, I realized how challenging it was as a first year teacher to be thrown into my position after the school year had already started. Not to mention I went through essentially no training once in my position. I also noticed there was very little training available for first year teachers at the district level. Although I later learned there was a one week orientation for new hires, which I missed due to my late hire, there was little to no follow up after the initial training. In my personal experience, it felt like a "you either sink or swim" approach.

Although my first year of teaching was indeed very enjoyable, it was also very challenging. I often had to "go with the flow" and be ready for things to change at the last minute. There were many times where I questioned if I was equipped to get the job done. As if that wasn't enough, our school was deeply impacted by a misunderstanding regarding teaching licensure among two of our staff that led to student protests and our school being featured on the

nightly news. All of this added stress. I continued to stay open as both our principal and vice principal were pulled from our school for an "investigation" during the second to last week of school. It was a year I would never forget. We lost approximately ten staff members that year, including our administration, to burnout, turnover and budget cuts.

When I returned the year after, I walked into a school staffed with new administration and teachers. I felt hopeful that my second year would be different and the intensity from the year prior would melt away. Unfortunately, with new administration came new ideas and different approaches to leadership. It was constant adjusting and re-adjusting with new initiatives, changes to the schedule and a recuperative swing towards order and control. By the end of the year, I was tired and feeling the effects of stress on my performance.

Although I believe we are in a better place six years later, I still see trends of stress and burnout that impact our school every year. Sometimes it seems clear that the stressors are due to personal reasons, unrelated to administrative support, student behavior or lack of resources. However, more often than not, I hear teachers share that they are worn out because it is just "too much." I do not regard these teachers as weak. In fact, some of the teachers that have experienced burnout have been some of our strongest, most effective and most remembered teachers. It has been challenging to see my colleagues and mentors struggle when I look to them as role models. At times, it cuts into the morale that we all try so adamantly to maintain.

The burnout of our great educators has not only impacted our teaching community but it has also impacted our students and families. Teachers spend an entire school year fostering relationships with students and building community. All of this time adds up to social emotional capital that can be greatly impacted when a teacher is suffering from burnout or worse, leaves

our school. If a teacher has been working at the school for some time, this is even more devastating. Even as an adult I can appreciate the deep loss of a mentor. In a world that is forever changing, I believe our students should have access to something that is constant, stable and healthy. I believe understanding and better navigating burnout is a step towards consistency for our students. It is because of this that I am deeply passionate about this subject.

Conclusion/Summary

This chapter began by acknowledging that stress and burnout pervade among public school teachers and are heightened in urban schools, where job demands are often high and resources low. As I mentioned in my rationale, 15% (about half a million) teachers leave the profession every year and more than 41% of teachers leave the profession within five years of starting (Ingersoll, Merrill and Stuckley, 2014). This is similar to other high stress professions, such as nursing which reports "49% of registered nurses under 30 and 40% of registered nurses over 30 experience burnout" (De Keyrel, 2018). I laid out that although teacher turnover has detrimental effects, it can also be seen as a benefit for public school annual budgets which may be a contributing factor as to why turnover related to burnout is not taken more seriously in the public school setting.

This chapter also discussed my personal rationale for exploring this topic. I have been working at an urban arts school for six years and I am deeply committed to our community. I see the impact of teacher stress and burnout everyday. Not only does it impact teacher morale, it also impacts the students ability to feel they can trust their environment for learning. This project will take a look at many different voices within the our school community and also the greater scope of teacher stress and burnout in our district. In Chapter 2, I will explore the contributing factors

to stress and burnout, followed by strategies to prevent their effects. In Chapter 3, I will discuss the methodology for conducting my action research, including qualitative data analysis and narrative interviews. Chapter 4 will include my data analysis and Chapter 5 will conclude with my findings and the implications for policy and practice.

Chapter 2
Literature Review

Introduction

As an educator, going into my seventh year of teaching, I am desperate to understand teacher burnout and how it can be prevented. I am passionate about my work with students and it is my hope to continue working as an educator for many years to come. In order to do this successfully, it appears to be vital that I understand why some teachers burnout and others do not. This matters to me deeply as I have experienced my own bouts of burnout during my tenure.

On a broader scale, it is important to look at burnout as it is impacting the teaching profession as we know it. According to The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), they predict that the employment of teachers at all levels will grow between now and 2026. BLS expects the number of teaching jobs for kindergarten and elementary schools to rise seven percent, introducing around 116,300 new jobs, and the number of middle school and high school teaching jobs to rise eight percent, equating to a combined 124,100 new teaching positions (American University, 2019). This is relevant because according to the LPI report, new teachers leave at greater rates than others leaving before retirement. Not only that, but the report also notes that new teachers leave at rates between 19% and 30% over their first five years of teaching (Hennick, 2015). According to this data, teachers are leaving at a faster rate than jobs are made available - which is problematic. Although this data does not include the number of graduates pursuing teaching jobs, we can confirm new teachers are leaving at a higher rate once entering the field. It is essential we take a closer look, not only to avoid a teacher shortage but also to

build a system where we keep great teachers doing what they do best. I believe it is important to review the research on what leads teachers to burnout and what allows them to thrive.

In Chapter two, I will examine the literature related to my research question: *What are teacher perspectives on preventing stress and burnout at an urban arts school?* I will start by defining teacher stress and burnout and continue with a literature review looking at contributing factors and solutions to prevent burnout. In my literature review, three different categories emerged related to teacher burnout: environmental stress factors, personal stress factors and strategies related to resilience and prevention. In this chapter, I will outline each of these categories and connect why understanding these concepts is essential in having a thriving and long lasting career in teaching.

It is important to note that amidst the process of choosing and beginning my thesis work, a global pandemic broke out with the Coronavirus disease (COVID-19). COVID-19 is an infectious disease caused by a newly discovered coronavirus. According to the Center for Disease Control (2020), most people infected with the COVID-19 virus experience mild to moderate respiratory illness and recover without requiring special treatment. However, older people, and those with underlying medical problems like cardiovascular disease, diabetes, chronic respiratory disease, and cancer are more likely to develop serious illness. It is because of this that many states (and countries) moved their public school system to online, distance learning or a hybrid system of both online and in person learning. It is undeniable that COVID-19 has added a tremendous amount of stress to the teaching community. This has shown up in additional work, impossible working circumstances at home and copious amounts of fear and worry about getting infected or spreading the virus to loved ones. Although this is a

profound and study worthy change in our society, for the purpose of this thesis, I will be looking more closely at the teaching environment before COVID-19. I will outline this approach more clearly in Chapter Three: Methods. Because stress and burnout within the teaching profession existed far before the pandemic, I will choose to focus on a broader understanding of them.

Stress and Burnout

In recent years, teacher stress and burnout have become topics of increasing public and professional concern. In a recent study, it was found that chronic stress is a precursor to burnout and can lead to teachers leaving the profession (American University, 2019). Understanding the elements of stress and factors of burnout help to understand why it is so pervasive in the field of education. Once we understand stress and burnout, it becomes more clear as to how we can prevent them. Below, I review the definitions for stress and burnout, explain the relationship between stress and burnout, define the depth of burnout, and identify the factors of burnout that appeared with greatest frequency in my literature review. I will then outline the different kinds of preventative tools that teachers incorporate so we can better understand strategies to cope, build resilience and rise above.

Stress

According to Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary (1999), stress is defined as, "a state of mental or emotional strain or tension resulting from adverse or very demanding circumstances." Bosquet states that high chronic stress leads to teacher burnout and teacher turnover rates as teachers are often existing in demanding circumstances over long periods of time (2012)**.** Stoeber and Rennert confirm that teaching is one of the professions with a high level of job stress, ranked tenth in a list of high stress jobs (2008). This data outlines that teachers

experience stress in their field. This is something all researchers seem to agree on. Carr explains that stress occurs when the demands of the teaching profession exceed resources, and over time, this may result in burnout (2009). Maxfield supports this by adding, "stress and burnout are pervasive among public school teachers and even more amplified in urban schools, where job demands are often high and resources low" (2009). Mounting accountability pressures, diminishing budgets, and the challenges of larger and increasingly diverse classes have made public school teaching one of the most stressful professions in the United States today (Botwinik, 2007). Nationally, an estimated 46% of teachers report "high daily stress," a rate matched only by nurses and physicians (Gallup, 2014). In urban schools, one study found that 93% of teachers reported high levels of job stress (Herman, Hickmon-Rosa & Reinke, 2018). The research concludes teachers experience stress and that it can show up in many different ways. In the next section, we will be taking a look at how and why stress can lead to burnout.

Burnout

One of the most significant consequences of teachers' continuous exposure to stress is burnout (Grayson, 2008). Burnout within the teaching profession occurs when a teacher has endured high stress over a longer period of time. This is relevant because burnout can lead to a desire to leave the profession. Psychology Today describes burnout as "a state of chronic stress that leads to physical and emotional exhaustion, cynicism, detachment, and feelings of ineffectiveness and lack of accomplishment" (2015, p.1). Teacher burnout is a long term response to the experience of emotional and interpersonal occupational stressors (Bermejo-Toro et al., 2016). Although stress may lead to anxiety or a sense of feeling overwhelmed, Edelwich and Brodsky take it a step further and suggest that burnout is a "progressive loss of idealism,

energy, purpose, and concern as a result of conditions of work" (2019, p.15). In general, burnout is a function of feeling inconsequential - feeling that no matter how hard one works, the payoffs in terms of accomplishment, recognition, or appreciation are not there. These feelings often lead to an early exit from the profession.

Maslach, Jackson, Leiter, Schaufeli, & Schwab go on to add that burnout consists of three components referred to as emotional exhaustion, reduced personal accomplishment and depersonalization (1986). Although they highlight that the core component of burnout is considered to be emotional exhaustion. For example, according to Maslach, et al (1986), a teacher may continue to teach and complete the responsibilities within their job with reduced personal accomplishment and depersonalization but if a teacher experiences chronic emotional exhaustion, it is often hard to continue. They go on to state that emotional exhaustion manifests itself as lack of energy. In a very simple equation, the lack of energy occurs because the individual's emotional resources available are being fully spent on work (Maslach et al., 1986). In summary, over exposure to stress and experiencing a lack of coping resources can lead to many different manifestations of burnout.

Regarding the effects on the teacher, research reveals that burnout is associated with poor job satisfaction, high rates of absenteeism, anxiety and depression, high blood pressure, or even cardiovascular disease (Roeser, 2013). Regarding the educational outcomes, Roeser suggests teacher burnout is associated with reduced quality of performance and classroom instruction and with diminished capacity to engage and effectively teach (2013). As further research confirms, studies linked teacher stress to poorer classroom climate as well as more unsatisfactory student behavior and achievement (Bosquet, 2012). I found this particularly interesting as we often look

at student behavior and achievement through the lens of the student. It causes pause to think a teacher's wellbeing has a more direct impact on student performance.

It is important to highlight that the relationship between the effects of teacher stressors on burnout levels are complex and often diffused by a wide array of resources. Meaning, how stress manifests and how it impacts the individual can vary. The following study highlights that if a teacher experiences stress, there is no guarantee this will lead to burnout. This premise comes from traditional stress models demonstrating that, in a given context, the stress response is a function of the balance between stressors and coping resources (Bermejo-Toro et al., 2016). To clarify, when looking at the algorithm for burnout, it is not only the amount of stress over a particular amount of time, but also one's ability to cope with said stress. Coping resources include contextual demands, personal characteristics, and interpersonal skills (Bermejo-Toro et al., 2016). We will take a closer look at coping resources as they relate to resilience later in this chapter but first, I will further examine the types of stressors that contribute to burnout. Although they are essentially stressors, we will categorize them as factors of burnout as they are only part of the burnout equation.

Factors of Burnout

As we learned in the previous section, burnout occurs when the stressors outweigh the coping mechanisms or methods of resilience. We will first take a look at the common contributing stressors that lead to burnout. The literature regarding burnout would suggest that there are many different contributing stressors to burnout. As outlined by Barry Farber of Columbia University:

"Burnout is the result of such stresses as student discipline problems, student apathy, overcrowded classrooms and shortages of available support staff, excessive paperwork, excessive testing, involuntary transfers, inadequate salaries, lack of promotional opportunities, demanding parents, lack of administrative support, role conflict and role ambiguity, and public criticism of teachers" (2016, p.22).

This would suggest that many of the contributing factors to burnout are external or environmental factors, an experience happening outside the teacher. In addition to external stressors, Hoerr (2015) outlines that teachers also experience chronic stress when they have a low sense of self-efficacy or demonstrate a lack of self-awareness to their heightened emotional state, suggesting burnout stems from internal or personal factors, an experience within the teacher. After reviewing the literature, I found it most helpful to organize contributing stressors into two overarching categories: Environmental and Personal. In this next section, we will review the literature to better understand how both environmental and personal stressors, overtime, can lead to burnout.

Environmental Stressors

In order to better understand teacher burnout, it is important to take a look at the stressors that contribute to burnout. Sources seem to divide causes into two primary areas: environmental factors and personal stressors. We will first take a look at environmental stressors. Environmental stressors can include: organizational climate, workplace conditions, organizational practices or factors, contextual factors and situational variables. Researchers emphasize the importance of environmental stressors to burnout. As stated by Barnwell, "Several factors strongly influence teacher satisfaction: the provision of ample time to collaborate during

the school day, strong and supportive principals, and common vision that's shared and executed by teachers and staff" (2015, p.17). Other literature suggests additional environmental stressors that contribute to burnout, including: lack of support for new teachers, lack of opportunities for professional development and growth (Williams, 2012), ineffective leadership, poor management of student behavioral issues (Phillips, 2015), toxic school climate, and a lack of common school vision (Barnwell, 2015). I will now breakdown the contributing environmental stressors that appeared with greatest frequency in the literature. These factors are external contributors to stress in the teaching profession and typically have a solution that may be outside of the teachers control.

Compensation. Low compensation appeared multiple times in the literature as a reason teachers experience stress in their job. According to NPR, beginning teachers make about 20 percent less than college graduates in other fields (2016). Although compensation was mentioned many times throughout the literature, very little research has been done to support how compensation directly relates to teacher burnout. Most complaints regarding compensation stem from teacher reporting (O'Hanley, 2013) which allows us to assume that teachers may feel they are not awarded properly for the amount of work they put in. According to American University of Washington, DC, 13% of teachers who left the field voluntarily did so to seek improved pay or benefits (2018). A 2018 Gallup report notes that despite prevailing coverage on low teacher pay, teachers who leave the profession blame poor pay less often than people in other professions did. For example, 24% of non-teachers voluntarily left their last jobs because of unsatisfactory pay compared to 13% of teachers (Gallup, 2018). In analyzing the data, I found that compensation did not appear to be the leading cause to burnout, but rather, another reason to

leave. Next we will take a look at how institutional demands and a lack of resources lead to high levels of environmental stress in the teaching profession.

Institutional demands and resources. Another example of environmental stressors come from institutional demands and a lack of resources. Rhiannon Wenning, a community site coordinator at a high-poverty junior and senior high school in Jefferson County, Colorado said teachers often get burnout because they find the bureaucracy of the educational system exhausting (McLaughlin, 2018). She states, "It's not the kids that burn us out, it's not the school per say, it's the requirements set forth by our state legislature, and the lack of support financially and professionally (as cited in McLaughlin, 2018)."

At the institutional level, job demands have been examined to include institutional support and working conditions. Demands such as class sizes and the proportion of students with low-income status within the school impact how teachers feel about their job (American University, 2019). General organizational health of the school environment and school climate appear frequently in the literature as well. Although institutional demands and resources have an impact on the learning environment, according to a survey conducted by Byrd-Blake et al (2010), it is classroom demands and lack of resources that teachers report as being one of their greatest causes for stress.

Classroom demands and resources. In the classroom, teachers often face additional environmental demands in the form of academic, behavioral, social, and emotional needs of their students. Student behavioral problems are often understood to be a central job demand contributing to teacher stress. In fact, challenges with behavioral management are among the most commonly cited reasons teachers leave the field (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011). Furthermore,

student classroom misbehavior is associated negatively with a sense of teaching efficacy. In other words, teachers who struggle with student behavior often lose faith in their ability to be an effective teacher over time or perhaps due low efficacy, students lack the structure needed for focus behavior. In my experience as a teacher, I hear this the most from teachers at my school. They feel overwhelmed by the intensity of their classrooms related to student behavior and it takes a toll over time. In order to combat the impact of student behavior at my school, we often focus our attention on improving social support. As social support is considered another factor of environmental stress, we will take a closer look at how it can contribute to stress and eventually burnout.

Social support. Social support has been defined as, "the availability of helping relationships and the quality of those relationships" (Leavy, 1983, p.5). Regarding work-related social support, teachers might be extra vulnerable. For example, although teachers spend many hours of the day interacting with children in the classroom, they are still largely isolated from their teaching colleagues, adding to stress (Dorman, 2003). In many cases, a lack of work-related sources of social support are considered important antecedents of teacher burnout. This also applies to social support from supervisors, which has proved to mitigate the effect on stress, leading to burnout. Babad (2009) claims that because of the loneliness related to teachers' work in the classroom, the support system from staff and administration is especially important. Unfortunately, many teachers self-report a lack of appreciation from their supervisors (Babad, 2009). When teachers do not feel supported by their administrators, it can add to environmental stress.

Administrative support. According to Tickle, Chang and Kim (2011), teachers feel they have administrative support when they believe the administration is there to help them. They outline that this can manifest in many different ways, including: acknowledgment, allocation of resources, allowing autonomy, positive school climate and by implementing a proper student behavior response system (2011). An administrative team that supports their teachers will work with the teacher and enforce school rules so that student behavior does not negatively impact the classroom environment. On the contrary, if teachers feel like they are not supported in doing their job, this may cause high levels of environmental stress which overtime may lead to burnout. As stated in Betoret, any restriction to their desire to teach, contributes to burnout (2006).

Administrative support is not only demonstrated by helping reduce the pressure from federal and state accountability systems, it is also cultivated by treating teachers as professionals. According to McLaughlin, teachers that are subjected to poor administrative support are burning out and leaving their jobs (2018). Curtis confirms low salary and lack of administrative support are considered reasons for teacher attrition (2012). We know based on our findings about burnout that once teachers begin to lose purpose, they often struggle to stay in the profession. Administrative support is especially important when workload is high. Workload is another factor that contributes to environmental stress.

Workload. It is often reported that teachers find the workload to outweigh the benefits of teaching. According to the Education Supports 2018 Teacher Wellbeing Index, 32% of all education professionals are working more than 51 hours a week. The Index also found that working long hours and feeling stressed appear to be closely linked, with the highest levels of

stress coming from those who work more than 41 hours a week. In addition, 72% say workload is the main reason for considering leaving their jobs. (Education Supports, 2018)

Furthermore, teachers feel that the time investment is disproportionate to the benefits for the student. Many teachers also complain that additional tasks assigned by administration or even the district only distract their work as teachers. Several authors have indicated that these administrative burdens are considered an important stressor and a main cause of job dissatisfaction among teachers (Babad, 2009; Iancu et al., 2017; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 201). For this reason, it is important to distinguish between teaching-related (e.g., class preparation, teaching) and non-teaching-related workload (e.g., administration, meetings). It is fair to assume that teachers react differently to the workload that is directly related to teaching and the well-being of their students versus the workload that is being developed by high-stakes accountability demands (Chang 2009). The literature review has indicated that time pressure and workload are significantly related to burnout (Babad, 2009).

As outlined in this section, there are many external stressors that exist in education. Any combination of these can contribute to teacher burnout. We will now take a look at personal or internal stressors that appear in the literature to get a more complete picture of the factors leading to burnout.

Personal Stressors

In addition to environmental stressors, the research reveals that personal stressors can also contribute to teacher burnout. As stated by Tomic, Evers and Brouweres, "Intervention programmes focusing on personality or internal factors are likely to be more effective than those focusing on environmental conditions because they appear to be more easily altered than

organizational factors" (p.752). This speaks to the reality that we cannot always change the specifics of our job but we can change how we react to it. Personal factors include individual aspects such as personality traits, perceptions, beliefs and mindsets and self-efficacy.

Personality traits. In regard to personality and burnout, the literature examines specific traits including introversion and extroversion as they relate to resilience. In my analysis, I found that introversion could be associated with high levels of stress and burnout. Teachers with low resilience also reported higher levels of stress and burnout.

Introverted personality. Many studies have been conducted on the challenges faced by introverted students in today's increasingly social learning environments, however, often overlooked are the introverted teachers leading those classrooms. Teachers with introverted personality traits can struggle just as much as the children they are educating (Godsey, 2016). A few studies claim that introverted teachers, "especially those who may have falsely envisioned teaching as a career involving calm lectures, one-on-one interactions, and grading papers quietly with a cup of tea (Godsey, 2016, p. 2)" are at risk of burning out.

Carl Jung defined introversion as an orientation through "subjective psychic contents," while *Scientific American* (2009) contends that introversion is more aptly described as a lessened sensitivity to rewards in the environment. He went on to state that introverts are energized by a quiet space, introspection and deep relationships and are exhausted by excessive social interactions. When introverted teachers are put in classrooms with high student behavior and they are not equipped with appropriate behavior management skills, it is possible they can feel overwhelmed. According to Godsey, their introversion is a reason why today's increasingly

social learning environments are exhausting them - sometimes to a point of burnout and retirement (2016).

   Resilience. Resilience has been defined as, "the process of, capacity for, or outcome of successful adaptation despite challenging or threatening circumstances" (Masten et al.; 1990, p. 425). Bernshausen and Cunningham (2001) defined resilience as the ability to bounce back after encountering stressful situations. Bobek (2002, p. 202) stated that, "A teacher's resilience is enhanced when he is capable of assessing adverse situations, recognizing options for coping, and arriving at appropriate solutions." Key characteristics of the resilient teacher included a strong sense of agency, or the feeling that they could control any situation; a tendency to not dwell on past failures or mistakes, a capacity to depersonalize unpleasant experiences and thereby understand them analytically, a strong sense of moral purpose (Bobek, 2002). Teachers who do not possess a strong sense of resilience have proven to burn out more quickly (Hoerr, 2015). They find themselves unable to adapt or let go of past mistakes. Dworkin (1987) reported that teachers who experience low levels of resilience more commonly feel the weight of perhaps "normal" teacher stress. Teachers with low resilience often lack self-awareness, which can be a powerful tool to manage stress.

   Self-awareness. Gold and Roth (1993) defined self-awareness as "a process of getting in touch with your feelings and behaviors" (p.141). An increased self-awareness involves a more accurate understanding of how students affect our own emotional processes and behaviors and how we affect students. Self-awareness is imperative for all teachers and can be especially helpful for those who work with students with emotional and behavioral disorders. As teachers, we are often affected by the behavior of our students and a heightened self-awareness can help us

stay connected to what we need in order to remain centered. Self-awareness allows us to take risks and regularly ask ourselves which of our own behaviors are helping or hindering our personal and professional growth (Richardson & Shupe, 2003).

The literature review would suggest that teachers with low or limited self-awareness are less likely to develop meaningful relationships with their students and peers. Although teachers need to learn how to recognize signs of emotional distress in their students, it is equally important to acknowledge that teachers' own personalities, learned prejudices, and individual psychological histories have helped shape their attitudes and responses to certain behaviors (Long et al., 1996). If teachers are not aware of how they show up in their classroom, there is a potential to cause harm. As highlighted by Fritz Redl, self-awareness is a key ingredient in succeeding with a student population 1996).

Perceptions. Another personal factor that appears in the research related to burnout is teacher perceptions. Many teachers enter the teaching profession with high expectations and ideas about what their job entails. The research suggests that teachers should be encouraged to maintain a realistic view of what is and is not within their control in order to have a healthy sense of reality and thus avoid burnout. McCarthy et al. (2009) examine why some teachers succeed in their jobs while others in the same or similar environments experience high stress, exhaustion and burnout. McCarthy et al. explain:

> Teachers' experience of stress appeared to have little to do with differences between the various elementary school contexts. Most variance was accounted for by individual differences between teachers, suggesting that individual perceptions of the balance between resources and demands were most predictive of burnout. (2009, p.296)

Here McCarthy et al. argue that differences in environmental circumstances don't matter as much as differences in teacher perceptions. These perceptions also lead to a sense of self-efficacy or a belief that you are able to do a task or reach a specific goal. We will take a closer look at that next.

       Self-efficacy. Interpersonal self-efficacy involves the teacher's beliefs about the ability to develop and sustain positive relationships with school administration, peers and students (Moura and Costa 2016). Bandura would take this further by stating, "self-efficacy refers to an individual's belief in his or her capacity to execute behaviors necessary to produce specific performance attainments" (1997). Self-efficacy reflects confidence in the ability to exert control over one's motivation, behavior and social environment. This is an invaluable skill in the teaching profession. These cognitive self-evaluations influence all manner of human experience, including the goals for which people strive, the amount of energy expended toward goal achievement, and the likelihood of attaining particular levels of behavioral performance. When a teacher has low self efficacy, they are likely to struggle in the classroom (Hoerr, 2015). Because low self efficacy reflects a teacher's doubt in their ability, this may cause students to feel misguided or without direction in the classroom. This could also contribute to a general sense of students not being seen or heard. In a report published by Friedman (2003), he reported that Israeli teachers with a strong sense of self-efficacy in interpersonal relationships within the school reduced the sense of burnout. In this section, we learned that low efficacy can contribute to burnout. We can also assume that a better understanding of high efficacy can also lead to strategies that mitigate burnout. We will look at various strategies in the next section.

Strategies

As previously mentioned, the research shows that personal factors or stressors are easier to manipulate when looking to avoid burnout. This is not to suggest that external stressors cannot be changed but rather that we have the most control over how we respond to situations. The research agrees and this leads us to strategies to prevent burnout. It is my hope to identify actionable steps and solutions that teachers and schools can take to move away from burnout and turnover. There are several approaches regarding the kind of intervention that is necessary to decrease teacher burnout. Based on the literature reviewed, I have organized these approaches into the following categories: cognitive behavioral therapy, mindfulness and relaxation, professional development, teacher collaboration and support and moderating student/teacher ratio.

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy

The literature suggests that an important factor to overcoming teacher burnout is to employ coping skills that are traditional in occupational health psychology. One of the most recommended strategies is engaging in the use of cognitive behavioral approach to stress. Cooley and Yovanoff (1996) implemented two interventions which consisted of a series of stress management coping skill workshops designed to prevent or relieve teacher burnout and a peer collaboration program designed to provide support. This allowed a space where teachers could interact and process work-related problems. The study group made a desirable change in the case of depersonalization and personal accomplishment. The group also showed a decrease in emotional exhaustion. Cognitive Behavioral Therapy is also commonly used with mindfulness and relaxation techniques.

Mindfulness and Relaxation Techniques

Interventions based on mindfulness and relaxation techniques provided encouraging results in literature reviews. Roeser et al. (2013) considered mindfulness a useful intervention in reducing the levels of teacher burnout and identified three change mechanisms that can explain the mindfulness utility in reducing burnout. First, mindfulness develops awareness of the precursors of one's reaction to stress. This allows a person to reflect on their emotional reactions and allows them to use this information to reduce stress. Secondly, mindfulness and relaxation develop an awareness of bodily sensations that accompany being "stressed out". This allows a person to know and be aware of what they are feeling. Lastly, it generates a set of strategies for coping effectively with stress. Once a person realizes they are stressed they are able to choose from a multitude of coping mechanisms, such as: take a break or breathe deeply before making a decision, escape ruminative thinking in favor of focusing on the present moment, let go of high expectations and illusions of control, see the pain and reason behind others' difficult behavior rather than taking it personally, and be compassionate with oneself when something is wrong. (Iancu et al., 2017)

Professional development

When cognitive behavioral therapy and mindfulness and relaxation techniques are introduced into the workplace, this helps teachers even more. This can be done by integrating these methods into professional development training. The literature would suggest that professional development is a widely accepted strategy to combating teacher stress and burnout. Professional development strategy specifies the fact that teachers are trained through academic lessons to provide explicit instruction to students to promote the development of emotional

awareness and communication, self-regulation, social problem solving, and relationship

management skills (Berg et al. 2016). Unfortunately, although professional development is

commonly cited in the research, there does not seem to be a consistently positive impact on

emotional exhaustion and personal accomplishment of teachers. Many teachers self reported that

professional development often adds to the already existing stressors of the teaching profession

(Inacu et al., 2017).

Teacher Collaboration and Support

The literature would suggest that social support involves the use of group work, in which

case the teachers should feel supported and encouraged for their work by their colleagues (Inacu

et al., 2017). This supportive environment would improve the self efficacy of teachers and allow

them to feel a deeper sense of purpose and meaning in relation to their work. We The research

would suggest that social support allowed teachers to depersonalize and feel a sense of personal

accomplishment. This improved (decreased) emotional exhaustion.

Moderating student teacher ratio

Throughout the research, the amount of students per teacher is brought up with great

frequency. This is also frequently referred to as pupil teacher ratio or PTR. It is referenced as a

cause leading to teacher burnout when there are too many students per teacher and it is also a

suggested strategy to lower the student-teacher ratio in order to improve classroom climate -

leading to an improvement in teacher self-efficacy. Hattie (2009) suggests there is evidence that

lower PTR relates to teacher and student work-related conditions. Wang and Eccles (2016)

suggested that a low PTR decreases teachers' work-load; therefore, it may become easier for the

teacher to manage the class. As burnout decreases, the teachers' involvement in the classroom

improves and there is a greater likelihood that bullying and other negative and aggressive behaviors between children will also decrease.

Teachers also report better relationships with students in small classes (Finn et al., 2003). Teachers are able to give more individualized attention and provide students with a greater sense of belonging which often leads to more positive student behavior. As an additional note, PTR could also be decreased by adding another teacher or support staff in some or all lessons.

Summary

In this chapter, I have provided essential background on the contributing factors to stress and burnout in teaching and strategies to mitigate their effects. I began by giving us a definition of stress and explaining how when it appears in chronic and unresolved ways, it is a precursor to burnout. I then outlined the many contributing factors to burnout by categorizing them into two main subjects: environmental and personal factors. I then laid out some of the prominent strategies that the research suggests in combating burnout. Chapter 3 details the methods employed to conduct my own research. The majority of this work culminates in one-on-one interviews with past and present employees of urban arts Secondary School, answering the questions: what causes teacher burnout and how can it be avoided?

Chapter Three

Methods

As a teacher already seven years into my tenure, I want to do what I can to avoid the effects of teacher burnout. In my research, I take a closer look at: *What are teacher perspectives on how to prevent stress and burnout at an urban arts secondary school?* I want to discover what causes some teachers to thrive and others to struggle. It is my hope to uncover the characteristics, perceptions, and thinking of teachers who effectively avoid burnout so that I may implement some of their strategies. I accomplished this through a qualitative study which consisted of one-on-one interviews with select participants. In order to look at both the arts and non-arts perspectives, I chose three teachers teaching arts content and three teachers from non-arts content areas.

As mentioned in Chapter Two: Literature Review, it is important to note that amidst the process of choosing and beginning my thesis work, a global pandemic broke out with the Coronavirus disease (COVID-19). Due to the severity and pervasive spread of COVID-19, many states (and countries) moved their public school system to online, distance learning or a hybrid system of both online and in person learning. It is undeniable that COVID-19 has added a tremendous amount of stress to the teaching community. This has shown up in additional work, impossible working circumstances at home and copious amounts of fear and worry about getting infected or spreading the virus to loved ones. As previously mentioned, I will be looking more closely at the teaching environment before COVID-19. I will outline this approach more clearly in the section regarding interview questions. Because stress and burnout within the teaching profession existed far before the pandemic, I will choose to focus on a broader understanding of

them. I will, however, address how the pandemic has impacted the teachers interviewed in this study.

The first part of my chapter will explain my choice of research paradigm and methods. Next, I will describe the setting and participants who participated in this study by sharing their perspectives and experiences within the teaching profession. I will also explain the research tools used to collect data. Finally, I will describe the methods used to analyze the data.

Research Paradigm, Rationale, and Methods

In order to address the question of how educators at urban arts Secondary School avoid teacher burnout, I conducted a qualitative case study. Creswell (2013) defines qualitative research as, "an inquiry approach that seeks to explore and understand the meaning individuals ascribe to a social or human problem." I chose a qualitative case study as the research question sought to discover both the contributing factors to teacher burnout and the characteristics, mindsets and thinking of teachers who effectively circumnavigate burnout. These are social issues and I found that qualitative research honors their complex nature. In addition, the research question addressed perceptions and feelings of teachers, which can be difficult to identify through quantitative methods. The primary qualitative research method I use in this study is grounded theory as it avoids preconceived assumptions and offers a more neutral view of understanding human action in a social context (Simmons, 2006).

Initial email

After receiving Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, I began my research process by sending an email to my principal to request permission to recruit teachers for my study (Appendix #1). Once I received approval from my principal, I sent an email to the teachers at my

school requesting volunteers to participate in my research (Appendix #2). Out of the eleven

teachers who responded, I chose three art teachers and three non-arts teachers. My goal was to

choose one teacher with two years or less of experience, one teacher with 15 or more years of

experience and one teacher somewhere in between. Unfortunately, there were not enough

teachers interested in participating with those specific criteria so I did the best I could to choose

teachers with a variety of experience. The specific area where I encountered difficulty was with

teachers who had less than two years of experience. I realized there was only one arts teacher

with two or less years of experience and zero non-arts teachers with less than two years

experience working at the school. I didn't realize this until after the study was formalized but as I

mentioned previously, I did the best I could to balance the years of experience with both arts and

non-arts teachers.

Once I recruited six teachers for my interviews, I arranged meeting times via GoogleMeet

to ensure the physical safety of my participants, due to COVID-19 and the current pandemic

state. I then emailed each participant a copy of the consent form via email. On the day of our

online meeting, I reviewed the consent form with each participant (Appendix #3), and recorded

their verbal consent to proceed and ask them the interview questions (Appendix #4). Based on

their responses, I asked a few additional questions to further clarify as needed. I recorded each

interview via GoogleMeet. Once the interviews were completed, I transcribed each one

completely.

After transcribing the interviews, I then used the grounded theory method to construct

hypotheses and theories through the collection and analysis of my qualitative data. I started by

tagging major ideas and concepts with codes that succinctly summarized the ideas/concepts. I

then looked for emerging themes in the codes and moved these into broader categories. I reported these categories and findings in the fourth and final chapter of my thesis.

Interviews. As mentioned above, I chose six different teacher participants based on their content area of teaching and their years of experience. My goal was to discover if there were any emerging themes or patterns based on the content area or years of experience. For example, I wondered if less experience equaled a faster track to burnout or perhaps more experience made teachers vulnerable to emotional exhaustion. I was also curious if participants with greater experience had learned specific strategies to help them thrive over the years. Although I had no agenda or expected outcome, I designed the questions to address themes that had already emerged in the research. I was curious to see if what appeared in the literature was consistent with what was happening at my school. As found in the literature, the questions were designed to address the three dimensions of burnout: depersonalization, emotional exhaustion, and reduced personal accomplishment. The interview questions were created to seek out answers for ten overarching questions. The interview questions are listed below:

1. Do you enjoy your work as a teacher?

    a. Do you feel organized and prepared each day?

    b. Do you feel the work you do matters and has value?

2. Do you feel invested in the growth and success of your students?

3. What does it look like when it goes well?

4. What are the stresses of the job?

    a. Do you feel the stresses of the job are inevitable?

    b. How might some of the stresses be avoided?

5. How do you cope with the stresses of the job?

   a. Do you feel you take work home with you?

   b. How do you recharge after a taxing day?

   c. Do you participate in extracurricular activities?

   d. Do you set boundaries for participation in school-related activities outside of your teaching role?

6. What makes you feel a sense of personal accomplishment within the job?

   a. Has this remained consistent throughout your teaching career?

   b. Can you identify any strategies that support this?

   c. Do you participate in professional development?

   d. Do you seek feedback from peers?

   e. Do you track student data to measure the effectiveness of your instruction?

7. Do you feel a sense of connectedness or community with those around you?

   a. Do you feel connected to other staff at school?

   b. What is your relationship with administration?

   c. How do you maintain relationships with important people in your life?

   d. Do you have positive relationships with your students?

8. What advice would you give to a new teacher?

9. Has burnout ever been mentioned within a mentoring process or professional development? If not, what would that look like?

10. Is there anything you would like to add regarding your experience as a teacher, related to stress or resilience

I also provided follow up questions depending on themes that emerged in the initial responses. All interviews were recorded and transcribed for analysis. After the interview process, participants will receive a copy of their transcript and all documents related to the interviews will be kept in my personal office in a locked filing cabinet. All online data will be kept in a secure, password- protected computer server. All materials will be accessible only to me and my research team.

Settings and Participants

The initial email was distributed to all teachers at my school of employment - a small, public secondary art school. Names and identities of those who were interested in participating were collected, however responses were kept anonymous from the school staff. Names of those with initial interest nor interview participants will be reported. The interviews were a maximum of 60 minutes in length and they took place at a time determined by the participant. All interviews were held over Google Meet due to the on-line nature of the 2020 school year. Participants included four current teachers at my school of employment and two teachers that recently left my school of employment due to other job offers. All interview responses were kept confidential, and names and other identifying features have not been reported in the results.

Data Analysis

The data from the interview was analyzed through transcriptions of recorded interviews, searching and noting themes and aberrations. I used the Grounded Theory method to construct hypotheses and theories through the collecting and analysis of my qualitative data. I started by tagging major ideas and concepts with codes that succinctly summarized the ideas/concepts. I then looked for emerging themes in the codes and moved these into broader categories. I

reported these categories and findings in the fourth and final chapter of my thesis. I chose to organize this data in a way that appropriately shows the complicated equation that leads to burnout. For example, I learned that experiencing stress in the job does not imminently equate to burnout. Burnout seems to be high stress over time with limited or ineffective coping mechanisms in place. In order to show this complex relationship, I grouped interview responses into main categories related to stress, coping mechanisms and advice for teachers entering the field for the first time. (Crewell, 2013)

In order to validate my results, I used several validity strategies to check the accuracy of my findings (Creswell, 2013). I first clarified my own bias as a teacher from the same school as the participants. I also presented conflicting information that came up in interviews that challenges my conclusions. This helps validate my findings while also acknowledging that there is no single narrative. Lastly, I used peer debriefing to ensure the study will resonate with others (Creswell, 2013).

Limitations

This study was limited in the number of participants, selection of participants, and the subjective nature of analysis. There were only six participants interviewed and only three of them came from arts and three from non-arts content areas. The small number of interviews will limit the ability to draw large-scale conclusions about teaching and burnout. In addition, the participants were selected only after they volunteered to participate. The interview data was also collected through self-reporting. This means that all of the information given was based on the teachers' perception of themselves and their surroundings. The method of having teachers self-report allows there to be discrepancies between perception and reality. What one teacher

may perceive as true, may not be the case for someone else. The participants may respond

negatively to the questions based on their mood or experience on that given day. For example, if

a teacher was assigned work above and beyond their regular job description, it may negatively

impact how they see their job and their own worthiness as a teacher. This could appear

specifically related to the additional stress presented by the pandemic.

As previously noted, the participants have been working under particularly stressful

circumstances due to COVID-19. All of the teachers at this school began working in a 100%

online, distance learning environment back in March 2020. Although the interview questions are

created for teachers to think about their experience in general, each participant acknowledged

they had their current experience (with COVID-19) in the forefront. It is possible that the

additional stress related to the pandemic will overshadow their experience as a whole and impact

the data. In the interview process, I did the best I could to ask more direct variations of the

questions to separate the pre-COVID and post-COVID experience. It is possible, however, that

the stressors related to COVID-19 will impact the data in this study. Although this is

understandable, it may keep me from having a clear understanding of what the general or broader

experience related to stress and burnout may be.

It is also important to mention that I work with the people who will participate in this

research. It is possible they will feel pressured to say yes to participating, although I hold no

authority over them as I am a peer. I do not anticipate this affecting the data, however, I can not

be certain and it is important to include it as a possible limitation.

Summary

In this chapter, I described my research paradigm and methods, as well as how they relate to my research questions. I also provided information about the selection and interview process with the participants. Finally, I included the protocol for how the interviews were conducted and how the data was analyzed. In Chapter 4, I will report the results of my one-on-one interviews with teachers from an urban arts secondary school. I will also include analysis of the interview data and interpretation of what was collected.

CHAPTER FOUR

Results

Chapter Overview

This chapter will discuss the results from my research. The study was centered around one-on-interviews investigating the question: *What are teacher perspectives on preventing stress and burnout at an urban arts secondary school?* The teachers were chosen on specific criteria regarding their years of experience and also whether or not they taught arts content or non-arts content. The interviews were designed to get at the heart of what causes stress in the teaching profession and also the qualities, perceptions and methods of thinking of teachers who avoid or prevent teacher burnout. Throughout this chapter I will show that my results are consistent with the procedures laid out in my methods chapter, and I will conclude by documenting the connections with the literature review.

Data Analysis

Interviews. An initial email was sent out to all staff requesting participation in one-on-one interviews regarding their experience with stress, burnout and resilience within the teaching profession. After a group of teachers expressed interest, participants for the interviews were chosen based on their experience and content areas. Three teachers were chosen from arts content areas and three teachers were chosen from non-arts content areas. It is important to note that race and gender are not specifically examined in this study because there was not a diverse population of teachers to draw from. The teacher population at Creative Arts is 85% white. Although race, gender and other identities are not overtly explored, I understand that identities are important and shape one's experience of the world, work, and might also impact how people

experience burnout. In total, two male teachers and one female teacher were chosen from each arts and non-arts content areas in attempts to keep the data balanced. The data that emerged was centered around teacher related stress, prevention of stress and burnout through tools for stress management, and returning to purpose. I will present the data collected from the interviews in this chapter.

Stressors. Identifying stressors is an essential step in understanding the challenges the participants face at their school. When asked to identify the stresses of the job, the participants were able to provide many examples. The main themes that emerged are: workload vs. time, communication and student success.

Workload vs. Time. The theme that appeared with the most frequency was workload versus time management. All participants agreed that throughout their career, they have felt they could use more time to complete their work. One participant identified that time conflict comes from having to prioritize your tasks. He admitted that it is sometimes challenging to choose between responsibilities directly related to lesson planning and classroom preparation, versus tasks assigned by administration or district level learning. Another participant explained that it is all of the seemingly small, additional tasks that pop up throughout the day such as: reaching out to families, presentations, committees, plcs, etc. A different participant took it a step further and explained that he wished he only had to focus on the kids instead of, "dealing with adults." Another participant agreed that he sometimes questions if he should serve the kids first or his boss or co-workers. He explained, "It is complicated. Bosses may get mad; kids won't - they just won't learn."

Relative to time and prioritizing workload, two participants commented on the stress of deadlines to complete administrative tasks. One participant confessed that he does not always know how to prioritize his work. He prefers to lesson plan and work on curriculum that directly impacts his students. He said, "It feels like there is always something else to do: professional development, observations, pass out technology. There are so many deadlines! If a deadline is approaching but it only affects me, like Teacher Development and Evaluation (TD&E) for example, I don't prioritize it over tasks related to student learning; even though it is all about student learning." He further clarified that he struggles when district tasks seem more important than actual teaching. A different participant commented, "Sometimes the workload that needs to be done in a limited amount of time causes me to stop breathing. In addition to that, you have teachers and students in your face saying, 'I want this too.' It is important to remember that you are only one person helping 30 kids and that is a big stressor."

Related to time management, a participant explained that she puts so much time into things that may only matter to some kids. When working on her power points, she states, "If my powerpoint doesn't look phenomenal, I feel like my teaching is subpar and this can be a time suck." She also finds that, as an English teacher, she spends a lot of time looking for texts that are modern and relatable. This process takes a lot of time as she is reading the texts to see if they are a good fit for her class. Even though she admitted that she could do less, she feels it could harm her students or keep them from having a more quality experience. Another participant agreed that he spends too much time, "trying to get it right for the kids." He explained that this becomes far more challenging when there is a lack of communication or miscommunication regarding the expectations.

Communication. All participants agreed that a lack of communication or

miscommunication can greatly contribute to the stress of being a teacher. One participant

explained that miscommunication or a change in plan or a lack of alignment on how to address

issues can all greatly contribute to stress. He stated, "Conflict can be good sometimes, but when

there is slow resolve or lots of red tape and/or poor communication - all of these things lead to

frustration." He also believes that it is important to have a platform to communicate and when he

feels unheard or the students do not feel heard that it leads to even greater disconnect and stress.

Another participant agreed that "Human to human things can be stressful." She believes that

communication is key when working with other people. She has found that lack of

communication exists regardless of where you teach. She added that it is even more complicated

when there is a power dynamic involved with a lack of communication, such as administration.

She explained that, as a teacher, she wants to do things right and when things get lost in

communication, you never know what is coming next. Two other participants also agreed that a

lack of communication from other staff or administration causes stress.

It is important to note that although all participants mentioned an appreciation for their

current administration, a few mentioned past administrators that contributed to their stress level

due to poor communication and ineffective leadership. One participant recalled having a

principal that did not lead their community effectively. He explained that this caused him to take

on a greater leadership role within his school to mitigate the effects on staff and students. He said

that although this caused him to grow in his own abilities, it was harmful to the school

community and greatly added to his own stress level. He expressed that was a time in his career

when he was burned out and considered leaving the profession. Another participant also recalled

past principals that did not lead effectively. He found that his stress level is far lower with supportive administrators. He likes knowing that they have his back no matter what but they also push him and don't allow him to be complacent in his position. He said although it is a tricky balance, he feels most successful when heard and pushed with respect. He added that when administrators push without respect, teaching will always suffer.

Student Success. All of the participants agreed that they are invested in the growth and success of their students. As two participants pointed out, much of the stress related to teaching comes from a deep concern for their students. One could argue that if you care about your students, you are guaranteed to feel some stress when you see them not succeeding. As one participant stated, "You want to make sure you are doing it right. The kids, you worry about the kids." A different participant explained that he carries deep empathy for not only the students but also his colleagues. He likes to think of it as carrying a huge umbrella with him; all of the people at CASS are under his umbrella and he wants to take care of them.

Student success can also be affected by student behavior. Many teachers reported student behavior as one of their greatest stressors. One participant stated, "Student behavior can pop up when you least expect it. If I don't handle it well, I feel stressed and with that comes judgement and guilt." A different participant stated she feels confident in her ability to manage student behavior but admits that she cannot control what is going on in a student's mind. Two participants also cited behavior as one of the contributing factors to their stress.

Tools for Stress Management. All of the teachers agreed that although some of the stresses can be avoided, most of them are simply a part of the job. In order to combat these stresses, it is important to identify stress management techniques or coping mechanisms to

survive. All of the participants shared many different tools they use to help them avoid or mitigate stress in their job. Some of the tools include being prepared and organized in addition to setting boundaries with work-related responsibilities, especially after school. The participants all mentioned various coping strategies they use on a daily basis.

Organization. The participants expressed that generally speaking, they feel organized and prepared each day. The non-arts teachers identified their preparedness for each lesson as a strength of theirs. One participant stated, "organization and being prepared are one of my strengths. I have a heightened sense of responsibility - this can be a strength but it also gets me into trouble sometimes. I am sure I could let go when things don't matter as much." He explained that because of this sense of responsibility, he feels he has to be organized and prepared. He also mentioned that at this point in his career, he feels he has his experience and many resources to draw from to help him feel prepared. An additional participant admitted he could be more organized but feels it won't happen until he has more experience. He added that he is organized when it comes to curriculum and unit planning. He finds himself making tweaks to his plan in the morning but he is never teaching without some kind of lesson outline.

One participant feels he is often prepared in curriculum and lesson planning. In fact, he commended his undergraduate program by stating, "Instructionally, my undergraduate program did a phenomenal job of preparing me to create and plan lessons." He added, "Unfortunately, lesson planning often involves staying up until 11pm or 12am each night, only to realize in year two that half of what you created was crap, so you start over." A different participant felt he was less prepared for particular situations as a teacher. For example: a student who is crying, how do you approach that student and offer them support? "No one taught me that," he claims.

Two participants believe that although they are prepared and organized, they agreed the real magic of teaching is when you are paying attention to the students and taking cues from their excitement. A different participant believes that lesson planning should not be too detailed or too dependent on the plan because the best teaching moments often happen organically. Another participant calls this the "art of teaching" and he feels that the ability to improvise with learning is often a skill that cannot be taught. He believes you have to acknowledge what the students are bringing into the space, consider who you are teaching and be flexible. As he stated, "Be prepared but be flexible. Fine tune your work over time and learn how to do it better."

Boundaries With After School Time. The participants have all expressed a deep investment in their students and they agree that their work matters and has great value. Because of their commitment, and willingness to do whatever it takes, many of them recognized that it is also important to have boundaries. The participants all agreed that without proper boundaries, specifically related to working after contractual hours, stress and eventually burnout may be inevitable. In this section, we will look at how each teacher has set their own boundaries and the journey that led them to the need for boundaries.

In order to specifically address boundaries, participants were asked to describe their level of engagement in school-related activities that take place after school. The teaching roles of participants as arts teachers involves a significant time commitment outside of regular contractual hours. This includes but is not limited to: concerts, performance nights, musicals, theatre performances, gallery openings, rehearsals, art clubs, art studio hours, etc. The arts teachers explained that most of this is expected although it hasn't always been explicitly laid out in the job description. One participant commented that, "There is always some inherent

assumption that arts teachers are going to go the extra mile. However, if non-arts teachers do it, they get paid the extra mile." Over the past few years, however, adjustments have been made to arts contracts so they are paid for some of this additional time. Two participants agreed that this not only motivates them to put in quality work, but it also allows them to feel valued as an artist. One participant felt this was particularly important, that she is valued not only as a professional but also a working artist. She also said it is important for all teachers to be honored (and compensated) for their additional work, regardless of content area. She stated, "I learned that I have to set that boundary to honor myself and my work." All arts teacher participants agreed that although their additional responsibilities add to stressors, they still find a sense of enjoyment in these activities. One participant added that the after school activities often add to the experience of joy in his role, although during COVID-19 he has used his after school time to meet with students virtually, one on one. A different participant explained he does it all by choice because he thinks it is important and valuable for the kids. He admitted that it adds extra time and responsibility which, at times, presents a challenge in maintaining work/life balance. He helps mitigate the extra time by completing his own art projects along with the students or cleaning and organizing his space after a long day of teaching.

Although non-arts teachers do not have any specific obligations afterschool, per their job title, all of the non-arts participants found themselves over-committing in previous years. One participant would stay after school weekly for math help hour, in addition to his bi-weekly commitment to the leadership team. He commented that at some point in his career he was committing to multiple activities after school and it was impacting his happiness. He mentioned that it was more difficult to find work life balance when he was committing to more things. He

stated that, "It would really weigh on me. There were parts that I would enjoy but extracurricular activities take up a lot of time, take extra effort and can add to stress." He further explained that when you are already teaching for many hours in the day and then you commit to staying after school, there are times when "you feel like you don't have it in you." A different participant agreed that in the past, she would often commit to additional activities after school. More recently, she has set a boundary so that she is able to go back to school and pursue an additional degree.

Coping. When teachers were asked how they cope with the stresses of the job both healthy and unhealthy mechanisms emerged. One participant took particular pride in his ability to cope. "I am good at this," he said. He explained that he has learned that life goes on. He claimed, "Even if it doesn't feel fine now, it will be fine eventually. Stress happens and then we move on. I have trained my mind to understand this. Get through one day at a time." An additional participant has a similar perspective and said, "being able to let go is one of the keys to being a good teacher." He explained this is particularly important because students will be able to tell if you are ok or not. He added:

> "You are always vulnerable in front of the students and so you have to always be 100%
> honest and truthful. If you don't do this already, you will learn to be this open and honest.
> When something yucky happens or you have bad energy, you have to go home and ask
> yourself 'what do I need.' Each teacher needs to figure out a way to brush that off
> because the students will notice if you don't."

An additional participant went on to explain that there are so many ways to reset. He suggested taking a deep breath before you walk into a space. He even recommended activities such as mediation, a walk in the park, tai chi, making art and even journaling.

Many of the participants found that exercise is a healthy way to reset and rejuvenate. One participant likes to go for walks, run or do other exercise at home. When an additional participant was asked how he copes with work related stress he responded, "Exercise!" Before COVID-19, he went to the gym regularly before school. Although this has been impacted by government mandated shut downs, he has continued his exercise routine at home. Although he admitted it is challenging, he finds it essential to keep his body and mind healthy.

Three participants recognize their coping mechanisms are not always healthy. "When I don't want to use my brain anymore - tv and cake out of the bin!" This rings true for other participants. One participant claimed that COVID-19 related stress, in particular, has caused him to gain weight because there is not as much to do. This is a challenge that all of the participants identified. They found that their usual coping mechanisms may not be possible or as impactful due to the COVID-19 restrictions.

Although there were many different ways mentioned to help cope with work related stress, one theme that appeared in all of the responses was the need for connection with other people. One participant claimed that in order to blow off steam he, "finds validation in other people, seeks human connection and support." He clarified that he often gets that from school but if he is not receiving that within his learning community, he looks for it with friends and family outside of school. A different participant also uses vacation, traveling, music and celebration to reinforce his personal connections outside of school.

Another participant mentioned that, "venting is important with fellow co-workers." She finds it helpful to vent and talk about her day with others. She commented that although it helps if they are teachers, it is also nice to get the perspective of non-teachers at times. A different participant also agrees that a positive home environment and strong connections with others in the community can help rejuvenate the spirit. He admitted that he tries to keep things positive but it is nice to be able to get an outside perspective on something that may be happening at work. Another participant mentioned that his relationship and workouts with his dad are very important to him. "My dad thinks like me and we respond to each other in similar ways. My dad listens to me and we process through things together. I find he understands even though he doesn't work with me." A different participant admitted that he is a verbal processor and that he needs to feel heard and validated by someone who understands him. He also mentioned that in addition to being active, he is healthiest when he gets to be outside, play sports, and gather with different friend groups. He said this has been the hardest part of surviving a pandemic, he can't gather with his people. One participant also agreed that gathering with friends and, more specifically, happy hours with colleagues are incredibly beneficial to staff morale and a general feeling of support. He believes it can also help you stay connected to why you decided to teach in the first place.

Find Your Why. When participants were asked questions related to why they teach, three main themes emerged. All teachers identified enjoyment in teaching, that their job matters and has value and that it has purpose in helping young people succeed. Throughout the interviews, all of the teachers mentioned why they began teaching without being prompted. It became clear that the "why" was the theme at the heart of what drives each of the participants to

come back to their job each day. It even seemed to be a source of resilience within the teaching profession. In this section, we will take a closer look at the central themes of enjoyment, value and purpose and how they make up "why".

   Enjoyment. At the heart of resilience seems to be the central idea of enjoyment within teaching. Enjoyment can come from many different places but when participants were asked directly if they enjoy their work as a teacher, there was a resounding yes. All participants agreed that working with students is something that brings them joy. Although this finding may be expected, it seems to serve as an anchor and necessary center to finding resilience. All participants admitted that when they are feeling particularly stressed, they often have to return to why they began teaching in the first place. One participant explained that he not only enjoys working with kids but he also feels energized in preparing lessons and curriculum, knowing that it is serving children. He explained that even though he may be tired at the end of the day, while teaching, he feels energized. A different participant went on to suggest that, "Teaching is hard work. I learned early on in my career that if you love teaching - it is hard work. If you don't love teaching, you won't last." Another participant added that his enjoyment of teaching allows him to function outside of school. It allows him to be exploratory and not have to worry about where the next paycheck is coming from. A different participant agreed that he enjoys his job but he also adds that it is very complicated. He mentions that like any job, you don't enjoy it all the time. What he does enjoy is his content area and the idea of working with kids all the time. He explained that he loves sharing what excites him about his content area. He also enjoys that he is able to bring life experiences into the classroom and help students manage their own life experience, growth and maturity. "Teaching is about life," he stated.

Value. Along with the enjoyment of teaching is also a belief that the work they do matters and has value. One participant stated, "This is a job where people depend on you, look up to you. Your peers, the parents, kids, etc. You are relied upon. You provide instruction and that is very valuable. Another participant agreed that her teaching matters. She explains that as an arts teacher, "you are not here to teach taxes, you are here to teach about what is inside of you - this is a different side of learning and growing." A different participant would go as far to say that as teachers, we are changing the world. He shared a story about a time where he told one of his college professors this and the professor laughed at him. He goes on to say that teachers are, "literally changing how society develops and grows. We plant seeds and the students eventually come around." He also reflected on how his job matters because it provides a path to his own self discovery as an educator.

Non- arts teachers share a similar perspective. One participant shares that teaching is a service job and that service is important to our community and important to him. He believes service contributes to building a strong community. Another participant is proud to be a teacher because he believes educating others is a vital profession. He believes that education, no matter how it appears (i.e. parenting, teaching, etc), is necessary to be healthy. A different participant believes that not only does his work matter but all things related to teaching matter. He says it is about showing up for the student and seeing how far they can take themselves. He believes it all plays a role in the success of the student: PLCs (professional learning communities), parent teacher conferences, TD&E, professional development. He states, "Every small moment matters, even if it doesn't seem like it does. Sometimes the best way to support a student is not directly supporting the student but also taking care of yourself, supporting another teacher, etc."

Purpose. In addition to feeling a sense of enjoyment in their work and also believing their work matters, all the participants seem to have a sense of purpose in what they do. This sense of purpose seems to be grounded in a genuine commitment to investing in the success of their students. It is because of this investment that the participants are also committed to coming to work each day. One participant explains that he wants to see every single student grow. He shares that his students mean a lot to him and that he believes he has fostered many connections in his short time as a teacher. He adds that his investment in the students makes him want to be the best teacher he can be. Another participant strongly agreed. He stated, "Police officers are never off duty, either are teachers. Where kids are lacking, the next step is in in the next lesson. Always." When two participants were asked if they felt invested in the growth and success of their students, they responded with a resounding, "Absolutely." A different participant added that distance learning has allowed him to recognize how deeply he feels for our students' success. "It is hard to accept that students aren't doing well and it would be a struggle to let that go," he adds. When asked the same question, a different participant started by clarifying that they are "our students, not his." He believes it takes a community to raise a student. He stated that he is not only invested in his students who physically show up but also the 6th graders who will come to meet him eventually, as they get older. He always asks himself, "How can I invest in them now, knowing I will get them later?" He looks at how he can align in practices and strategies with all teachers in the building. Another participant shares a similar perspective in the arts. She explained that if a student starts and stays in her art discipline, they will continue on with her for 3-7 years depending on their starting grade. "Having students in an art form is an investment in itself." She added that the relationship is especially important when the student will continue on

with you. She also stated this carries on even after they graduate or leave the program. "Music extends outside of the classroom. It can be a hard transition out of school and it is important to continue supporting them," she added. It is apparent that their investment in their students is a clear motivation for them to show up at school everyday.

Advice to new teachers. Each of the participants were asked what advice they would give to a new teacher in hopes of preventing stress and burnout. As one participant said so eloquently, "Don't do it." He chuckled as he responded. An additional participant thought of a new band teacher who may be starting in a role similar to his. He explained that he would give them a lot of advice on how to organize their teaching, responsibilities and space. He added that in order to create the best experience for the students, he has put in a lot of extra effort in his first two years. Another participant pointed out that it is all about the kids and, "When people say you should get to know your students, that, "you should ACTUALLY get to know them." She also explained, "If there is a disconnect, then there is a disconnect. Most of the issues related to the job can be resolved by sitting down and talking; whether that is with students, colleagues or administration." Another participant also strongly recommended, "Be your authentic and real self. They (the students) will always know. And why act all day?"

When giving advice to new teachers to avoid stress and burnout, one participant strongly suggested learning the art of setting boundaries for your time and space. "Figure out how to say no, set boundaries this way and don't take on too much or too much time. When you get home, take space and a break. This is a way to heal - recharge." He also believes learning how to be organized can really help a new teacher. He explained that this could be applied to lessons and grading but also physical space too - "you will even benefit from your desktop being organized."

Summary

My primary research focused on one-on-one interviews investigating the question: *What are teacher perspectives on preventing stress and burnout at an urban arts secondary school?* The interviews aimed to discover the qualities and practices of teachers who effectively avoid teacher burnout. The interviews revealed that all participants find a deep sense of purpose in their job that is centered around the success of their students. All teachers identified success as being able to witness "aha moments" in the classroom where students are connecting their learning to previous lessons or the real world. The interviews suggested that although all participants face considerable stress in their position, they are intrinsically motivated by their love for teaching children. This seems to drive all participants and subsequently allows them to enjoy their job and find a deep commitment to their students. Chapter 5 offers a comparison between the results of the teacher interviews and the literature review as well as a discussion of the implications, limitations and recommendations of this study.

CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusions

Chapter Overview

My final chapter of my thesis will focus on the conclusions I have made based on my research. I will acknowledge the limitations of my study and make recommendations for educators and policymakers based on the findings. I will also conclude by considering additional research needed in this topic. Finally, I will reflect on my own growth as an author and on the personal impact this research and study have had on me as a teacher in an urban arts school.

Conclusions

In Chapter 4: Results, I shared the perspectives and experiences of six teachers from an urban arts school. The interviews revealed that all participants find a deep sense of purpose in their job that is centered around the success of their students. All teachers identified success as being able to witness "aha moments" in the classroom where students are connecting their learning to previous lessons or the world outside of the classroom. The interviews suggested that although all participants face considerable stress in their position, they are intrinsically motivated by their love for teaching children. This seems to drive all participants and subsequently allows them to enjoy their job and find a deep commitment to their students.

In all my research and data from my study, I found that the path leading to burnout is different for everyone. As supported by Bermejo-Toro et al., this premise comes from traditional stress models demonstrating that, in a given context, the stress response is a function of the balance between stressors and coping resources (2016). To clarify, when looking at the algorithm for burnout, it is not only the amount of stress over a particular amount of time, but also one's

ability to cope with said stress. Coping resources include contextual demands, personal

characteristics, and interpersonal skills (Bermejo-Toro et al., 2016). In essence, high stress over

time in conjunction with ineffective coping mechanisms and skills leads to burnout. Although

there are many ways to balance out this equation, all participants agreed that to be a teacher is to

experience stress. In the literature review, we found that stress is defined as, "a state of mental or

emotional strain or tension resulting from adverse or very demanding circumstances"

(Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, 1999). We also learned that burnout is, "a state of

chronic stress that leads to physical and emotional exhaustion, cynicism, detachment, and

feelings of ineffectiveness and lack of accomplishment" (Psychology Today, 2015, p.1). This

confirms our understanding that burnout is, in part, caused by chronic levels of stress.

As confirmed by both the literature and the teacher interviews, there are multiple

contributing factors to stress within the field of education. As stated by Barry Farber of

Columbia University:

"Burnout is the result of such stresses as student discipline problems, student apathy,

overcrowded classrooms and shortages of available support staff, excessive paperwork,

excessive testing, involuntary transfers, inadequate salaries, lack of promotional

opportunities, demanding parents, lack of administrative support, role conflict and role

ambiguity, and public criticism of teachers" (2016, p.22).

In looking further into the literature around teacher related stress, I was able to find emerging

categories of environmental and personal factors. This helped me better understand how stress

can show up from both external forces and internal awareness or perceptions. Among the

environmental stressors listed were: compensation, institutional demands and resources,

classroom demands and resources, social support, administrative support and workload. The personal stressors that emerged in the literature included: personality traits, introverted personality, resilience, self-awareness, perceptions and self-efficacy. In addition to stressors, strategies for coping with stress were featured as an important part of avoiding burnout. The strategies that appeared with greatest frequency were: cognitive behavioral therapy, mindfulness and relaxation techniques, professional development, teacher collaboration and support and moderating student teacher ratio. Although the goal was to capture the leading factors in burnout and furthermore avoiding burnout, this is not an all encompassing assessment. There were many contributing factors listed in the literature, as well as many different strategies to cope with high stress in the field.

The teacher interviews also identified stressors and coping mechanisms as antecedents to burnout. The primary stressors that were named in the interviews were: workload vs. time, communication and student success. All of these stressors relate back to themes mentioned in the literature. For example, workload vs. time was closely intertwined with expectations from administration or institutional initiatives, in addition to workload and classroom demands. Stressors related to communication appeared in multiple themes mentioned in the literature including: administrative support and interpersonal relationships. Lastly, the participants all mentioned stress related to wanting their students to succeed. Although this was not specifically named in the literature, there are many themes that heavily correlate with student success; such as: pressure from high stakes testing, administrative expectations, institutional demands, etc.

In addition to stressors, the participants were also asked to identify ways they cope with job-related stress. Three main themes emerged: organization, boundaries and coping

mechanisms. In addition, at the heart of it all, seemed to be a clear connection to purpose and one's reason for teaching. Although these themes did appear in the literature, they were not the most commonly cited strategies in my sources. After conducting the interviews, I found myself wanting to review my literature a second time to see if there were additional sources supporting these simple approaches to avoiding burnout.

Limitations

As discussed in Chapter 3: Methods, this particular study was limited by the number of interview participants, the selection of interview participants, and the subjective nature of interviews as a method of research. Six interviews were conducted and participants were chosen based on their content area and years of experience. Although these participants were chosen with the goal of having variety in backgrounds and experience, the amount of teachers interviewed does not accurately represent the entire population of teachers at this particular school. In addition, these interviews only address stress related to the particular school and district assignment. It is possible that in gathering data from interviews from various schools I would have a wider perspective on whether or not these findings are consistent across the board. In light of the limitations of this study, the data analysis cannot be generalized to a population of teachers at large.

It is also important to note that there was no qualifying process confirming the teachers interviewed were personally experiencing chronically high levels of stress or burnout. If this study was to be repeated, perhaps an initial survey would provide introductory knowledge as to how participants identified their own stress levels. In addition, the nature of the questions asked in the interviews is highly subjective. In asking the questions, there is an assumption that the

teachers possess a high level of self awareness and self reflection. For example, if a teacher is experiencing high stress levels or burnout but they choose to dissociate from that experience, they may not perceive they are having that experience. Regardless of the potential discrepancies, it is possible the teachers interviewed do not accurately paint the picture of a teacher experiencing burnout at this particular school. The results of the interviews provide anecdotal evidence, corroborated by the review of literature which looked at together can hopefully provide broad characteristics of teachers avoiding burnout.

Recommendations

Based on the outcomes of the interviews and the findings summarized in the literature review, I have a particular interest in learning more about how teachers can reconnect to their purpose for entering the teaching profession to begin with. Although insightful, knowledge of the factors that impact teacher burnout does not seem to be enough to avoid burnout itself. I believe that it would prove to be an invaluable experience if "finding your why" was at the center of yearly professional development. I believe that completing a writing prompt about why you got into teaching in the first place could also deepen your own understanding and self-awareness through reflection. I would add that sharing this with your colleagues could also have tremendous benefits and contribute to building a stronger sense of community.

If I were to replicate this study, I would change key aspects of the process, as well as the selection process of interview participants. My original plan was to begin with a survey to help me identify where teachers were at with their own stress levels and symptoms of burnout. My hope was that the initial survey would help me choose a variety of participants. For example, I would have chosen participants with high satisfaction in their job and also participants with low

satisfaction in their job. This could have allowed a wider variety of responses. It is possible that by having an idea of where a teacher was at in their stress levels and satisfaction that I could have noticed different patterns surrounding burnout and resilience. For example, if a pattern emerged where a participant had low job satisfaction and higher perceived stress, it may have been easier to map. In my study, I found a lot of the teachers shared similar experiences which made it difficult to find patterns or even contrary experiences that reinforced the patterns. If I were to replicate this study, I would administer an initial survey and I would interview a larger number of participants to help get a wider picture of what is happening. With a larger number of respondents to select from, the more data to draw from and the stronger conclusions and generalizations could be drawn from the results of the interviews.

For future researchers, perhaps at the district level, I believe it could be useful to develop a survey that measures staff levels of stress and their need for additional tools to manage stress. If used properly, this data could inform decisions around professional development opportunities or specific onboarding strategies for new hires. Although a similar study could provide such information, a survey may provide additional perspectives. It would also allow stress and signs of burnout to be measured on a more consistent basis which could help teachers avoid burnout entirely.

Personal Reflections

At the beginning of this study, I was in search of ways to thrive in the field of education. I wanted to master the art of avoiding high levels of chronic stress, burnout and possibly leaving the field. I had witnessed many stressed teachers considering different professions. In fact, I had myself considered leaving education only a handful of years after I began. When I finally took a

step back, I realized there were many teachers that seemed to be rooted and rather unaffected by the waves of change and stress that seemed to affect the rest of us. It was almost as if they had achieved a secret balance or special level of resilience and satisfaction in their teaching. At first, I wanted to know if there was something in particular that was contributing to the stress. I also wanted to know if I could change it. It was because of this that I set out to investigate the question: *What are teacher perspectives on the contributing factors leading to stress and burnout at an urban arts secondary school?* The study culminated in teacher interviews with educators who have been riding the waves, some for many years. The teacher interviews paralleled the literature review, specifically related to common stressors found in the field, a need for boundaries and tools for stress management that lead to a work/life balance. These results have implications for anyone working in education, from teachers to administration to policy makers. This study was limited, particularly in the number of interview participants and the selection of participants. A future study should address these limitations to strengthen the results and provide conclusions that can be generalized to teachers at large. I personally learned so much from this experience, in particular from the teacher interviews. I am in awe of my colleagues and their deep commitment to the students and serving their community. What I realized through their interviews was that although some stress can be avoided, thriving in education is more about setting boundaries, finding healthy ways to cope, a strong support system and staying grounded in why you began teaching in the first place. I have already started to apply these learnings and perspectives to my own teaching practice. This process has inspired me to return to my own purpose and my own "why" for teaching. I believe strengthening this self awareness and reminding myself of why I am passionate about teaching children is an important step in

remaining resilient. I will return to this as I continue in my journey as a teacher so that I can ride

the waves and rise above teacher burnout.

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Appendix A

Permission to Conduct Research Study from Principal

Kara Noble
XXXX
XXXX, XXXX XXXXX

XXXX Principal XXXX
XXXX
XXXX, XXXX XXXXX

Date

RE: Permission to Conduct Research Study

Dear XXXX:

I am writing to request permission to conduct a research study at XXXX. I am currently working toward a Masters of Arts in Teaching with Hamline University in St. Paul, Minnesota, and I am in the process of writing my Capstone Thesis. My Capstone Thesis is investigating: How do educators avoid teacher burnout?

I intend to email the staff at XXXX in hopes of identifying six teachers who would be interested in sharing about their experiences with stress and burnout as a teacher. Responses will be examined to determine those individuals who will be selected for an interview (questions attached).

If approval is granted, all staff will be invited to participate, although only six participants will be chosen based on their content area and years of experience. Interviews will be held outside of school hours, via GoogleMeet. The recruitment process should take no longer than one week, and interviews should take no longer than an additional two weeks to complete. Names will be collected and interview results will be analyzed for the purpose of the thesis project. However, individual responses remain absolutely confidential. The thesis project will not include any costs to XXXX or the participants involved.

Your approval to conduct this study at XXXX is greatly appreciated. In order to acknowledge your consent to this project, please sign below.

Sincerely,

Kara Noble
Enclosures: Letter to Staff, Interview Questions
Approved by:

_____ _____ _____
Print your name and title here   Signature   Date

Appendix B

Letter to Staff with Initial Survey

Email Invitation to Staff

Dear Teachers and Staff:

I am currently working toward a Masters of Arts in Teaching with Hamline University in St. Paul, Minnesota. I am in the process of writing my Capstone Thesis related to teacher burnout. I would greatly appreciate your voluntary participation in a research study investigating how educators avoid teacher burnout.

If you are interested in participating in a one-on-one interview, please respond to this email and include your content area of teaching and your years of experience. I will send you an email to confirm your participation and the next steps in arranging a meeting time.

If you have additional questions about this process and my study, please see the details below or email me directly.

Your response and time is greatly appreciated!

Kara Noble
612-810-7206
knoble02@hamline.edu

What the study is about: The purpose of this study is to discover the descriptions, perceptions, and thinking of teachers who effectively avoid teacher burnout.

What you will be asked to do: If you agree to be a part of this study, I will ask you to participate in a one on one interview. The interview will take approximately 60 minutes. The interview will include questions about how you manage the stresses of your job, your job satisfaction, and the balance between your professional and personal lives. Your participation in this interview is voluntary.

Confidentiality: All results will be analyzed for the purpose of the thesis project, however, individual responses will remain absolutely confidential. The interview will be digitally recorded for the purpose of transcription, but digital recordings will be deleted once transcription is complete. The written report of this study including drafts and the final copy will not include any information that will make it possible to identify participants.

Appendix C

HAMLINE UNIVERSITY

Informed Consent to Participate in Research

You are being asked to participate in a research study. This form provides you with information about the study. The student researcher will provide you with a copy of this form to keep for your reference, and will also describe this study to you and answer all of your questions.

This form provides important information about what you will be asked to do during the study, about the risks and benefits of the study, and about your rights as a research participant.

● If you have any questions about or do not understand something in this form, you should ask the research team for more information.

● You should feel free to discuss your potential participation with anyone you choose, such as family or friends, before you decide to participate.

● Do not agree to participate in this study unless the research team has answered your questions and you decide that you want to be part of this study.

  ● Your participation is entirely voluntary, and you can refuse to participate or withdraw
                                                                      at any time.

Title of Research Study: Understanding Factors of Teacher Stress and Resilience in an Urban Arts High School Context

Student Researcher and email address: Kara Noble, knoble02@hamline.edu

Faculty Advisor, Hamline affiliation/title, phone number(s), and email address:
Linnette Werner, Associate Dean of Graduate Programs, 651-523-2190, lwerner@hamline.edu

1. What is the research topic, the purpose of the research, and the rationale for why this study is being conducted? The purpose of this study is to discover the descriptions, perceptions, and thinking of teachers who effectively avoid teacher burnout.

2. What will you be asked to do if you decide to participate in this research study? You will be asked to schedule an interview time via GoogleMeet for approximately 60 minutes. The student researcher will email you a copy of the consent form for your review. On the day of the online meeting, the student researcher will review the consent form with you, record your verbal consent and proceed to ask the interview questions. Based on your responses, the student researcher may ask a few

additional questions to further clarify as needed. Once the interviews have been completed, the student researcher will transcribe your interview and send you a copy for your personal records.

3. What will be your time commitment to the study if you participate? You will participate in a 60 minute interview.

4. Who is funding this study? This study is being conducted without funding.

5. What are the possible discomforts and risks of participating in this research study? By participating in this study, there is a small chance that you may feel pressured to say yes to participating because you work with the student researcher, although they hold no authority over you as they are your peer. It is also possible that you may feel uncomfortable being asked questions. You may feel uncomfortable at the possible loss of confidentiality. Steps will be taken to minimize those risks - this will be expanded on in #6 below. In addition, there may be risks that are currently unknown or unforeseeable. Please contact Kara Noble at knoble02@hamline.edu or 612-810-7206 or my faculty advisor Linnette Werner at lwerner01@hamine.edu or 651-523-2190 to discuss this if you wish.

6. How will your privacy and the confidentiality of your data and research records be protected? All data will be collected without identifiers. This includes, but is not limited to, name, date of birth, email address, street address, phone number, video recordings, and social security number. All written consent or assent will be stored separately from the data. Only the student researcher will obtain consent from the participants. After the thesis defense on December 15, 2020, all records from the interviews will be destroyed.

7. How many people will most likely be participating in this study, and how long is the entire study expected to last? There will be six participants and the study or data collection will last approximately one week. All findings will be presented in my thesis defense on December 15, 2020.

8. What are the possible benefits to you and/or to others from your participation in this research study? This study is examining the causes of stress and burnout, as well as coping mechanisms and paths to resilience in an Urban Arts Secondary School Context. You may benefit from the findings of the study. In addition, the findings may provide our learning community with more general knowledge that may benefit other teachers and/or lead to policy change.

9. If you choose to participate in this study, will it cost you anything? No

10. Will you receive any compensation for participating in this study? No

11. What if you decide that you do not want to take part in this study? What other

options are available to you if you decide not to participate or to withdraw? Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You are free to refuse to participate in the study, and your refusal will not influence your current or future relationships with Hamline University or with urban arts Secondary School. In addition, if significant new findings develop during the course of the research that may affect your willingness to continue participation, we will provide that information to you.

12.How can you withdraw from this research study, and who should you contact if you have any questions or concerns? You are free to withdraw your consent and stop participation in this research study at any time without penalty or loss of benefits for which you may be entitled. If you wish to stop your participation in this research study for any reason, you should tell me, at knoble02@hamline.edu or 612-810-7206 or my faculty advisor Linnette Werner at lwerner01@hamine.edu or 651-523-2190. You should also call or email the faculty advisor for any questions, concerns, suggestions, or complaints about the research and your experience as a participant in the study. In addition, if you have questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact the Institutional Review Board at Hamline University at IRB@hamline.edu.

13.Are there any anticipated circumstances under which your participation may be terminated by the researcher(s) without your consent? No

14.Will the researchers benefit from your participation in this study? The researchers will gain no benefit from your participation in this study beyond the publication and/or presentation of the results obtained from the study, and the invaluable research experience and hands-on learning that the students will gain as a part of their educational experience.

15.Where will this research be made available once the study is completed? The research is public scholarship and the abstract and final product will be cataloged in Hamline's Bush Library Digital Commons, a searchable electronic repository and that it may be published or used in other ways, such as in conference presentations or published in research journals.

16.Has this research study received approval from school where the research will be conducted? Yes

PARTICIPANT COPY

Signatures:

As a representative of this study, I have explained the purpose, the procedures, the benefits, and the risks that are involved in this research study:

Signature and printed name of person obtaining consent Date
(Student researcher or PI)

_____
Title of person obtaining consent

You have been informed about this study's purpose, procedures, possible benefits and risks, and you have received a copy of this Form. You have been given the opportunity to ask questions before you sign, and you have been told that you can ask other questions at any time. You voluntarily agree to participate in this study. By signing this form, you are not waiving any of your legal rights.

Printed Name of Participant Date

Signature of Participant

Signature of Principal Investigator or Faculty Advisor Date

As a part of your participation as a volunteer in this scientific research study, you may be photographed during the course of this experiment. Any photographs of your performance (without your name or likeness revealed) may be shown to educational audiences, such as conferences. Your consent to be photographed is independent of your consent to participate in this study. If you have any questions about this consent, you can contact me, Kara Noble, at knoble02@hamline.edu or
612-810-7206 or my faculty advisor Linnette Werner at lwerner01@hamine.edu or
651-523-2190 to discuss this if you wish.

By signing below, you hereby give permission for any photographs or videotapes made during the course of this research study to be also used for educational purposes. Your identity and face will be blurred or not shown/revealed if photographs or videos are used for any of the above purposes.

Signature of Participant Date

Signature of Principal Investigator or Faculty Advisor Date

INVESTIGATOR COPY
(Duplicate signature page for researcher's records)

Signatures:

As a representative of this study, I have explained the purpose, the procedures, the benefits, and the risks that are involved in this research study:

Signature and printed name of person obtaining consent
Date
(Student researcher or PI)

_____

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