

Running Head: TEACHER STRESS AND ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORTS

Administrative Supports that Reduce Teacher Stress

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### Abstract

Teacher stress and administrative supports that reduce that stress were investigated using a mixed methods exploratory approach in the Southern Gulf Islands of British Columbia. An online survey instrument was used to collect the data from participating volunteer teachers. 115 teachers in the district were invited to complete an on-line survey, which collected both quantitative and qualitative data. 65 participants completed the survey, representing 57% of the population in the district.

A literature review took place examining relevant and current North American and British Columbia research around both teacher stress and effective leadership supports. A survey was then generated and distributed. The survey consisted of likert style questions around teacher *stress factors* and the importance of various *administrative supports* that reduce teacher stress. An open-ended qualitative style question followed. Data were then analyzed to discover the most significant stressors and the most valued administrative supports as perceived by participants both qualitatively and quantitatively. Results indicated that the top three stress factors were: class size and composition, lack of human resources and time demands. The administrative supports most desired that would reduce teacher stress were: communication, compassion and empowering staff. Recommendations to the school district and its administration team were given.

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## Chapter One: Problem to be Investigated

### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to acknowledge the existence of stress in the teaching profession and to hear from teachers what positive supportive measures administrators have done (and do) that contribute to the reduction of teacher stress. The goal on one level was to recognize the factors that *add* to teacher stress to inform administrators and raise awareness. On a second level it was to gather a collection of affirmative administrative supports to distribute amongst leadership to shed light on what teachers value and appreciate from administrators that has *reduced* teacher stress.

As an educator with over 18 years experience, teacher stress has been evidenced with this researcher physically and emotionally, with the cumulative effects taking place in 2010. After ambulance trips, hospital stays, brain scans and neurologist consults, the overwhelming evidence of the detrimental *physical* effects of teacher stress and its negative impacts on self and family weighed tremendously. Deeper still were the *personal*, *emotional* and *relational* ramifications. Stress damages deeply.

This researcher recollects a time silently trembling with fear, gowned in hospital scrubs, attempting to lay stock still, listening to the deep rumblings of the technology reading the brain, vowing then that teacher wellness would become a living priority. Now, with the intent to become an administrator it is even more relevant. Hearing personal narratives from a variety of teachers raises awareness of what *others* attribute as valuable that may differ from this researcher's perspective. The more administrators can understand

the importance people attach to various administrative supports, the more they can be intentional in their acts and words to put those supports in to practice.

To prevent others from experiencing a similar level of fear, loss of control, or deep anxiety is the intent of this research. To support those teachers who dedicate their lives to improving others' lives is the desire of it. To honour those teachers in the profession who give so much of themselves, and to give back is the goal.

### **Justification of the Study**

Research examining job related stress is vast. Duxbury (2004) surveyed 37 000 employees across Canada and came to the conclusion that many employees were stressed, and could not find a balance between work and life. 60% of Canadian workers suffered high levels of stress when trying to balance work and family commitments, and amongst the most vulnerable employees were teachers and nurses (Duxbury, 2004). More than 40% of North American teachers have experienced serious symptoms of stress due to the pressure of excessive workload (Austin, Shah, & Muncer, 2005).

There is a cost to stress. There is a price to pay physically, mentally, emotionally, and financially. Research says that in the Public Servant sector in Canada over 60% report high levels of *overload* (Health Canada, 2011). Overload is defined as *to excessively burden, to put too large a load on, to laden too heavily* (www.dictionary.com). Role overload is one of the major and pervasive occupational work stressors for teachers (Austin et al., 2005). Health Canada (2011) states that they conservatively estimated that the costs of absenteeism due to role overload and conflict between work and life are approximately \$6 billion to \$10 billion per year. The link between work-life conflict and use of the health care system is also staggering. Health Canada goes further to state that the direct costs to

the health care system of treating disorders associated with high levels of family-to-work interference is approximately \$514 million per year (2011). The number of referrals of teachers with stress related disorders such as anxiety, depression and burnout is increasing (Austin et al., 2005; Naylor & White, 2010). The mental health claims of depression, anxiety, and stress are the leading causes of teacher short and long-term disability (Naylor & White, 2010). BCTF (2008) shared the findings from Occupational Health Safety Canada 2008 that reported that 72% of Canadian long-term disability claims and 82% of short-term claims are linked to mental health issues. Stress costs. There is a financial cost, and a personal cost. There is the physical cost of stress on the body, and emotional cost of stress on the spirit and mind. There is the burden of cost on a country, and the burden of cost on an individual and family. Stress carries with it a steep price tag on many levels.

The teaching profession is intense and challenging. It is considered a 'high stress' job (Haslam, 2005; Kyriacou, 2001). Common stressors found in multiple research studies related to teacher stress include: balancing multiple demands, time pressures, problems associated with class size, inclusive classrooms, student discipline, students who lack motivation, inadequate administrative support, declining self esteem and status, lack of community support, inadequate resources, unsafe environments, isolation, the implications of a heavy workload on family life, and coping with on-going change (Kyriacou, 2001; Leithwood, 2006; Leithwood & Beatty, 2008; Naylor 2003; Naylor & White 2010; Pickering, 2008). The demands on the classroom teacher are severe. The workload has no limits (Naylor, 2003). The incremental and cumulative expectations of others cause teachers to feel intense pressure and stress (Naylor & White, 2010).

At the national level, the Canadian Teachers Federation “National Teachers Poll” (2005) revealed on average, teachers had a total workweek of 55.6 hours. More than 80% of teachers feel they take on too many things at once, 75% say others expect too much of them, and 75% worry that teaching comes at a cost to family and friends (BCTF, 2008).

At the provincial level, “The Worklife of BC Teachers in 2009” revealed that teachers’ perceptions of the effects of stress were: 51.5% can’t ‘turn off’ work concerns during personal time, 46% say the workload demands of teaching are stressful, 34.8% say teaching interferes with family, and 22.5% say the job negatively affects their physical and emotional wellbeing (Naylor & White, 2010). Nationally, British Columbia’s teachers reported higher stress than any other province (Naylor, 2003).

Change is a major contributor to teacher stress. Schools are in a constant state of reform and change. Teachers describe being overwhelmed with the scale and pace of educational change in the province of British Columbia in the past few years and feel bombarded by demands and deadlines within the workday with little time to reflect on their work (Joseph, 2000; Pickering, 2008). In a time of great change, with the BC Ministry of Education’s recent announcement of *Personalized Learning Initiative* (“PL21”) June 22, 2011 many British Columbia teachers are faced with changes and challenges unique to this era that must be addressed.

In particular, at the local level, the Southern Gulf Islands (School District #64) have been in the forefront of BC Ministry PL21 movement for several years since the visit of John Abbott (Author of “Overschooled and Undereducated”) in 2006 spurred conversations of great educational change. This past year, schools and teachers in SD#64 began in earnest to explore beyond theory and put into practice significant educational

changes aligning with the BC Ministry's' Personalized Learning initiative. It is a season of tremendous change. Change is unnerving and stressful (Pickering, 2008). The need to address teachers' stress locally in SD#64 and to understand what administrative supports are effective is both relevant and necessary. This research is timely and of importance for teachers in SD#64, as well as universally.

Leadership can and does take an active role in reducing teacher stress. Knowing something about the psychological costs to teachers doing their jobs well sets the stage to address teacher wellness (Leithwood & Beatty, 2008). An involved and supportive administration is a pivotal determinant of a teacher's perception of stress in the workplace (Pickering, 2008). As Leithwood and Beatty (2008) state, "the inner world of teachers should be a source of strength and inspiration for their work with students; this inner world is profoundly susceptible to leader influence" (p. 42). If backed by administrative support, it is believed that teachers can not only survive creatively in their profession, but thrive as well (McGrath, 1995). What leaders say, do, and believe has influence in addressing the issue of teacher stress.

### **Research Question and Hypothesis**

Given the high prevalence of stress in teachers' jobs, the changing climate at the provincial and local level and the important role administrative support can play, the researcher decided to investigate: What factors do teachers say most contribute to teacher stress and what administrative supports counter and ease that stress?

It was believed that teachers would list a wide variety of factors that influence teacher stress and that some factors would be common across participants. It was also hypothesized that teachers would share powerful personal narratives of the positive effects

of administrative supports in reducing stress.

### **Definition of Terms**

Kyriacou first penned the term ‘teacher stress’ in 1977 (Kyriacou, 2001). He defined *teacher stress* as “an unpleasant experience by a teacher that leads to negative emotions such as anger, anxiety, tension, frustration, or depression resulting from some aspect of their work” (Kyriacou, 2001, p.28). Essentially, teacher stress is a negative emotional experience triggered by work.

Since Kyriacou’s original research, awareness of this issue and the need to address these concerns has multiplied. The problem is not new. It is, however, growing and requires a more proactive approach (Naylor & White, 2010). As stress factors continue to expand, and teacher wellness is at stake, it is time to address the issue in a more preventative manner. “If society hopes for wonderful schools for their children, then there must be significant concern for the mental health and well being of teachers” (Houghton, 2001, p. 706).

Research has shown significant causal factors for teacher stress. The twelve stress factors that were selected to be included in the survey for this study were based on empirical findings in the literature on teacher stress.

In the context of this research *administrators* will be: the leadership of a school, the principal, and/or vice principal, recognized in British Columbia, and member of BCPVP association. *Administrative support* will refer to “the collection of affirming actions by the school administrators that assist teachers in performing their responsibilities and withstanding the stress of their positions” (Weiss, 2001, p. 12).

Research will take place in the *Southern Gulf Islands* which is: a cluster of five island communities located in the Pacific Ocean off the south-western part of British Columbia. It is comprised of 11 public schools, Kindergarten - Grade 12, and is numbered SD#64.

### **Brief Overview of Study**

This study used a mixed methods exploratory design to examine teacher stress and administrative supports in the Southern Gulf Islands, British Columbia. The Superintendent of SD#64 was contacted in order to obtain permission and assistance in accessing teachers in the district.

A survey was administered to willing, anonymous participants and consisted of three parts. Part one asked teachers about the factors affecting teacher stress. These were closed-ended likert style questions, with space left at the end of the Section A (stressors) that allowed for personal open-ended responses. Section B looked at administrative supports and asked teachers to indicate the level of importance (using a likert style) they personally attribute to each, again, an option to respond in an open-ended fashion on the personal preference of administrative supports desired was provided. Finally, in Section C respondents were then asked to provide a detailed description of a positive experience they had with an administrator with whom they worked that had a beneficial impact on the reduction of teacher stress. This was a reflective, open-ended piece. Both quantitative and qualitative method approaches were used.

The survey results were tabulated and analyzed using descriptive statistics. The qualitative results were coded for emergent themes. Demographics were collected to see if

there were trends between position/levels taught (elementary, middle years, secondary, support), and/or years experience.

## Chapter 2: Review of Related Literature

### Teacher Stress

Teaching is a service industry. Caring for others involves emotional cost to the self (Harris, 2007). Research has shown that jobs in the service sector are prone to more stress than most (Joseph, 2000). Teaching is an emotionally intense form of work and has been referred to as “emotional labor” (Leithwood & Beatty, 2008, p.4).

“Education is a field in which professionals are quick to take action on behalf of their students’ needs. Educators do not however always address their own needs and concerns as readily” (McGrath, 1995, p.29). Healthy teachers, mentally and physically, can better serve their students’ needs, *and* their own needs. Teachers are effective only if they are able to maintain their own health and energy levels (Houghton, 2001).

Many teachers combat the growing challenges and changes in education by working harder (Naylor, 2001). Those most dedicated to the care of others often neglect their own care (McGrath, 1995). The teachers most at risk are those highly motivated individuals who react to added burdens by trying harder, doing more, overworking to a point of collapse: burnout. Burnout manifests itself as an extreme form of stress, one most often experienced by those who work in interpersonally intense occupations (Leithwood & Beatty, 2008). Burnout is often marked by feelings of emotional exhaustion or wearing out, depersonalization of attitudes, and reduced state of accomplishment or esteem (Austin et al., 2005; Leithwood & Beatty, 2008). “Teachers are sacrificing their physical and mental health, and in some cases their relationships, to maintain their programs and classes....This represents a severe and unsustainable imbalance in many teachers’ lives” (Naylor, 2001, p.5).

Research has found class size and composition to be a significant area of tension (Kyriacou, 2001; Leithwood, 2006; Leithwood & Beatty, 2008; Naylor 2003; Naylor & White 2010; Pickering, 2008). Large classes increase the workload demands on teachers and make it challenging to meet the needs of all students. More time spent on preparation, grading and discipline rather than connecting with individual students or using innovative instructional approaches, are problems frequently identified with large classes (Pickering, 2008). Completing individual learning plans, outside class time meetings, feeling ineffective and unprepared, and having inadequate resources are all noted stressors linked with class size (Leithwood & Beatty, 2008; Naylor 2003; Naylor & White 2010; Pickering, 2008).

Since the 1980's educational movement in British Columbia towards integrating students with a host of diverse needs and challenges- intellectual, physical, emotional, and social- there has been a marked increase in teachers' stress (Naylor, 2003). Cultural and economic conditions present teachers with students with complex needs, educational and emotional (McGrath, 1995).

The profound social and emotional needs that students bring to the classroom, along with the demand for teachers to take on multiple roles not directly related to teaching and learning, is a concern (Leithwood & Beatty, 2008). Teachers struggle with ever-expanding content. Teachers wonder how they can cover violence prevention, drug awareness, conflict resolution, self-esteem, appropriate touch, and suicide prevention *and* still teach the required basics- reading, math and spelling (McGrath, 1995). Many added expectations have been given to teachers, and nothing has been taken away (McGrath, 1995). "It simply can't *all* be done, and it is highly stressful to be given a task you know

you can't complete" (McGrath, 1995, p.5). The pressure is high and the support is low (Kyriacou, 2001; Leithwood, 2006; Leithwood & Beatty, 2008). The workload has no limits (Naylor, 2003). The strain of teaching can be overwhelming.

Research into Canadian and BC teachers' stress levels and the various factors *contributing* to teacher stress is vast, however where it is lacking is in research directly linking the *reduction* of teacher stress with effective administrative supports. That was the intent of the current study.

### **Role of Leadership**

How does the mindset of many in the teaching profession authentically and deeply shift from feeling helpless to hopeful, from exhausted to exhilarated, from frustrated to freed?

The first step to eradicating teacher stress and burnout is acknowledging that it exists in schools and that it is a correctable and preventable problem (Brock & Grady, 2000). Teachers are on the front line. They need support. First, the issue of teacher stress must be acknowledged. Then, tools for self-care and team support need to be provided by leadership to ensure teacher wellness.

In schools, teachers spend a great deal of time placing oxygen masks on other people's faces while they themselves are suffocating (Houghton, 2001). Emotional resilience must be seen as far more than a competence for individuals only. "If one of the purposes of education is to effect a more humane society, then change is needed in the individual and collective psyche of school and communities. School transformation and human transformation are two sides of the same coin" (Harris, 2007, p.35). Collective and individual self-care is critical, and the role of leadership, fundamental.

Leadership is primarily an emotional, not rational activity (Harris, 2007). Northouse (2010) quotes Sergiovanni (1992) who says that “the leadership that counts, in the end, is the kind that touches people differently” (p.76). Leadership can and does make a difference in reducing teacher stress. The current study aimed to directly link administrative supports with the reduction of teacher stress.

Tickle, Chang, and Kim (2010) examined the effects of administrative support on teachers’ job satisfaction and intent to stay in teaching. Using quantitative research, through a teacher survey questionnaire, researchers were able to determine that administrative support was *the most significant* predictor of teachers’ job satisfaction. The study focused on the US public school sector and included approximately 34 810 public teachers. Their research question asked, “Does perceived administrative support mediate the effect of teaching experience, perceived student behavior and teachers’ satisfaction with their salary relative to teachers’ job satisfaction?” Indeed, this study determined that administrative support was *the most significant* predictor of *both* teachers’ job satisfaction ( $\beta = .399, p < .01$ ) *and* intent to stay in teaching ( $\beta = .030, p < .01$ ). Administrative support is imperative. Contrarily, evidence also strongly shows job *dissatisfaction* leads to stress and ultimately burnout for teachers (Pearson & Moomaw, 2005).

The findings of Tickle et al. (2010) shines a light on the importance and influence of teachers’ perceptions of administrative support on increasing their job satisfaction and decreasing attrition. Though this study took place in the United States and thus may not be replicated in Canada with the same results, it does give merit to further research on the role of administrative support in combating teacher stress and in recognizing the

significant effect of administrative support on teacher job satisfaction and intent to stay in the profession. The current study examining administrative supports that reduce teacher stress in SD #64, B.C., therefore looked to validate the Tickle et al. (2010) findings.

Littrell, Billingsley, and Cross (1994) similarly sought to determine the effects principals have on teachers' level of stress, their job satisfaction, their school commitment, their own personal health, and their intent to stay in teaching. 1 226 teachers from a random sampling in Virginia, US were asked to complete a questionnaire. The researchers' theoretical framework focused on the *multidimensional* nature of support and included four dimensions of administrative behaviors: emotional support (principal shows teachers they are esteemed, trusted professional and worthy of concern), appraisal support (principal provides ongoing personal appraisal such as frequent feedback), instrumental support (principal assists with collaboration, discipline problems, parent confrontations, and the allocation of materials) and informational support (principal provides opportunities for professional growth/development). Littrell et al. (1994) predicted that the findings would corroborate previous research that claimed a direct link between principal support and the decrease of teacher stress and burnout. It did. It also articulated the strong connection between the positive effects of supportive principals on teachers' commitment, job satisfaction and retention.

Littrell et al.'s research (1994) stated that of the four multidimensional supports from administrators, teachers expressed that *emotional support* was the most important. Littrell et al. (1994) concluded that the teachers who reported *more* emotional support reported *fewer* health problems. They also found that teachers who were provided with support that promoted building self esteem (emotional support) had a decrease in

negative physical and psychological symptoms. They concluded that teachers who experience higher levels of principal support are more likely to experience greater job satisfaction and school commitment, and are less likely to experience personal health problems. Grounded in research, Littrell and team suggested (1994): principals provide an atmosphere of optimism and camaraderie, emphasize emotional support daily, and interact frequently with teachers. Littrell et al. (1994) also noted that though most principals *do* offer support, it might *not* necessarily be the kind of support teachers believe is important. Consequently, principals should assess their behaviors to see if they are providing the support that *teachers* believe is important. Similar was the intent of the current study in SD#64; to hear from teachers what *they* feel is most valued and needed as support from administrators, and to then share those findings with current administration to inform their practice and deepen their understanding of their teaching team.

The Littrell et al. multidimensional framework (1994) was used in the current study to design the survey. Survey questions examined the effects of administrative *emotional* support as well as *appraisal* support, *instrumental* support and *informational* support, though the language (categories) used differed. The researcher looked at the *concept* of support through a multidimensional lens but did not keep the original language of Littrell et al.'s work.

Relationships, encouragement, trust and compassion offset the effects of teacher stress (Leithwood & Beatty, 2008). Leadership that builds environments, that creates authentic, caring, nurturing and healthy communities, and that encourages the development of individual and collective good to their full potential are active agents in

the battle of combating teacher stress (Harris, 2007).

Blase and Blase (1999) looked further at research that examined what teachers' perspectives were on effective instructional leadership. Blase and Blase (1999) used a qualitative approach and asked the question: "What characteristics (e.g., strategies, behaviors, attitudes, goals) of school principals positively influence classroom teaching and teachers?" The open-ended survey instrument asked respondents to provide detailed descriptions of one characteristic of a principal with whom they had worked that had a positive impact on them. 809 full time teachers in USA were a part of the study. The results of the data collected indicated that leadership characteristics (strategies) have strong enhancing effects on teachers, emotionally, cognitively and behaviorally. The study (Blase & Blase, 1999) revealed that the cornerstone to effective instructional leadership was *relational*. Teachers reported most appreciating when principals used five primary talking strategies with them: making suggestions, giving feedback, modeling, using inquiry and soliciting advice/opinions, and giving praise. Teachers reported that these strategies had positive effects on motivation, self-esteem, efficacy and sense of security. Praise significantly affected teacher motivation, self-esteem and efficacy. Based on their research, Blase and Blase (1999) suggested leadership strive to develop cooperative, nonthreatening teacher-leader partnerships that are characterized by trust, openness, and freedom to make mistakes.

Using a similar positive focus to collect qualitative data and asking teachers for personal narrative responses to an open-ended reflective question, the current study sought to confirm Blase and Blase's (1999) results by collecting similar data from teachers in BC, Canada. Like the Blase and Blase study (1999) it intended to discover

what administrative supports teachers of SD#64 claim are most meaningful and effective in reducing their teacher stress.

Leadership incorporates the followers' and the leader's needs and growth (Northouse, 2010). "Leadership is the process that ordinary people use when they are bringing forth the best in themselves and others" (Harris, 2007, p.45). There is an emphasis on individual and collective desires, needs, values and morals. This collaborative and caring environment promotes teacher efficacy (Leithwood & Beatty, 2008). Fundamentally, supportive leadership is morally uplifting, and a natural combater against teacher stress (Littrell et al., 1994). "Leadership is a social, moral and ethical process which is fundamentally about raising individual self esteem and collective responsibility" (Harris, 2007, p. 172). Leaders who serve are altruistic. To be the recipient of this support and concern reduces teacher stress. Finding data to support this claim was the intent of the current study.

This literature review is not meant to be a complete survey of the field but rather highlights key studies that help to justify that further research in the study of teacher stress and effective administrative supports is needed and that support the design of the current study being conducted in SD#64.

### **Chapter Three: Procedures and Methods**

#### **Research Design**

The aim of the current study was to assess the various factors teachers say add to teacher stress and to hear from teachers what positive support measures administrators can provide that contribute to the reduction of that stress. The study utilized a mixed method approach. A survey with both close-ended questions and open-ended questions was administered to all the teachers of School District 64.

#### **Participants**

Participants were recruited from a population of interest in School District 64. As an employee of SD64 for over ten years this researcher was interested specifically in this population of teachers in British Columbia. All 115 teachers employed by School District #64 were invited to participate and were given the opportunity to complete the survey. There were a total of 65 surveys returned out of a possible 115, which indicates a return rate of 57%, a strong representative sample. Of the 65 respondents 30% were male, and 70% female, which is representative of the spread in the district where 30% of the teachers are male and 70% are female.

With regards to years teaching experience, demographic information collected is reported in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1

*SD# 64 Participant Demographics by Years of Teaching Experience*

| Years Experience | Total in District | # Survey Participants | % SD#64 Population Represented |
|------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------------|
| 0-5 Years        | 33                | 10                    | 30%                            |
| 6- 15 Years      | 46                | 19                    | 41%                            |
| 15+ Years        | 36                | 36                    | 100%                           |
| Overall Total    | 115               | 65                    | 57%                            |

Noteworthy; 100% of the teachers of SD#64 with over 15 years teaching experience participated. The data therefore is more representative of very experienced teachers in SD#64 than those populations with less experience.

Demographics were also analyzed by grade level taught seen in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2

*SD# 64 Participant Demographics by Grade Level Taught*

| Grade Taught  | Total in District | # Survey Participants | % SD#64 Population Represented |
|---------------|-------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------------|
| Elementary    | 37                | 21                    | 57%                            |
| Middle School | 46                | 18                    | 39%                            |
| High School   | 48                | 18                    | 38%                            |
| Support Staff | 31                | 5                     | 16%                            |

Teachers in SD#64 often hold multiple roles. Therefore this analysis may not accurately depict the response rate by grade level taught. Multiple teaching roles also explains why the total number of teachers was greater than 115. Demographic data was received from the Executive Assistant to the Superintendent and Board of Education School District #64 (Southern Gulf Islands).

The teachers in the sample varied by gender, years of teaching experience and grade level taught (Kindergarten - Grade 12). The data gathered from this sample were used to generalize to the teaching population of School District 64, Southern Gulf Islands, B.C.

### **Instruments Used**

The survey introduced the research topic, requested background information, had a two-part rating section to complete, and asked participants to provide detailed descriptions of one (or more) support(s) they received from an administrator with whom they had worked that had a positive effect on reducing their teacher stress, as well as the effect (impact) of that administrative support on their thoughts, behaviours, or feelings (See online link at the end of Appendix A).

Using a mixed methods approach, the survey first asked teachers to rate their personal stress levels from twelve *factors that contribute to teacher stress* with space left for optional open-ended responses following the likert scale section. Second, to rate eleven *administrative supports*, by levels of personal importance, that lessen teacher stress again with space left for comments if desired. Finally, a section was set aside for teachers to write their own reflections and narrative descriptions of effective administrative supports

that reduced their own teacher stress, and the impacts experienced as a result of that support.

Research has shown significant causal factors for teacher stress. The twelve stress factors that were selected to be included in the survey for this study were based on empirical findings in the literature on teacher stress. Research points to the following factors as playing a role in teacher stress: class size and composition, time demands, discipline, ongoing change, lack of resources (human and concrete), assessment, extra curricular demands, digital technology, level of community support, job satisfaction and work-life balance (Kyriacou, 2001; Leithwood, 2006; Naylor, 2003; Naylor & White, 2010; Pickering, 2008). The purpose of this section of the study was to determine what stressors *most* effected teachers in School District 64, in order to share with current administration to inform policy and practice.

The ‘factors that contribute to teacher stress’ section of the survey listed the twelve stressors and a five-point likert scale, that asked teachers to rate the perceived level of personal stress experienced per item. The numeral 1 represented ‘No Stress’ and 5 represented ‘Extreme Stress’. An open-ended comment section, which allowed teachers to expand on which factor causes the most stress to them personally, was given at the end.

The eleven supports chosen for the ‘administrative supports’ section of the study came from current research linking principal leadership and teachers’ feelings of efficacy. Walker and Slear (2011) looked at the positive relationship between specific principal behaviors/characteristics and teacher efficacy (Efficacy: teachers’ confidence in their ability to positively effect learning of students, *I can do this*). Walker and Slear (2011) presented a list of eleven principal characteristics (supports) that teachers rated for

importance. For the current research on Teacher Stress and Administrative Supports in SD#64, this researcher drew a connection between Walker and Slear's (2011) findings of teachers' feelings of confidence/ability (efficacy) and the reduction of teacher stress. Research clearly states that teachers with high feelings of efficacy experience less teacher stress (Blase & Blase, 1999; Harris, 2007; Leithwood & Beatty, 2008; Littrell et al., 1994). Thus it was assumed that supports that increased teacher efficacy would also reduce teacher stress. Therefore, the 'Principal Characteristics' survey that Walker and Slear (2011) used was adapted for the current research in SD#64 to measure the personal importance of various administrative supports in specifically reducing teacher stress. The Walker and Slear list of 11 'Principal Characteristics' (2011), modified, became the 11 'Administrative Supports', which were examined in the 'administrative supports that reduce teacher stress' section of the current survey. Table 3.3 shows Walker and Slear's original survey (2011) and the modified version for the current study:

Table 3.3

*Comparison of Walker and Slear (2011) survey and modified survey used in current study*

| Walker and Slear 2011: Original Survey   | Modified Survey used in Current Study   |
|--|---|
| Rating of <b>Principal Characteristics</b>   | Rating of <b>Administrative Supports</b>  |
| <b>1. Communication</b><br>The principal establishes strong lines of communication with and among students and teachers  | <b>1. Communication</b><br>...is clear, concise, consistent   |
| <b>2. Consideration</b><br>The principal expresses genuine concern for the welfare of teachers and makes efforts to get to know each individual.   | <b>2. Compassion</b><br>...expresses genuine concern for the welfare of the teachers  |
| <b>3. Discipline</b><br>The principal protects teachers from intrusion into their instructional time. This includes limiting announcements and preventing disruptions to class time.                             | <b>3. Discipline</b><br>...protects teachers and deals with the discipline concerns that go beyond the classroom intervention   |
| <b>4. Empowering Staff</b><br>The principal provides opportunities for teachers to make decisions about their work and to be involved in school-wide decisions   | <b>4. Empowering Staff</b><br>...promotes autonomy, efficacy, innovation, risk taking   |
| <b>5. Flexibility</b><br>The principal utilizes varied leadership behaviors as necessary based on specific situations and circumstances in the school.   | <b>5. Flexibility</b><br>...meets with individual needs of staff, students, classes   |
| <b>6. Influence with Supervisors</b><br>The principal effectively garners support from supervisors and district level administrative offices to assist in meeting the needs of the school.                       | <b>6. Influence with School Board</b><br>...garners support at a district level for the needs of school, staff, and individuals |
| <b>7. Inspiring Group Purpose</b><br>The principal creates an environment where all teachers are part of a team and work together toward shared goals that result in student and teacher success.                | <b>7. Inspiring Purpose</b><br>...creates an environment where all staff work together towards shared goals                     |
| <b>8. Modeling Instructional Expectations</b><br>The principal models his/her belief in the instructional process and emphasizes the importance of the instruction that takes place in each classroom.           | <b>8. Modeling Instructional Expectations</b><br>...informs practice and provides opportunities for professional growth         |
| <b>9. Monitoring and Evaluating Instruction</b><br>The principal "keeps an eye" on what is happening in the school and provides feedback to teachers regarding the instructional impact of classroom strategies. | <b>9. Feedback</b><br>...provides regular constructive feedback   |
| <b>10. Providing Contingent Rewards</b><br>The principal formally and informally recognizes outstanding work inside and outside of the classroom and shares this recognition in tangible and visible ways.       | <b>11. Appreciation and Praise</b><br>...formally and informally recognizes the efforts of staff                                |
| <b>11. Situational Awareness</b><br>The principal is aware of the details and concerns regarding the functioning of the school and uses this information to address current and potential problems               | <b>10. Situational Awareness</b><br>...notices, anticipates, trouble shoots, is intuitive and aware                             |

The 'administrative supports' section of the survey came with a five-point likert scale, where teachers rated the level of personal importance they attributed to each of the eleven administrative supports. The numeral 1 represented 'Not at all Important', and 5 represented 'Extremely Important'. Again, room was left for teachers' comments about the desirable supports that would aid them personally at the end of this section.

The third part of the survey was an open-ended question intended to elicit information of specific administrative supports personally experienced that were not addressed in the previous broad questions, in an attempt to draw some direct connections between the variables (teacher stress and administrative supports). This question provided the opportunity for a more personal narrative to be heard; explicit and reflective in manner.

Opting to include this narrative element came from the literature review of Blase and Blase (1999) where respondents were asked to provide detailed descriptions of one characteristic of a principal with whom they had worked that had a positive impact on them. The 'human voice' element was appealing and powerful.

Participants were asked to provide a detailed description of an experience where they received support from a principal that had a positive impact on the reduction of their teacher stress. The open-ended question asked teachers to: "Describe and give one (or more) detailed example(s) of a positive support (overt or covert, formal or informal) that a principal did that contributed to your stress reduction. Please share the effects (impacts) that administrative support had on your thoughts, behaviors, and emotions". Teachers were given a blank page on which to respond with no limitations. Though participants

may have been reluctant to write long narratives it was reasoned that asking for only one detailed description reduced the time/effort required to a reasonable level. An interview or focus group were also considered to draw deeper insight into quantitative responses, however time constraints restricted the research.

Responses were tallied and analyzed for common themes. A list of synonyms for each stressor was obtained using Microsoft Word. Stressor synonyms were collapsed into common themes.

Each survey came with an 'Administrative Supports that Reduce Teacher Stress' Information Sheet and Consent Form (see Appendix A) giving a full explanation of the purpose and intentions of the study, and an explanation that participation was anonymous. It also clearly stated that completion of the online survey indicated free and informed consent to participate in this research study.

### **Procedures**

Over a one-month period in spring 2012, 115 teachers from 11 schools in School District 64, in the Southern Gulf Islands, were invited to complete an online survey. Surveys were distributed to the entire SD#64 teaching population. Teachers' contact email information was obtained from the superintendent. Emails were sent from the Superintendents' Executive Assistant to the teaching staff at all the schools (K-Grade 12) introducing the survey. Included was a full explanation of the purpose and intentions of the study, a clear statement that participation was voluntary and completely anonymous, and a link to the online survey (see Appendix A). It was stated that completion and submission of the survey implied consent. An e-mail reminder was sent two weeks after the initial e-mail.

Using Fluid Surveys, a Canadian electronic statistical data analysis program, data were collected and statistics compiled. Electronic data and results were accessed by a password-protected account during the course of this study. Upon completion of the study, the electronic data was downloaded onto a storage device and stored with any printed documents in a locked filing cabinet for a period of two years. At the conclusion of that period, the electronic data will be deleted and the documents shredded.

### **Validity**

In order to minimize threats to internal validity the online survey included items that elicited primarily quantitative data (likert scale items). Data collector bias was avoided as participants responded directly to an anonymous online survey.

The open-ended question was anonymous and participants were asked to not include any names and any identifying information. Direct quotes avoided misrepresentation, though the selection and interpretation of the excerpts by the researcher may be biased.

Twelve questions addressing teacher stress were composed based on factors that emerged from a literature review of the field. Adapted survey questions were also derived from previous research on the topic of administrative supports (Walker & Slear, 2011) and addressed specifically eleven administrative supports that have been found to reduce teacher stress. An open-ended question inviting specific reflections followed. Explicitly connecting the two variables, teacher stress and administrative supports, in the open-ended narrative question provided additional data about the relationship between the variables. Qualitative and quantitative methods were used to triangulate results and interpretations.

The survey was presented in a trial with 10 teachers and five non-teachers outside of School District 64. Feedback was given as to the structure and content of the survey. In addition, factors such as clarity of printing, size of type, appropriateness/clarity of language (avoidance of educational jargon), and clarity of directions were considered.

The single survey retrieved data that directly answered the research question, thus demonstrating concurrent validity.

The 2012 climate of contract negotiation and tensions around job action in British Columbia may have threatened internal validity. The small size of the district, and sample population, factored in to the inability to make generalizations beyond this population of teachers/schools in School District 64 and thus the current study had external validity restrictions. Selection bias existed, though use of quantitative measures and standardized conditions that invited all teachers of SD#64 to participate minimized the effects.

External stress factors, outside the classroom or profession, may have contributed to the participants' perceived personal level of stress, and thus may have had some effect on the reliability and internal validity of this research. Direction of causation cannot be unequivocally determined. This is a confounding factor for those who work in 'emotional labor' professions, like teaching (Leithwood & Beatty, 2008). Separating work stress from personal stress is near impossible and a recognized concern for those who have jobs in the service sector (Leithwood & Beatty, 2008). While teacher stress may be the focus, other factors may have contributed to personal levels of stress and may jeopardize reliability however the significant number of participants who completed the survey minimized these effects.

**Justification of Methods of Analysis**

The participant population demographics were tallied and summarized. The data from the two-part survey were summarized and the results were ranked from most stressful factors to least, and from most important administrative support to least, using frequency distributions. Mean, mode and variance scores were calculated and presented in frequency tables for an overall picture, then means were examined and compared within sub groupings of years teaching experience and grade level taught. The mean calculated was used to categorize high/extreme stress as well as very/extremely important desirable administrative supports. The open-ended questions were coded for recurring themes. A list of synonyms for each stressor was obtained using Microsoft Word. Stressor synonyms were collapsed into common themes. Direct quotes from the open-ended questions at the end of both the stressors and support section, as well as the one overall positive reflective memory section were used to support interpretations of quantitative results and bring the human voice of experience and emotions into the data. The findings are presented first in a quantitative manner followed by qualitative data for both sections, with the one positive reflective piece completing the data.

The data was shared with the administrative population in the Southern Gulf Islands to inform their practice and policy making in the leadership realm. The results from this research have the potential to affect the interactions between principals and teachers in school each day and may deepen administrators' understanding of the differentiated needs of their teaching community.

### **Chapter Four: Results**

The findings of this action research study answered the question: What factors most contribute to teacher stress and what administrative supports counter and reduce that stress? Data were generated from an on-line survey that was distributed to all teachers in School District 64 in the Southern Gulf Islands, British Columbia. The data was collected and analyzed using the Canadian based survey company, Fluid Surveys.

There were a total of 65 surveys returned out of a possible 115, which indicates a return rate of 57%. Of the 65 respondents 30% were male, and 70% female, matching the spread of teachers in SD#64 where 30% are male and 70% are female.

The data reflects the responses to stressors effecting teachers and administration supports that reduce teacher stress in a quantitative five-point likert scale. It also reflects the common themes found in open-ended qualitative responses (Appendix B).

Tables 4.1 through 4.7 reflect a summary of the data received from the likert scale portion of the survey. The overall mean scores, mode scores and variance for each question are represented in Table 4.1 with potential means and modes from 1.0 to 5.0. Actual means range from 2.3 to 3.9. Actual modes range from 2.0 to 5.0. The results are examined in two sections, and illustrate the mean and mode frequency of: Section A) the level of stress experienced with each factor and Section B) the importance teachers attribute to the indicated administrative support that reduces stress. Within both sections, the results are examined by years teaching experience and grade level taught. These analyses were carried out because participant numbers were significant and were conducive to being representative of those populations. Trends within each group were then analyzed and compared.

Section A of the survey focused on the specific stressors. A likert score of 1 indicated no stress, 2 reflected low stress, 3 referred to some stress, 4 revealed high stress, and 5 reflected extreme stress. A mean or mode score of  $> 3.0$  therefore would be considered high/extreme stress.

Section B focused on the importance of various administrative supports according to teacher participants. A likert score of 1 indicated not important, 2 represented somewhat important, 3 referred to important, 4 was very important and 5 reflected extremely important. A mean or mode score of  $> 3.0$  therefore would be considered very important/ extremely important administrative support.

Section C requested an open-ended response. A tally of qualitative themes was recorded. Direct quotes from the open-ended reflection portion were used as well. Due to space limitations, only brief excerpts are presented in this chapter. The research in this section looked at collecting data that would explicitly connect the relationship that exists between the variables (teacher stress and administrative supports).

The researcher first examined the overall mean and mode scores for the stress factors of participating teachers from SD#64 (Table 4.1) in Section A. Further analysis investigated mean scores for stress factors according to the number of years teaching experience (Table 4.2), as well as the mean scores for stress factors according to grade level taught. (Table 4.3) A mean or mode score of  $> 3.0$  was considered high/extreme stress.

Table 4.1

*Overall Mean, Mode and Variance Scores for Stress Factors*

| Stress Factor              | n  | Mean | Mode | Variance |
|----------------------------|----|------|------|----------|
| Time Demands               | 60 | 3.5  | 4    | 0.7      |
| Student Discipline         | 63 | 3.1  | 4    | 1.2      |
| Lack: Human Resources      | 63 | 3.8  | 4    | 0.8      |
| Lack: Concrete Resources   | 63 | 2.9  | 2    | 1.2      |
| Assessment/Marking         | 62 | 3.0  | 3    | 0.7      |
| Extracurricular Activities | 63 | 2.3  | 2    | 0.6      |
| Digital Technology         | 63 | 2.9  | 3    | 1.4      |
| Public/Parent Relations    | 63 | 2.6  | 3    | 0.9      |
| Job Security               | 63 | 2.5  | 2    | 1.8      |
| On-going Change            | 60 | 3.0  | 3    | 1.2      |
| Class Size and Composition | 63 | 3.9  | 4    | 0.9      |
| Work-Life Balance          | 63 | 3.0  | 3    | 1.0      |
| Average Stress Level       |    | 3.0  |      | 1.0      |

Notable stress factors that contributed to *high-extreme stress*, where the mean ( $\mu$ ) is  $> 3$ , were: class size and composition ( $\mu=3.9$ ), lack of human resources ( $\mu=3.8$ ), time demands ( $\mu=3.4$ ) and discipline ( $\mu=3.1$ ).

Data were analyzed utilizing the reported demographic information (years of experience and grade level taught). Table 4.2 displays mean scores of stress factors

according to number of years experience teaching, again recognizing a mean score greater than 3.0 is significant and represents *high to extreme stress*.

Table 4.2

*Stressors: Mean Scores According to Years of Teaching Experience*

| Stressor                   | 0-5 years<br>n= 10 | 6-15 years<br>n= 19 | 15+ years<br>n= 36 |
|----------------------------|--------------------|---------------------|--------------------|
| Time Demands               | 4.0                | 3.3                 | 3.6                |
| Student Discipline         | 3.6                | 3.2                 | 3.0                |
| Lack: Human Resources      | 3.0                | 3.7                 | 4.1                |
| Lack: Concrete Resources   | 2.6                | 3.1                 | 2.9                |
| Assessment/Marking         | 2.7                | 2.9                 | 3.0                |
| Extracurricular Activities | 2.6                | 2.5                 | 2.2                |
| Digital Technology         | 2.6                | 2.7                 | 2.9                |
| Public/Parent Relations    | 2.5                | 2.5                 | 2.6                |
| Job Security               | 3.6                | 2.5                 | 2.2                |
| On-going Change            | 3.1                | 2.9                 | 3.1                |
| Class Size and Composition | 3.5                | 3.8                 | 4.0                |
| Work-Life Balance          | 3.1                | 3.3                 | 3.5                |
| Average Stress Level       | 3.1                | 3.0                 | 3.1                |

The top three stressors of teachers with 0-5 years experience were: a) time demands ( $\mu= 4.0$ ), b) job security/ student discipline ( $\mu=3.6$ ) and c) class size and

composition ( $\mu=3.5$ ). Teachers with 6-15 years teaching experience reflected: a) class size and composition ( $\mu= 3.8$ ), b) lack of human resources ( $\mu= 3.7$ ) and c) time demands/work-life balance ( $\mu= 3.3$ ) added the most stress. Experienced teachers with more than 15 years teaching said: a) lack of human resources ( $\mu=4.1$ ), b) class size and composition ( $\mu=4.0$ ) and c) time demands ( $\mu=3.6$ ) were significant contributors of stress. Note: class size and composition, as well as time demands, appear in the top three stressors for *all* levels of teaching experience.

Further, data was grouped by grade level taught: elementary school teachers, middle school teachers, high school teachers and support teachers. Table 4.3 displays the mean scores for each stress factor according to grade level taught.

Table 4.3

*Stressors: Mean Scores According to Grade Level Taught*

| Stressor                      | Elementary<br>n= 24 | Middle<br>School<br>n= 18 | High School<br>n= 18 | Support<br>Teacher<br>n= 5 |
|-------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|----------------------|----------------------------|
| Time Demands                  | 3.4                 | 3.9                       | 2.7                  | 3.8                        |
| Student Discipline            | 3.0                 | 3.4                       | 3.1                  | 2.8                        |
| Lack: Human Resources         | 4.2                 | 4.3                       | 3.2                  | 4.0                        |
| Lack: Concrete<br>Resources   | 2.5                 | 3.4                       | 2.8                  | 3.2                        |
| Assessment/Marking            | 3.0                 | 3.1                       | 2.7                  | 3.0                        |
| Extracurricular<br>Activities | 2.4                 | 2.6                       | 2.2                  | 1.8                        |
| Digital Technology            | 2.9                 | 3.2                       | 2.3                  | 3.2                        |
| Public/Parent Relations       | 2.4                 | 2.9                       | 2.3                  | 3.2                        |
| Job Security                  | 2.3                 | 3.1                       | 2.4                  | 2.0                        |
| On-going Change               | 3.0                 | 3.2                       | 2.7                  | 3.2                        |
| Class Size and<br>Composition | 4.0                 | 3.9                       | 3.6                  | 3.4                        |
| Work-Life Balance             | 3.4                 | 3.9                       | 3.0                  | 3.4                        |
| Average Stress Level          | 3.0                 | 3.4                       | 2.8                  | 3.1                        |

Again noting the top three stressors per category is as follows: Elementary School Teachers: a) lack of human resources ( $\mu=4.2$ ), b) class size and composition ( $\mu=4.0$ ), and c) time demands/work-life demands ( $\mu=3.4$ ). Middle School Teachers: a) lack of human resources ( $\mu=4.3$ ), b) class size and composition/work-life balance/time demands ( $\mu=3.9$ )

and c) student discipline/lack of concrete resources ( $\mu=3.4$ ). High School Teachers: a) class size and composition ( $\mu= 3.6$ ), b) lack of human resources ( $\mu=3.2$ ) and c) student discipline ( $\mu=3.1$ ). Support Teachers: a) lack of human resources ( $\mu=4.0$ ), b) time demands ( $\mu=3.8$ ) and c) class size and composition/work-life balance ( $\mu=3.4$ ) Note: lack of human resources appeared in the top three stressors in *all* four teaching categories, as did class size and composition.

Also noteworthy, according to those who participated in the survey, Middle School Teachers have the highest average stress levels ( $\mu=3.4$ ) and High School Teachers have the lowest ( $\mu=2.8$ ).

Overall, class size and composition appeared in the top three listed stressors in *all* categories regardless of teaching experience (Table 4.2) or grade level taught (Table 4.3).

A qualitative data question directly followed the likert-scale ranking question examining teacher stress factors. The question asked participants to expand on which stress factor(s) cause them *personally* the most teacher stress. Responses were tallied and analyzed for common themes. A list of synonyms for each stressor was obtained using Microsoft Word. Stressor synonyms were collapsed into common themes. 52 out of a possible 65 responses were given in the open-ended section, indicating 80% of the survey participants responded to the prompt. Some overlap occurred as teachers blended themes. A tally recorded key words noted. Four themes emerged and presented in Table 4.4:

Table 4.4

*Stress Factor Themes with Example Quotes*

| Stress Factors          | # of Respondents<br>(n= 52) | % of Respondents |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------|
| Lack of Time*           | 14                          | 28%              |
| Lack of Human Support** | 40                          | 77%              |
| Work-Life Balance ***   | 6                           | 12%              |
| Student Needs ****      | 25                          | 48%              |

\* “Too much to do, too little time”, “Not having the time and/or support to meet the needs of ALL the students in my class”

\*\* “The most stressful area of work for me are not receiving enough guidance and staff support for students with learning difficulties and behavioral needs. I feel like I am all alone...I am stressed that I am not meeting the learning needs of my students”

\*\*\* “I have been running on empty for too long...time has come to look after myself and allow the garden and sun to help make things right again”

\*\*\*\* “Class sizes are too large coupled with too many special needs students per class without any support for them or me”

Due to space limitations, only brief excerpts were included as example quotes. The research in this section of the survey looked at collecting data that could explore the connection between the two variables of interest in this study (teacher stress factors and administrative supports). The common themes that emerged will be discussed further in Chapter 5.

The researcher then examined the overall mean, mode and variance for the *administrative supports* of the participating teachers from SD#64 (Table 4.5). Further

analysis then looked at the mean for administrative supports according to the number of years teaching experience (Table 4.6) as well as the mean for administrative supports according to grade level taught (Table 4.7). A mean score of  $> 3.0$  was considered a *very/extremely* important administrative support.

Table 4.5

*Overall Mean, Mode and Variance Scores for Administrative Supports*

| Admin Support           | n  | Mean | Mode | Variance |
|-------------------------|----|------|------|----------|
| Communication           | 62 | 4.4  | 5    | 0.6      |
| Compassion              | 65 | 4.3  | 5    | 0.9      |
| Discipline              | 65 | 4.1  | 5    | 1.0      |
| Empowering Staff        | 65 | 4.2  | 5    | 0.8      |
| Flexibility             | 65 | 4.0  | 4    | 0.9      |
| Influence with District | 65 | 3.8  | 4    | 1.0      |
| Inspiring Purpose       | 65 | 3.8  | 4    | 1.0      |
| Modeling                | 63 | 3.6  | 4    | 0.8      |
| Feedback                | 64 | 3.5  | 4    | 1.0      |
| Situational Awareness   | 61 | 3.8  | 4    | 0.8      |
| Appreciation and Praise | 63 | 3.9  | 4    | 0.9      |

The top three ranked administrative support factors that were considered *very/extremely* important ( $\mu > 3$ ) were: a) communication ( $\mu=4.4$ ), b) compassion ( $\mu=4.3$ ),

and c) empowerment ( $\mu=4.2$ ). It is important to mention that *all* eleven supports had a mean score greater than 3.

Data were analyzed utilizing the reported demographic information (years of experience and grade level taught). Table 4.6 displays mean scores of desired administrative supports according to number of years experience teaching, again recognizing any mean score greater than 3.0 is significant and represents *very to extremely important*.

Table 4.6

*Supports: Mean Scores According to Years of Teaching Experience*

| Support                 | 0-5 years<br>(n=10) | 6-15 years<br>(n=19) | 15+ years<br>(n=36) |
|-------------------------|---------------------|----------------------|---------------------|
| Communication           | 4.3                 | 4.0                  | 4.6                 |
| Compassion              | 4.5                 | 3.9                  | 4.4                 |
| Discipline              | 4.1                 | 3.9                  | 4.4                 |
| Empowering Staff        | 4.2                 | 3.7                  | 4.4                 |
| Flexibility             | 4.0                 | 3.4                  | 4.3                 |
| Influence with District | 3.9                 | 3.4                  | 4.0                 |
| Inspiring Purpose       | 4.2                 | 3.4                  | 4.0                 |
| Modeling                | 3.8                 | 3.2                  | 3.8                 |
| Feedback                | 3.0                 | 2.7                  | 3.6                 |
| Situational Awareness   | 3.9                 | 3.4                  | 4.0                 |
| Appreciation and Praise | 3.8                 | 3.4                  | 4.2                 |

Teachers with less than five years teaching experience expressed the desire for

administrative support by way of: a) compassion ( $\mu=4.5$ ), b) communication ( $\mu=4.3$ ) and c) empowerment/ inspiration ( $\mu=4.2$ ). Teachers with 6-15 years experience were seeking administrative support through: a) communication ( $\mu=4$ ), b) compassion and discipline ( $\mu=3.9$ ) and c) empowerment ( $\mu=3.7$ ) . Veteran teachers with more than 15 years teaching experience desire administrative support through: a) communication ( $\mu=4.6$ ), b) compassion ( $\mu=4.4$ ) and c) empowerment ( $\mu=4.4$ ). All teachers, regardless of experience, indicated communication and compassion as the top two supports desired.

Table 4.7

*Supports: Mean Scores According to Grade Level Taught*

| Support                 | Elementary<br>(n=21) | Middle School<br>(n=18) | High School<br>(n=18) | Support Teacher<br>(n=5) |
|-------------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|
| Communication           | 4.6                  | 4.3                     | 4.5                   | 4.8                      |
| Compassion              | 4.3                  | 4.3                     | 4.3                   | 4.8                      |
| Discipline              | 4.5                  | 4.4                     | 4.1                   | 3.6                      |
| Empowering Staff        | 4.3                  | 4.1                     | 3.9                   | 4.4                      |
| Flexibility             | 4.3                  | 3.6                     | 3.8                   | 4.6                      |
| Influence with District | 3.8                  | 3.6                     | 3.8                   | 3.8                      |
| Inspiring Purpose       | 4.0                  | 3.7                     | 3.4                   | 3.6                      |
| Modeling                | 3.8                  | 3.5                     | 3.5                   | 3.8                      |
| Feedback                | 3.5                  | 3.6                     | 3.4                   | 3.4                      |
| Situational Awareness   | 3.7                  | 3.8                     | 4.0                   | 3.8                      |
| Appreciation and Praise | 4.0                  | 4.0                     | 3.7                   | 4.0                      |

Elementary School Teachers are looking for administrative support by way of: a) communication ( $\mu=4.6$ ) b) discipline ( $\mu=4.5$ ) and c) compassion/empowerment/flexibility

( $\mu=4.3$ ). Similarly, Middle School Teachers are seeking: a) discipline ( $\mu =4.4$ ), b) communication/compassion ( $\mu=4.3$ ) and c) empowerment ( $\mu=4.1$ ). High School Teachers are asking for: a) communication ( $\mu=4.5$ ), b) compassion ( $\mu=4.3$ ) and c) discipline ( $\mu=4.1$ ). And Support Teachers say they need: a) communication ( $\mu=4.8$ ), b) compassion ( $\mu=4.8$ ) and c) flexibility ( $\mu=4.6$ ). Again, regardless of grade level taught, *all* teachers seek communication and compassion, and ranked it in the top three most valued administrative supports.

Qualitative data directly followed the likert-scale ranking question examining administrative supports. An open-ended question was asked of participants. 42 out of a possible 65 responses were recorded, representing 65% of the survey participants. Participants were given space to expand on which *administrative support(s)* they most desire *personally* that would help to reduce teacher stress. Administrative support synonyms were collapsed into common themes. A tally system was used that reported the common themes for administrative supports. Responses within each theme were tallied. Three top common themes emerged and support the previously recorded quantitative data. The top three themes are presented in Table 4.8 and will be discussed further in Chapter 5:

Table 4.8

*Common Themes for Desired Administrative Supports that Reduce Teacher Stress*

| Administrative Support | # of Respondents<br>(n=42) | % of Respondents |
|------------------------|----------------------------|------------------|
| Relational *           | 32                         | 76%              |
| Empowering **          | 11                         | 26%              |
| Supported ***          | 10                         | 24%              |

\* “I (would) love an administrator who expresses genuine concern for all the staff”, “one who works together to form healthy, respectful, ethical relationships”

\*\* “I (would like) supportive leadership (that) enables growth and improved skills...empowering and supporting staff”

\*\*\* “I look for administrators that are supportive...can be counted on, has my back, supports me in *all* circumstances ...one who deeply listens to staff and students about their needs”

Section C of the survey asked teachers to reflect back to a principal with whom they had worked that had a positive impact on the reduction of their teacher stress. They were asked to describe and give a detailed example of the positive support (overt, covert, formal or informal), as well as the effects/impacts that that administrative support had on their thoughts, behaviors, and emotions.

A tally system was used that reported the common themes that emerged from the responses. 58 participants responded to the final prompt, 89% of the survey participants. Responses were often lengthy and reported multiple aspects of administrative support that were meaningful and effective in reducing their teacher stress. Therefore, one participant response frequently touched upon several themes.

Responses were tallied and analyzed for themes. The four most common themes that emerged support the previously recorded quantitative and qualitative data and are presented in Table 4.9.

Table 4.9

*Common Themes in Reflections of Positive Administrative Supports*

| Type of Administrative Support       | #of Respondents<br>(n= 58) | % of Respondents |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------------|------------------|
| Relational *                         | 58                         | 100%             |
| Presence **                          | 33                         | 57%              |
| Supported (in challenging times) *** | 39                         | 67%              |
| Validated/Appreciated ****           | 37                         | 64%              |

\* “he made a personal connection with everyone and took the time to acknowledge me in a genuine way”

\*\* “This principal was very encouraging and supportive. He was a presence in the school talking with students and teachers...being involved with everyone”, “took time and care to listen, observe, and provide specific feedback...this principal modeled high ethical standards for everyone which helped (me) gain confidence”

\*\*\* “...listened to the good, the bad and the ugly, providing support and asking questions, mediating when needed”

\*\*\*\* “I felt this person believed in my abilities”, “she gave me positive feedback and told me how good I am at my job. She made me feel appreciated”, “...commenting in a positive way about my teaching style and success with my students. This encouraged me to continue teaching and feel proud of myself”

A discussion of these common themes, as well as the themes from the two previous sections looking at stress factors and administrative supports will be presented in Chapter 5. Quote selection is subject to researcher bias.

## Chapter Five: Summary and Conclusions

### Summary and Discussion

This study investigated the factors that contribute to teacher stress and the administrator supports that reduce that stress. The research question was prompted by the current climate of educational change in British Columbia and specifically in School District #64, a district recognized provincially as being on the forefront of PL21 initiatives (Personalized Learning in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century). The Southern Gulf Islands' (SD#64) schools, educators and students are on the cusp of drastic changes in methods and philosophy. Information about how teachers feel during this time of change, both in their personal level of stress and the administrative support they appreciate, need, and receive will greatly impact the success of this small district leading this giant paradigm shift in education today.

What factors add to teacher stress and what administrative supports reduce it? To understand this at a deeper level a literature review took place examining relevant and current North American and British Columbia research around both teacher stress and effective leadership supports. A survey was then generated and distributed to examine more specifically the population of teachers in the Southern Gulf Islands, School District #64.

The survey consisted of likert style questions around teacher *stress factors* and the importance of various *administrative supports* that reduce teacher stress. Participants were first asked to rate each stressor or administrative support on a five-point likert scale. An open-ended qualitative style question followed the likert score segment, in each of the *stress factors* and the *administrative supports* sections. As well, a final qualitative

question ended the survey that asked teachers to reflect back on their own positive experiences in the past with a supportive administrator(s) and describe the effect and/or impact that administrators' actions, words or efforts had on the teachers' thoughts, behaviors and emotions. Data were then analyzed to discover the most significant stressors and the most valued administrative supports as perceived by participants both qualitatively and quantitatively. The quantitative data were then disaggregated to examine differences and similarities in years of teaching experience and grade level taught. The qualitative data were tallied for reoccurring themes both in stress factors and administrative supports.

**Comparison of findings for years of teaching experience and grade level taught.**

Overall stress factors that contributed to *high-extreme stress*, where the mean ( $\mu$ ) is  $> 3$ , were: class size and composition ( $\mu=3.9$ ), lack of human resources ( $\mu=3.8$ ), time demands ( $\mu=3.4$ ) and discipline ( $\mu=3.1$ ). This reflects the findings of many researchers in the field. Research has found predominately that class size and composition is a significant area of teacher stress (Kyriacou, 2001; Leithwood, 2006; Leithwood & Beatty, 2008; Naylor, 2003; Naylor & White, 2010; Pickering, 2008). Lack of human support (Kyriacou, 2001; Leithwood, 2006; Leithwood & Beatty, 2008), time demands (Leithwood & Beatty, 2008; Naylor 2003; Naylor & White, 2010; Pickering, 2008), and discipline (Leithwood & Beatty, 2008; Naylor, 2003; Naylor & White, 2010; Pickering, 2008) are recognized as significant stress factors for teachers found throughout the research in this field. The work done in SD#64 therefore concurs with previous findings examining factors contributing to teacher stress.

Regardless of years teaching experience or grade level taught, all teachers who participated noted the tremendous stress class size and configuration bring. They indicated “struggling with the number of students” in their class and the “needs and challenges each student brings” with them. Ideally teachers seek “smaller classes with fewer students with special needs”. The reality is that won’t likely happen in the public teaching system. Administrators need to be sympathetic to the challenges teachers face everyday in their classrooms trying to meet the needs of all their students. What administrators do and say can contribute to validating teachers’ efforts and honoring the tremendous task and responsibility they face every day.

New teachers (0-5 years experience) indicated feeling added stress around lack of time, student discipline, and job security/lack of confidence. Participants in the current study noted the tremendous amount of time put in to planning early in ones teaching career. Everything that beginning teachers create and execute is new and for the first time. The investment of “hours upon hours” is the norm for beginning teachers. Providing support during early years of teaching is essential (Walker & Slear, 2011).

Learning how to manage student behaviors and challenging situations can be daunting. Classroom management skills often need time and experience to be honed. As Liu’s research (2007) notes, student behavior and classroom management are major concerns for novice teachers. New teachers are still finding their ways. University can’t teach class management in the way that time and experience can. It’s challenging and stressful.

New teachers also showed marked increase of stress around job security combined with personal insecurity, especially “in a field where seniority often determines

successful applicants”. It is no wonder that “efficacy is highly volatile for new teachers” (Walker & Slear, 2011, p.47) and why teacher attrition is highest in the first few years of service (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003). Loeb, Darling-Hammond and Luczak (2005) found that lack of administrative support was one of the key reasons new teachers left the profession. Stockard and Lehman (2004) also report that social support and school administration were significantly related to job satisfaction and attrition rates for new teachers. Woolfolk Hoy (2000) goes on to suggest that efficacy may be “most malleable early thus the first years of teaching could be critical to the long term development of teachers” (p. 2). The “principal must play a vital role in the provision of supports that lead to positive efficacy” (Walker & Slear, 2011, p. 49) Administrative support is crucial.

Those new teachers, therefore, need something different from administrators in the way of backing (Walker & Slear, 2011). A compassionate, caring leader needs to stay connected with those members of their staff who may be feeling fragile and unsure of themselves in their new career. They need to encourage them, check in with them, support them. From daily interactions between teachers and principals, to teachers’ perceptions of the principal’s concern for each of them individually, “principal behaviors can have an impact on teacher effectiveness and teacher’s confidence in their ability” (Walker & Slear, 2011, p.47).

As with the current research done in SD#64, Walker and Slear’s study (2011) indicates that less experienced teachers need administrators to provide clear guidelines on the principal’s expectations surrounding instruction. Good communication and extra attention would help to ease much of the uncertainty they face daily and build their self-esteem. “A principal’s influence on teachers goes beyond curriculum and assessment. It

includes the influence on the teacher's individual belief system and self confidence in the classroom" (Walker & Slear, 2011.p. 51)

Self-confidence and efficacy of new teachers, according to Woolfolk Hoy (2000), are related both to "the stress and commitment to teaching", as well as to "the satisfaction with the support from administrators" (p.6). This reflects the "continued need for affirmation from and a positive relationship with their principal to offset lower levels of confidence in their teaching performance" (Walker & Slear, 2011, p. 55). New teachers need extra care and attention. Principal leadership characteristics that encourage feelings of effectiveness and confidence are essential (Barnett & McCormick, 2004). This parallels participants in the current study who state that a "compassionate administrator can do much to reduce their stress and increase their confidence" as they begin their journey in the world of teaching.

Teachers with 6-15 years experience noted the same stressors as those with over 15 years teaching experience. Experienced teachers recollect a time in their career when there was "greater funding and more support services". They indicate feeling the strain of having "financial and human support removed". Economic times and budget cuts have lead to drastic changes in education in the past few decades. Those teachers who once had more support by way of "smaller classes, less special needs students, and more human support" services year for days of past for both themselves and their students. From one survey participant:

In the early years of my career I had a full-time teacher's aide in my classroom and so did all my colleagues. This aide was available to work with individual students or with anything else that was needed... I also had a Learning Assistance

teacher who worked specifically with my special needs children. These two individuals enabled me to be effective and freed me to do that which I was trained for... teaching. I was not burdened with the myriad of tasks teachers now deal with. My time was spent efficiently, and the children with learning disabilities were given expert assistance. The workload now imposed upon teachers is unrealistic and is causing a general stress level that is not sustainable (Elementary Teacher, 15+ years experience).

Survey participants voice similar concerns to those found in research in the field. As demands have increased over the years, time spent in the class and away from home has increased. Economic challenges in the “past few decades have changed the face of education”. Since they began teaching there have been added stressors imposed. “More students, more needs, less funding, less support”. Education has changed much over the years and the demands have intensified (Naylor & White, 2010). Experienced teachers may have wisdom to glean from but indicate also feeling “ill equipped to meet the new challenges and vast needs in the classroom”. Teachers with experience feel the loss. Administrators need to stay compassionate to their needs and communicate with them how to adjust to the added strains in their profession as well as affirm them in what they *are* doing...the best they can.

Administrators with experienced staff need to support them differently. Research by Walker and Slear (2011) determined that experienced teachers expect the principal to believe in the work they are doing and to be able to talk with them, empower them, and release them to explore new innovative ways of teaching. This reflects similar findings in SD#64 amongst staff with experience. One participant with 15+ years experience stated,

“I feel the need to be innovative and creative is extremely important at this stage in my career...administration can play a huge role encouraging this”.

Identifying the specific administrative behaviors that support teachers at “each experience level and then implementing those behaviors in a differentiated way for each teacher has the potential to unlock tremendously positive advances in teacher confidence” (Walker & Slear, 2011, p.51) “Principal behaviors affect the efficacy (and stress reduction) of new and experienced teachers differently” (Walker & Slear, 2011, p.57). Administrators must address the differentiated needs of teachers at various stages of their career (Walker & Slear, 2011).

Beyond the previously noted stressor of *class size* and *configuration*, teachers of elementary school, middle school, and high school all indicated significant stress with having little in the way of *human resources* to support them and their students. How do administrators stretch the staff they currently have to meet all the needs and reduce the strain teachers currently feel? This is a difficult question with no easy or stock answer. But it is a question that needs to be addressed both at a district level and within each unique school setting. The findings show how taxing teaching is. District leadership and local administrators need to address this concern.

With the exception of High School teachers, all teachers in the current study, regardless of years teaching experience or grade level taught, expressed feeling the strain of the *lack of time* to sufficiently address all they face. They also noted the burden their career places on their *work-life* sense of balance...or in this case, imbalance. Teaching is extremely trying personally and professionally. Administrators need to be aware of this and protect their teachers.

Not surprising then, as far as administrative supports, *all* teachers who participated in the current study seek *communication* and *compassion* from their leaders. Walker and Slear (2011) found the same: teachers need clear lines of communication. They need to feel connected and informed (which) increases ownership and the willingness to work together for a common goal (Walker & Slear, 2011). Further: relationships, encouragement, trust and compassion offset the effects of teacher stress (Leithwood & Beatty, 2008).

Unique to Middle School teachers in the current study is an added desire by teachers to have administrators assist them with discipline concerns. Ingersoll and Smith (2003) found that teachers who were dissatisfied with their job often cited student discipline problems for their dissatisfaction. Middle School Years students can be challenging. Teachers of this unique and exceptional age indicated needing and requesting support when those difficult situations surface.

Participants in SD#64 match (though in different ranking order) the findings of the Walker and Slear study (2011) that showed teachers look for administrators to: a) model instructional expectations, b) show strong communication, and c) inspire teachers to see greater meaning and purpose in their work.

As Ladd (2009) states, teachers' perceptions of school leadership quality has a significant association with teachers' plan to depart from (or stay in) their career. Tickle et al. (2010) agree. Using quantitative research, through a teacher survey questionnaire, researchers were able to determine that administrative support was *the most significant* predictor of teachers' job satisfaction and intent to stay in the profession (Tickle et al., 2010)

Ladd (2009) goes on to say this pattern is true in elementary, middle and high schools. SD#64 findings concur. It is a challenging profession. Teachers' perceptions of administration support are critical.

**Discussion of noted teacher stress factors.**

The research findings regarding teacher stress factors found participants indicated a score of *high stress* in four areas; class size and composition, lack of human resources, time demands, and student discipline. The mean scores noted that the greatest stress experienced was in class size and composition ( $\mu = 3.9$ ), the lack of human resources to meet student needs ( $\mu = 3.8$ ), and time demands ( $\mu = 3.5$ ). These stressors were also reflected in the themes that emerged from the open-ended question responses.

***Stress theme: Lack of human resources and class size and composition.***

Analysis of the *stress factors* qualitative open-ended section of the survey revealed the emergence of several themes. A vast majority of teachers, 40 out of 52 written responses (77%), noted the *lack of human resources and support* combined with *class size and composition*. Teachers stated feeling 'ill equipped to meet all the vast needs of the students'. Within that body of forty responses, ten spoke specifically of the urgent need for more Support Teachers and/or Educational Assistants *in* the class. One teacher wrote:

The most stressful area of work for me is not receiving enough guidance and staff support for students with learning difficulties and behavioral needs... I am alone... I am not meeting the learning needs of all my students (Elementary Teacher, 11-15 years experience).

Many teachers echoed this concern and one noted that, “meeting the needs of special needs children, particularly those with severe behavior problems, influence both the opportunity for other students to learn and my teaching style”. Another commented:

I find that much of my time is spent putting out fires rather than teaching. I have students in my class that need lots of one on one support, socially and academically, and I am unable to give them what they need. I wish that I could have an EA in the classroom all the time (Primary Teacher, 6-10 years experience).

This sense of being unable to meet all students’ needs and often feeling alone as a result of *lack of human resources and support* and *class size and composition* was a theme that resonated in 77% of the open- ended reflections. These findings concur with others that show class size and composition is a significant area of tension in teaching (Kyriacou, 2001; Leithwood, 2006; Leithwood & Beatty, 2008; Naylor, 2003; Naylor & White, 2010; Pickering, 2008). Pickering (2008) credits larger class sizes with more special needs to an increase in time spent on preparation, grading and discipline. Growing class sizes and integrating students with a diverse host of needs and challenges has lead to a marked increase in teachers’ stress (Naylor, 2003). Research reflects similar concerns with class size and composition, and lack of human support to meet students’ needs, as those that surfaced in the SD#64 study.

***Stress theme: Lack of time.***

The second most prominent stressor theme recorded was the *lack of time*. Comments like: “There is never enough time to accomplish all that is needed”, “there is too much to do, in too little time”, “I can never seem to get all the work done in a given

day” were echoed in fourteen of the 52 responses (27%). Comparable, BCTF (2008) note 80% of teachers say they take on too many things and 75% say others expect too much of them. As revealed by Canadian Teachers Federation in 2005 even with working an average of 55.6 hours a week teachers state they are unable meet all the demands of the profession (BCTF, 2008). Addressing the incremental and cumulative expectations of teachers, McGrath (1995) states, “it simply can’t all be done, and it is highly stressful to be given a task you know you can’t complete” (p.5).

***Stress theme: Work-life balance.***

The previously named *lack of time* was then frequently blamed for the infringement of work-life into personal lives. Which lead to the third notable theme of *work-life* balance, and was often combined with feeling *undervalued*. One teacher in the study wrote:

The demands of the job do not equate with the pay scale or the respect teachers deserve. We are expected to raise these children, make them ready for the future yet the support from administration and community are next to none. We are expected to give up our personal time to help. Where is there support anywhere?  
(High School Teacher, 0-5 years experience)

Another participant commented: “Teaching takes up a great deal of personal time and balancing the needs of your family, young and old is important too. Sadly, family often takes a second place to school.” One teacher wrote, “We are overworked and undervalued”. Finally, a teacher, on the cusp of retirement reflected:

I have had the great honor of working with so many hard working, caring teachers in my career. Every one of them has dedication, love for kids and the ability to

stretch resources and themselves to impossible lengths. I have been running on empty for too long a time now and despite my desire to finish with a bang, it's not going to happen. Time has come to look after myself and allow the garden and sun to help make things right again (Middle School Teacher, 16+ years).

The personal cost to self is clear. Parallel, Duxbury noted (2004) that 60% of Canadian workers suffered high levels of stress when trying to balance work and family commitment. Duxbury (2004) further found one of the most vulnerable employees are teachers. Participants in the SD#64 study voiced similar concerns to those teachers in "The Worklife of BC Teachers 2009" that state: 51.5% can't 'turn off' work concerns during personal time and 34.8% say teaching interferes with family, and 22.5% say the job negatively effects their physical and emotional wellbeing (Naylor & White, 2010). As was reflected in this research, teachers (75%) in the 2005 "National Teachers Poll" worry that teaching comes at a cost to family and friends (BCTF, 2008). Echoing the voice and thoughts of SD#64 participants, Naylor (2001) summarizes: "Teachers are sacrificing their physical and mental health, and in some cases their relationships to maintain programs and classes. This represents a severe and unsustainable imbalance in many teachers' lives" (p.5). Teaching *is* a 'high stress' job (Kyriacou, 2001). One participant in the SD#64 study wrote, "It is not *one* factor but the *cumulative* effect of ongoing stressors which cause me much stress".

The data found in this study reflects similar findings in previous research looking at teacher stress factors (Leithwood & Beatty, 2008; Naylor, 2003; Naylor & White, 2010; Pickering, 2008). It can be derived from the current data, therefore, that teachers in SD#64 experience similar stressors to other BC teachers regardless of how long they have

been teaching, or what grade level they teach. Nationally, British Columbia's teachers reported higher stress than any other province (Naylor, 2003). Concerns must be addressed.

**Discussion of desired administrative supports that reduce teacher stress.**

Not surprising then were the responses to the question of which administrative supports are most desired. In the likert scale section of the survey the research findings for administrative supports demonstrated participants indicated a mode score of *very important* ( $Mo=4$ ) to *extremely important* ( $Mo=5$ ) in *all* eleven administrative supports. The administrative supports most valued with the highest mean scores were: communication ( $\mu= 4.4$ ), compassion ( $\mu= 4.3$ ), empowering staff ( $\mu= 4.2$ ) and discipline ( $\mu= 4.1$ ). This was further evidenced in the qualitative data unveiled in the following section. Both quantitative data and qualitative data revealed similar ideal administrative supports that reduce teacher stress.

Strong lines of *communication* are critical (Blase & Blase, 1999: Walker & Slear, 2011). *Compassion* in the form of genuine concern for the welfare of teachers is vital (Littrell et al., 1994: Walker & Slear, 2011). *Empowerment* whereby teachers make decisions about their work and school-wide decisions is needed (Blase & Blase, 1999: Walker & Slear, 2011). The current findings in SD#64 that examined specifically which administrative supports are most valued therefore concur with preceding research.

The Walker and Slear survey (2011) showed three principal behaviors as being statistically significant in relationship to teacher efficacy; a) Modeling Instructional Expectations b) Communication, and c) Providing Contingent Rewards. Consideration and compassion was also noted with participants with over seven years teaching

experience, as well as ‘Inspiring Group Purpose’. All these factors were made mention of in the SD#64 study, though the ranking order differed.

***Ideal administrative support theme: Relational.***

Of the forty-two written responses in the qualitative section of the survey examining ideal administrative supports, thirty-two spoke of the importance of a *relational* theme that included care, respect, validation and acknowledgement. Over and over phrases describing ideal supportive administration included words like; *genuinely caring, compassionate, trusting and trustworthy, authentic relationship, sincere concern, value and respect everyone* were evidenced in 76% of the written responses. One teacher said:

We need to be validated for what we do, and celebrated among and with our peers~ it’s so important to feel valued and respected. Our job is tough. We all do so much. It’s nice to be appreciated, supported and cared for. I need an administrator who shares a genuine respect and concern for all (Middle School Teacher, 11-15 years experience).

This is parallel to what Littrell et al. (1994) found; teachers desire administrators who will show that teachers are esteemed, trusted professionals worthy of concern by such practices as maintaining open communication, showing appreciation, and taking an interest in teachers’ work, and considering teachers’ ideas. This emotional support provides teachers with a sense of belonging and motivates them (Littrell et al., 1994). Relationships, encouragement, trust and compassion offset the effects of teacher stress (Leithwood & Beatty, 2008). Walker and Slear (2011) go further to emphasize that

principal characteristics such as an ability to encourage feelings of effectiveness and confidence are essential. Correspondingly, teachers in SD#64 voiced likewise thoughts.

***Ideal administrative support theme: Empower team / vision building.***

A sense of team and vision building was the second most heard theme in the qualitative section. Eleven responses (26%) spoke of the desire for administration to create a team feeling of a united ‘us’. *Collaboration, team visioning, empowering the collective whole, inspiring togetherness, one of us, deeply listens to and truly values everyone in the group and creates opportunities to grow as a team* were some voiced thoughts. One teacher wrote, “I like an administrator that acknowledges the need for staff to connect, plan, talk about kids and socialize together. Better yet, I like when he/she makes an effort to provide this kind of time!” (Support Teacher, 16+ years experience).

These findings supports studies that state that administrators need to empower staff and provide opportunities for teachers to make decisions both about their own work and school-wide decisions (Edwards, Green, & Lyons, 2002; Walker & Slear, 2011).

***Ideal administrative support theme: Support/backing in challenging situations***

A very close third theme found was the longing for administrative support during challenging times with students and parents, usually around discipline. Ten statements (24%) spoke of the ideal support of having an administrator who *can be counted on to be in your corner, who stands up for me in tough times and who verbalizes his faith in me and my abilities*. One teacher stated:

Knowing that they have your back and can be relied upon to be there to support you in all circumstances means so much to me. That’s what I need....an

administrator who understands the complexities of teaching and consistently offers support in the class and out (Primary Teacher, 6-10 years experience).

The desire of teachers to have the principal to protect and back them in challenging situations such as discipline is cited both in the current study, as well as was found empirically in others (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003; Littrell et al., 1994; Liu, 2007; Walker & Slear, 2011).

The findings of the study in SD#64 offer similar results to previous research in the field examining the effects of administrative supports on teacher job satisfaction, efficacy and teacher stress reduction (Blase & Blase, 1999; Harris, 2007; Leithwood & Beatty, 2008; Littrell et al., 1994; Tickle, 2010). Administrative support is strongly associated with teachers' job satisfaction and intent to stay in teaching (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003; Liu, 2007).

It therefore can be derived that what Littrell suggested in 1994 remains true, "Fundamentally, supportive leadership is morally uplifting, and a natural combater against teacher stress" (p. 303). It is imperative that administrators examine their words and actions and make a concerted effort to value, appreciate, communicate and support their teachers. As Harris (2007) states, "Leadership is a social, moral and ethical process which is fundamentally about raising individual self esteem and collective responsibility" (p. 172). The current study confirms that teachers in SD#64 seek what all teachers seek; a leader who will validate them, encourage them, support them and communicate well with them; a compassionate, authentic leader who prioritizes relationships and connections; a leader that empowers and releases teachers to rise up to their full potential; a leader that "bring(s) forth the best in themselves and others" (Harris, 2007, p.45).

**Discussion of reflections of experienced administrative supports in the past.**

58 participants (89%) responded to the closing prompt, which asked teachers to reflect on a positive experience/s in the past, as a result of administrative support, that aided in reducing teacher stress. Themes emerged similar to the results already presented. Responses were often lengthy and reported multiple aspects of support that were meaningful and effective in reducing their teacher stress. Therefore, one participant response often mentioned several themes.

***Experienced administrative support theme: relational***

100% of the 58 qualitative responses made reference to a *relational* aspect of positive administrative supports they benefitted from in the past. Words like *authentic personal connections, caring relationships, genuinely listened, trusted and trustworthy,* and *caring and compassionate* were echoed in *every* reflective response. This parallels findings in the quantitative section that show relational components of compassion (genuine care), empowerment (efficacy), flexibility (individual acknowledgement) and appreciation (personal recognition) are highly valued and needed. Within this study, these *relational* elements represent four of the six highest ranked administrative supports in the quantitative data. This reflects previous findings (Blase & Blase, 1999; Harris, 2007; Leithwood & Beatty, 2008; Tickle, 2010; Walker & Slear, 2011) where emotional relational supports were found to be critical. Littrell et al. (1994) participants rated ‘emotional support’ as *the* most important of all forms of support. Blase and Blase (1999) further revealed that the cornerstone to effective instructional leadership was relational.

Within this relational theme a sub-theme appeared. The sense of the administrator being *present* in the classes, halls, and staff room was noted. In 33 out of the 58 *relational* responses, 57%, explicitly named ‘presence’ as being a key to positive experiences in the past. One teacher wrote:

This principal was very encouraging and supportive. He was a positive presence in the school, talking to students and teachers, being involved with everyone. The principal made time to listen to teachers and kids... I liked that this principal had a physical presence in the school and knew every kid and staff member personally (Middle School Teacher, 11-15 years experience).

Another reflected:

The principal would often come in my room and offer support, and give words of encouragement to me, and the students...at that time there was almost a sense of ‘collusion’... I think that the feeling that I was not alone dealing with my class and their issues was perhaps the most important stress reducer in this whole relationship I had with this administrator (Middle School Teacher, 16+ years experience).

These findings support what Littrell et al. (1994) suggested: that principals provide an atmosphere of optimism and camaraderie, emphasize emotional support daily, and interact frequently with teachers.

***Experienced administrative support theme: Support in challenging times***

A feeling of being ‘backed’ when situations were tense was the next most commonly noted positive reflection in 60% of the responses. Memories from several participants; “I remember feeling overwhelmed...I felt the administration understood the

stress I was under and that they wanted to make things easier for me”, “The principal shared responsibility with a very difficult student... I cannot express the relief of stress that the principal’s action gave to me the teacher, and class. I cannot express the gratitude I felt.” Two more specific reflections, the first:

...a parent was verbally abusive...this was extremely difficult for me. I was vulnerable and especially stressed with the demands of the job. The principal stood by me 100%...the support helped me get through this experience with some dignity and resilience (Primary Teacher, 11-15 years experience)

The second:

I have appreciated how issues have been brought to my attention...without judgment. The admin may not have agreed with how I managed a situation but demonstrated respect for different points of view...the curiosity, rather than judgment allowed me to be self-reflective rather than defensive. That behavior builds trust and genuine heartfelt respect, which creates loyalty and a greater sense of team (Support Teacher, 16+ years experience)

Teachers’ desire to have the principal protect and back them in challenging situations is cited both in the current study, as well as is found empirically, and previously noted, in others (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003; Littrell et al., 1994; Liu, 2007; Walker & Slear, 2011). The qualitative data concurs with the quantitative data in the SD#64 research as well. That data also noted teachers seek support through administrative compassion ( $\mu=4.3$ ) and support with discipline ( $\mu=4.1$ ).

***Experienced administrative support theme: Validation and acknowledgement***

Feeling valued, honored and appreciated in subtle ways and more direct methods was the next most verbalized theme. 57% of the responses indicated the impact that positive feedback played in their stress reduction. Several vocalized reflections: “He would always remember to thank me or show appreciation through a hand written note in my box or stop and tell me face to face. I always felt supported”, “I knew this person believed in my abilities and that led to decreased stress”, “It was nice that my work was recognized”, “I felt valued as a staff member when my efforts were noticed...I felt like we were working together...it gave me confidence”, “Her interactions with me made me feel valued and successful therefore I was always going that extra mile for my students and the school”, “ He listened, discussed, and gave voice to his confidence in my abilities”. And finally, from one participant:

When I thanked the principal for coming in to the class as he was leaving, he stopped and said emphatically, *No, THANK YOU! You do a great job for the students here...*The positive feedback made me feel like the principal had some idea about the work I do and the effect I have on the students and I felt appreciated (High School Teacher, 16+ years experience)

Praise significantly affects teacher motivation, self-esteem and efficacy (Blase & Blase, 1999).

**Limitations**

The goal of this study was to look at what factors contribute the most significant stress to teachers, and what administrative supports teachers most appreciate or benefited from in the past that are said to reduce stress. A survey was sent to the whole teaching

population of SD#64 in the Southern Gulf Islands of British Columbia. This study had a 57% return rate, which left 43% of the teaching population having not communicated the stress factors that effect them, nor the administrative supports that assist them. Therefore, even though a significant number of participants responded, the results cannot be generalized to a larger context or a different school district.

However, a 57% response rate was a significant return rate. It may be that the strong response rate was due to the relationship of the researcher with many teachers in the district. It could also reflect that the researcher was investigating an important topic for teachers.

The demographic information depicted that, of those who did respond, the largest population were female with more than 15 years teaching experience. Of the 65 respondents 30% were male, and 70% female. It should be noted that currently within School District #64, 30% of the teachers are male and 70% are female. The data therefore is a good indicator of current teaching population represented by gender.

The distribution of responses for age level taught was also well represented with 34% teaching elementary school, 29% teaching middle school, 29% teaching high school, and 8% being support teachers. School District is small so often teacher's roles and job descriptions overlap. Statistics received from the executive assistant to the superintendent of SD#64 report that 30% of the teachers employed teach elementary school, 37% teach middle school, 38% teach high school and 25% are support teachers. Based on that, the spread of grade levels represented from the sample of participants in the current study was representative of the population.

Data from the quantitative sections of the survey gave similar findings to those recorded in the qualitative sections. The quantitative and qualitative data therefore supported each other.

The current climate of provincial contract negotiations and job action may have influenced participants' responses to stress factors that otherwise may have had different results, however the focus of the research was on the administrative supports that reduce teacher stress, actual and ideal. It was the intent of the author to concentrate on the positive effects of administrative supports, however it is noted that this school year was burdened with extra stressors. One respondent said, "This year, job action has been very stressful. If I were to complete this survey another year, my answers would be different." Another participant stated, "Although this year has been a difficult one I would say overall our administration is very approachable and does want the best for the students and staff". It should be noted as well that several teachers suggested that the high response rate to the survey reflected the desire of teachers to relay information to administration and teachers saw the survey as a tool to communicate their needs in a respectful manner that could potentially open up important dialogue. One teacher stated:

I know many people on my staff took this survey in hopes that administration will actually look and see what we teachers are all desperately feeling. It is hard to have conversations like these without emotions getting in the way, or people getting defensive. Because we are a close-knit district and are often friends with our administrators it's awkward to talk about where we feel we need more administrative support. We hope that administration can receive what we have said in the manner it was intended, not as blame or an attack, but rather as a way

to open up and start important, needed conversations (Elementary Teacher, 16+ years experience)

While the results may not be generalizable to other districts, the high response rate and the value teachers put on the survey indicates the results have the potential to contribute to better understanding between teachers and administrators within Southern Gulf Islands, School District #64.

### **Recommendations for Practice**

Many teachers are experiencing high levels of stress in SD#64. Class size and composition, as well as lack of human resources, are leaving teachers feeling ill equipped to meet the needs of all their students and void of time, and this is influencing their professional and personal lives. Administrators need to be aware of the current issues facing teachers and use their influence, abilities and resources to help reduce teacher stress. Teachers have voiced their heartfelt cries for administrative support by ways of communication, compassion, discipline and empowerment. Leadership can and does make a difference in reducing teacher stress.

It is hoped that by distributing the results of this survey to the administrative team at the district level and the school level it would provide leadership with the information they need to set goals and create the structures required to support teachers in the Southern Gulf Islands as they lead the province forward towards new visions and educational shifts. When administrators support the teachers who are on the forefront of change, all will benefit.

Appreciative Inquiry, the process of building on the existing positive, could be utilized to uncover what administrative supports are currently in place that are successful.

It is suggested that teachers and administrative teams come together with the central goal being to discuss what is needed in the care and support of the teaching team. Together, administrators and teachers could share what works, what's needed, and what's next. If administration were to focus their efforts on teacher support, then the students, the school, the district, and of course the teachers themselves would all benefit.

**Specific recommendations for practice.**

Focusing on the top two desirable 'administrative supports' of communication and compassion, gathered directly from teachers' responses in the survey, as well as witnessed good practice, suggestions include:

1) *Communication:*

a) "This week at a Glance" emails. Emails that communicate upcoming events in the school and whom it affects that goes out to staff in advance weekly. An anticipatory day-by-day look at what's coming up, who is responsible, what needs to be done as well as recognition of the various teachers' roles helps keep all staff informed. A similar visual, in a prime location, would be recommended as well (ex: daily communication book of who is absent/special events/field trips etc: a monthly calendar/whiteboard sharing the information).

b) Respond to staff emails: survey participants indicated feeling ignored, unheard, undervalued when administrators did not reply to emails. Set aside time daily to answer staff emails or have face-to-face discussions. Emails not responded to can be misinterpreted.

- c) Classroom visits: schedule regular time for informal/formal feedback and discussion. Use AFL (Assessment for Learning) principles and ‘sandwich’ feedback with what’s working well. Be specific and authentic with feedback.
  - d) Seek feedback: ask staff to evaluate/give administration feedback. Allow anonymity. Use responses to inform practice. Administration should assess their behaviors to see if they are providing the support that *teachers* believe is important (Tickle et al., 2010).
  - e) Meet with staff one on one: schedule a face to face meeting to discuss with each teacher their goals, desires, strengths and challenges and ask how administration can support the teacher specifically. Give the teacher a guideline of the discussion format in advance, provide release time for an hour for each meeting, record the responses, and follow-up.
- 2) *Compassion:*
- a) Relationships: get to know each staff member at a personal level. Use a staff list and intentionally make time to get to know something about each individual. Show an interest in each as a person, not only a teacher on staff.
  - b) Team time: create time for staff to bond. Weekly scheduled ‘hang out’ time/place to connect the team informally or more formal team building times/events (ideally within school hours) monthly. Littrell et al. (1994) suggests administration provide an atmosphere of optimism and camaraderie, emphasize emotional support daily, and interact frequently with teachers.
  - c) ‘Check-in’s’: schedule time at the beginning of every staff meetings to give each person a voice, responding to an open ended prompt personal or professional

- d) Presence: greet staff and students at arrival daily, walk the halls, smile, deliver notices to classes, offer to help in class, keep office door open, be visible/friendly
- e) Appreciate teachers: formally or informally honour teachers for their efforts big and small. Notice the details and acknowledge/encourage/thank teachers

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

Some of the most significant noted stress factors were the lack of human resources to meet student needs and class size and composition in School District #64. The need for administrative support through clear communication, compassion, discipline and empowerment were seen as extremely important. Though the author suspects a similar feeling throughout British Columbia based on current literature reviews, further studies are needed to confirm this.

Many factors contribute to growing teacher stress but more importantly many leadership approaches and methods are said to reduce teacher stress. Schools are only as effective as the teachers within the building.

What administrators say and do can make a tremendous difference. Leadership can take an active role in reducing teacher stress. Knowing something about the psychological costs to teachers doing their jobs well sets the stage to address teacher wellness (Leithwood & Beatty, 2008). If backed by administrative support, it is believed that teachers can not only survive creatively in their profession, but thrive as well (McGrath, 1995). What administrators say, do, and believe has influence in addressing the issue of teacher stress.

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**Appendix A: Research Consent Form**

Enjoy  
the journey.

**FACULTY OF EDUCATION**  
 Vancouver Island University  
 900 Fifth Street, Nanaimo,  
 British Columbia, Canada V9R 5S5  
 Tel (250) 740-6221 Fax (250) 740-6463  
<http://www.viu.ca/education/>

**ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORTS THAT REDUCE TEACHER STRESS  
 SOUTHERN GULF ISLANDS, BRITISH COLUMBIA**

**RESEARCH CONSENT FORM**

**“Administrative Supports that Reduce Teacher Stress”  
 May, 2012**

|   |   |
|---|---|
| Shannon Johnston, Researcher &<br>Masters of Educational Leadership Student,<br>Vancouver Island University<br><a href="mailto:sjohnston@sd64.bc.ca">sjohnston@sd64.bc.ca</a> | Rachel Moll, Ph.D., Supervisor<br>Department of Education<br>Vancouver Island University<br>(250) 753-3245, ext. 2161 |
|   |   |

**Purpose:**

I am a student in the Masters of Educational Leadership program at Vancouver Island University. This program requires us to gain applied experience in designing and conducting educational research. As such, I have designed a research project to explore which administrative supports help reduce teacher stress.

**Participants:**

In order to participate in this study, you must satisfy the following criteria:

- a) You are a certified public school teacher working in School District 64 in the Southern Gulf Islands, BC

**Study Procedures:**

During this study, you will be completing the attached survey, which is composed of 5 multiple choice questions concerning your level of teacher stress and your experience with and opinions of administrative supports that reduce stress. This will be followed by one open ended question that will ask you to elaborate on a positive experience you had with an administrator in the past. Your participation will require approximately 20 minutes of your time.

For confidentiality reasons, you are being asked not to provide any identifying information about yourself or others at your school when providing answers for the one question which asks you to elaborate on your

experiences. Upon completion of the study, the investigator will analyze the results.

**Potential Risks:**

You may experience negative feelings when focusing on the amount of teacher stress experienced in the profession. It may also be that you may not have felt you had administrative support in the past and participating in this study may remind you of this experience. For your information, the BC Teacher's Federation has some excellent online resources to help support teachers experiencing high levels of teacher stress. These can be accessed through <http://www.bctf.ca/SalaryAndBenefits.aspx?id=4788> .

Locally, SD64 has a link to an Employee Assistance Plan, which provides voluntary confidential free counseling at <http://www.sd64.bc.ca/hr.html#forms> or a direct link to the SD64 counselor Warren Shepell at <http://www.shepellfgi.com/EN-US/>

As well, it should be noted that BCTF has a 6 week support program promoting Teacher Wellness at <http://bctf.ca/LivingWithBalance.aspx> .

**Potential Benefits:**

You will be introduced to the concept of administrative supports that counter teacher stress, focusing on the positive counters to stress. Having focused on your current level of teacher stress you may feel motivated to focus on methods of self-care/wellness, and/or find ways to support other teachers to reduce teacher stress. Participation in this study may help reiterate and bring in to focus the need for self-care and work-life balance.

Results from this study will be provided to the Southern Gulf Islands school superintendent and any interested school principals to inform them about what factors are effecting teacher stress as well as what teachers' would appreciate as supports from administration. Also, if you wish to receive a copy of this study, you may email me, the researcher, directly at the email address provided above.

**Confidentiality:**

As the investigator of this study, I have not been provided with any email addresses. Emails were distributed by school principals. No IP addresses are being recorded by this survey instrument and the data collected by the Canadian online survey will be stored in Canada. No names are being asked for and any identifying information will be deleted in any reports or data analysis of this study. Electronic data and results will only be accessed by the investigator on a password-protected account during the course of this study.

Upon completion of this study, the electronic data will be downloaded onto a storage device and stored with any printed documents in a locked filing cabinet of the office of this study's supervisor for the period of two years. At that time, the electronic data will be deleted and the documents shredded.

**Contact information for this study:**

If you have any questions, or desire any further information about this study, please contact me, Shannon Johnston at the email address provided above.

**Concerns about your treatment in the research:**

If you have any concerns about your treatment as a participant in this research, please contact the VIU Research Ethics Officer at [reb@viu.ca](mailto:reb@viu.ca) or by telephone at (250) 753-3245 (ext. 2665).

**Consent:**

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you may refuse to participate or withdraw from the

study at any time and for any reason. If you withdraw after submitting your responses, however, your data will remain in the study, as it will not be possible to distinguish your responses from those of other respondents. You may choose not to answer any question for any reason. Clicking on the "Yes, I consent to participate in this study" button below indicates that you have read and understood the information, understand that you can ask questions in the future, and indicates free and informed consent to research participation. Also, by clicking on the "Yes" box, you will be taken directly to the survey.

[http://app.fluidsurveys.com/surveys/shannon-johnston/adminstrative-supports/?TEST\\_DATA=](http://app.fluidsurveys.com/surveys/shannon-johnston/adminstrative-supports/?TEST_DATA=)

## Appendix B: Survey



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### Teachers' Perspectives on Administrative Supports that Reduce Teacher Stress

#### Gender

Male                      Female



#### Years of Teaching Experience

0-5 years                  6-10 years                  11-15 years                  16 years or more





#### Current Teaching Position

Primary                  Intermediate                  Middle School                  High School                  Support Teacher






For the purposes of this study Teacher Stress will be defined as: *“an unpleasant experience that leads to negative emotions such as anger, anxiety, tension, frustration, or depression resulting from some aspect of their work as a teacher”*

**Factors Contributing to Teacher Stress** - This portion of the study is meant to determine the degree to which you feel teacher stress. Please indicate *your own personal level of Teacher Stress experienced due to the following factors:*

#### 1. Time Demands

No Stress                  Low Stress                  Some Stress                  High Stress                  Extreme Stress






#### 2. Student Discipline

No Stress                  Low Stress                  Some Stress                  High Stress                  Extreme Stress






#### 3. Lack of Human Resources to Meet Student Needs

No Stress      Low Stress      Some Stress      High Stress      Extreme Stress

                      

**4. Lack of Concrete Resources**

No Stress      Low Stress      Some Stress      High Stress      Extreme Stress

                      

**5. Assessment/Marking**

No Stress      Low Stress      Some Stress      High Stress      Extreme Stress

                      

**6. Extracurricular Activities**

No Stress      Low Stress      Some Stress      High Stress      Extreme Stress

                      

**7. Digital Technology**

No Stress      Low Stress      Some Stress      High Stress      Extreme Stress

                      

**8. Public/Parent Relations**

No Stress      Low Stress      Some Stress      High Stress      Extreme Stress

                      

**9. Job Security**

No Stress      Low Stress      Some Stress      High Stress      Extreme Stress

                      

**10. On-going Change**

No Stress      Low Stress      Some Stress      High Stress      Extreme Stress

                      

**11. Class Size and Composition**

No Stress      Low Stress      Some Stress      High Stress      Extreme Stress

No Stress      Low Stress      Some Stress      High Stress      Extreme Stress

                      

**12. Work-Life Balance**

No Stress      Low Stress      Some Stress      High Stress      Extreme Stress

                      

**Please expand on what factor(s) cause you, personally, the most teacher stress:**

**For the purposes of this study Administrative Supports will be defined as: "the collection of affirming actions by the school administrators that assist teachers in performing their responsibilities and withstanding the stress of their positions"**

**Please indicate the level of importance for the following ideal administrative supports that would reduce your personal teacher stress (NOT necessarily current level of administrative support):**

**Ideally, to reduce *my own personal stress* it is important that a principal displays strong levels of ...**

**1. Communication.... is clear, concise, consistent**

Not at all Important      Somewhat Important      Important      Very Important      Extremely Important

                      

**2. Compassion.... expresses genuine concern for the welfare of the teachers**

Not at all Important      Somewhat Important      Important      Very Important      Extremely Important

                      

**3. Discipline... protects teachers and deals with the discipline concerns that go beyond the classroom intervention**

Not at all Important      Somewhat Important      Important      Very Important      Extremely Important

|                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Not at all Important  | Somewhat Important    | Important             | Very Important        | Extremely Important   |
| <input type="radio"/> |

**4. Empowering Staff.... promotes autonomy, efficacy, innovation, risk taking**

|                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Not at all Important  | Somewhat Important    | Important             | Very Important        | Extremely Important   |
| <input type="radio"/> |

**5. Flexibility.... meets individual needs of staff, students, classes**

|                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Not at all Important  | Somewhat Important    | Important             | Very Important        | Extremely Important   |
| <input type="radio"/> |

**6. Influence with the School Board.... garners support at a district level for the needs of school, staff, individuals**

|                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Not at all Important  | Somewhat Important    | Important             | Very Important        | Extremely Important   |
| <input type="radio"/> |

**7. Inspiring Purpose.... creates an environment where all staff work together toward shared goals**

|                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Not at all Important  | Somewhat Important    | Important             | Very Important        | Extremely Important   |
| <input type="radio"/> |

**8. Modeling Instructional Expectations.... informs practice and provides opportunities for professional growth**

|                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Not at all Important  | Somewhat Important    | Important             | Very Important        | Extremely Important   |
| <input type="radio"/> |

**9. Feedback.... provides regular constructive feedback**

|                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Not at all Important  | Somewhat Important    | Important             | Very Important        | Extremely Important   |
| <input type="radio"/> |

**10. Situational Awareness.... notices, anticipates, trouble shoots, is intuitive and aware**

|                         |                       |                       |                       |                        |
|-------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|
| Not at all<br>Important | Somewhat<br>Important | Important             | Very Important        | Extremely<br>Important |
| <input type="radio"/>   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>  |

**11. Appreciation and Praise.... formally and informally recognizes efforts of staff**

|                         |                       |                       |                       |                        |
|-------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|
| Not at all<br>Important | Somewhat<br>Important | Important             | Very Important        | Extremely<br>Important |
| <input type="radio"/>   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>  |

**Please expand on which administrative support(s) you, personally, desire most that would reduce your teacher stress:**

Please *think back* to a principal with whom you have worked with that has had a *positive impact* on the reduction of your teaching stress.

**A) Describe and give one (or more) *detailed* EXAMPLE(S) of a *positive support* (overt or covert, formal or informal) that principal did that contributed to your stress reduction**

**B) Please share the EFFECTS (impacts) that administrative support had on your thoughts, behaviors, and emotions.**

*Please remember not to reveal your identity or any one else's in your answer.*

Thank you for your time and effort in filling out this form.  
*The return of your completed survey indicates your consent to participate in this research and for the information you provide to be included in study results.*