Preventing Educator Burnout

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate burnout, and to find preventative healthy supports that can aid in preventing educator burnout. The effects of healthy supports were examined in the Qualicum School District, located on the East Coast of Vancouver Island. An online survey was implemented to collect educators’ perspectives of healthy initiatives they currently use along with healthy leadership approaches they value. The survey was conducted during significant district reconfiguration and reallocation of resources. The survey consisted of twelve researcher created Likert style questions, which pertained to the twelve determinants of health as indicated by Health Canada. This study found that educators had a multitude of personal coping skills to help reduce levels of stress. Although there was a recent significant change within the district, educators’ perspectives largely depended on their ability to adapt and focus on the positive potential in their new learning environments. The top three leadership strategies valued during periods of change were: the ability to listen, support and effective communication. Further research during a district reconfiguration is recommended, although in a larger district using a triangulated data collection method.
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Chapter One: Problem to be Investigated

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate burnout, and to find preventative healthy supports that can aid in preventing educator burnout. Various district supports were considered during a period of district reconfiguration and reallocation of resources. A research question was established: *What are the most important healthy supports that districts can offer educators during periods of considerable change?* There were three goals of this study: The first was to research the impact of burnout within the education profession. The second goal was to identify key determinants of health within the education profession. To determine what important social, personal coping skills, and working conditions that principals could implement during school reconfiguration and re-allocation of resources.

Educators work very hard and day-to-day stressors can lead to burnout. Important in preventing these stressors from impacting an educator’s professional life is support from colleagues, appropriate working conditions and the ability to personally recharge oneself. In order for educators to excel and to positively influence student learning, they must share and apply strategies through social environments, personal coping and working conditions. Furthermore, strong leadership plays an important role in professional development. This study found correlations between reduced educational burnout and healthy supports offered by educators and their school district. Important terms were considered, including: stressors, self-efficacy and leadership.
Justification of the Study

Teaching can be a very challenging role. Interest seems to be increasing in the topic of burnout as it has been increasing. Owens (2013) makes reference to burnout as being a widespread issue among educators today. Although stressors and burnout affects all occupations, the teaching profession is among the most studied (McCormick & Kerry, 2011). In Canada, current data points to 12-20% of teachers reporting burnout symptoms at least once a week (Pas, Bradshaw, & Hershfeldt, 2012). Within school communities, teachers experience burnout due to demands that are far beyond their human limits (Owens, 2013). Previous research has noted, “teacher burnout has long been recognized in the international research community as an important construct of study” (Fives, Hamman, & Auturo, 2007, p 931).

New teachers entering the profession enter it with passion and enthusiasm. However, many become discouraged and leave the profession all together, citing factors such as lowered job satisfaction, lowered teacher efficacy and increased burnout. A recent United States study found within two years of teaching, approximately 30% of new teachers exit the profession (Owens, 2013) and within five years approximately half of teachers leave the profession (Pas et al., 2012).

It is widely accepted that principals can have a direct and indirect impact on teacher effectiveness and therefore indirectly affect student achievement (Wahlstrom & Louis, 2008). According to Price (2011) the principal is seen as the leader and can positively or negatively affect a teachers’ outlook towards their job. Once identified, burnout requires immediate organizational support (Owens, 2013), and in the case of teachers, school principals play a role in the recovery process. If not properly addressed by principals, teaching environments can lead to costly substitute teachers and teachers exiting the profession (Pas et al, 2011).
Local school districts have had discussions and meetings with stakeholders about how to reduce spending in this time of provincial budget cuts. Within this researcher’s local school district, school reconfiguration and school closures were discussed and a plan to close or repurpose four schools was implemented. A recent study found that teachers considered prolonged unsolved problems within a professional community, such as funding issues and school closures, as main causes for experiencing stressors leading to burnout (Pyhalto, Petarienen, & Salmela-Aro, 2011).

Burnout can be seen as a financial burden and major cost to society. Research done by the Canadian Mental Health Association found that “burnout costs Canadian businesses an estimated $12 billion every year in health claims, lost productivity and absenteeism” (Canadian Mental Health Association, 2013). Success in the prevention of burnout requires proactive supports such as: supported well-being, intrapersonal and interpersonal social supports, and teacher engagement. Without at least acknowledging these supports, a percentage of teachers become overworked, stressed and become at risk for burnout. With added focus on engagement of the teachers and students, it is believed that new perspectives will help alleviate burnout in the future (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001).

Although recent burnout research has identified determinants, little is known about how patterns of change predict burnout (Fernet, Guay, Senecal, & Austin, 2012). Perceived supports and teacher burnout still require much work and further studying to fully understand the relations (Fives et al., 2007). The work presented in this study hopes to contribute to this growing field of knowledge. Without prevention and treatment, burnout causes students to be taught ineffectively, which ultimately could be more costly for society (McCormick & Kerry, 2011).
Research Question and Hypothesis

With declining enrollment and cost-cutting measures being implemented in the Qualicum School district, many possible research questions arise. The research in this study will be based on the guiding question: What are the most important healthy supports that districts can offer educators during periods of considerable change?

The goals of this study were to investigate and to offer suggestions to a school district that is in the middle of cost cutting. Burnout is expensive and educator jobs are challenging. The research suggests that there is a significant correlation between principal supports and prevention of burnout (McCormick & Kerry, 2011). This researcher believes the current study will reveal a few central themes regarding leadership strategies including: the importance of trust, open communication, and educator autonomy. This researcher’s hypothesis are:

a) of the three determinants of health discussed in this research (working conditions, social environment, and coping skills) educators will place an emphasis on the importance of a positive social environment.

b) all surveyed educators will perceive that open communication is an important skill for educators to incorporate to prevent burnout.

Definition of Terms

Burnout, a term originally coined by Freudenberger in 1973 (Maslach et al., 2001) is associated with professionals including teachers. Burnout has been defined as the result of prolonged exposure to job related stressors (Maslach et al. 2001) leaving a worker at their endpoint (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2009). Some examples of workplace stressors include: excessive workload, perceived student/colleague conflicts or job insecurity. In recent studies, emotional exhaustion,
Depersonalization and diminished personal accomplishment have been the three dimensions scholars have discussed regarding burnout (Brown & Roloff, 2011). The state of being burned out emerges gradually over time, and although the stages evolve, few longitudinal studies have been completed to investigate how and why (Fernet, et al. 2011). Stress and burnout are conceptually distinct from one another. Therefore, “intense stress does not necessarily lead to burnout, but it can” (McCormick & Kerry, 2011, p. 280).

Ross et al. (2012) refer to teacher self-efficacy as “involving teachers self-judgements about their abilities to affect student outcomes” and goes on to say, “especially for those students who appear unmotivated or difficult to teach” (p. 119). Teachers who have a higher sense of self-efficacy that set challenging goals for themselves and their students are most successful at adapting to change (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007).

For the purpose of this study, educators refer to a number of district employees including superintendents, district staff, principals and vice-principals, teachers and support teachers. The term principal refers to the leader of the school, as recognized in British Columbia by the British Columbia Principals and Vice-Principals Association (BCPVPA). There are references to the core values and belief systems of the BCPVPA and how they pertain to the supporting of teachers.

Collection of data for this study took place in the Qualicum Beach School District stretching from Nanoose Bay to Bowser on the East Coast of Vancouver Island, BC Canada. The district was comprised of: two high schools, seven elementary schools and two alternative schools. School closures, reconfiguration and reallocation of resources had recently taken place before this study.
Brief Overview of Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate burnout, and to find preventative healthy supports that can aid in preventing educator burnout. Burnout can be a concern for many employees and a very costly concern for school districts. The Public Health Agency of Canada (2011) found that social and community responses can add resources to an individual's repertoire of coping strategies and promote future health.

In order to collect data, an on-line survey was made available through FluidSurveys in January 2015 to be anonymously completed by willing educators in the Qualicum District who offered their consent. Notably, the Superintendent of the Qualicum District was contacted in order to ensure proper permission and assistance was granted before data was collected. The survey tool contained three sections. The first section gathered demographic information. Next, the second section offered twelve Likert style questions about determinants of health. The third section was an open-ended format, with space for the respondent to answer four questions pertaining to positive supports they have experienced.

The survey results were tabulated and analyzed with help from FluidSurveys. The results were coded for developing themes and conclusions were drawn. Chapter Five reviews study limitations along with future recommendations. These findings will be distributed back within the district in hopes of offering valuable feedback following future significant change.
Chapter Two: Review of Related Literature

The Three Dimensions of Educator Burnout

According to top psychology researchers “burnout is the biggest occupational hazard of the 21st century” (Leiter & Maslach, 2005, p. 3). Burnout can occur when physical and mental well-being deteriorates over time leading to sickness or depression (Leiter & Maslach, 2005). In addition, teachers who experience high levels of burnout are at higher risk for physical and mental health problems (Pas et al., 2012). Many people are unaware of the enormous cost associated with occupational burnout. Estimated costs in Canada exceed $12 billion, while in the US over $300 billion a year is spent on sick leave (Canadian Mental Health Association, 2013), replacing current employees, and the training of new employees. In teaching, this cost is absorbed by districts that are making cuts with diminishing budgets. Not surprisingly, long term disability claims comprised of stress, burnout and depression are the fastest growing category of claims in North America and Europe (Leiter & Maslach, 2005).

Researchers in Finland, Pyhalto et al., (2011), spent time looking closely at burnout, and moreover the importance of acknowledging that it is a serious occupational hazard. The purpose of their study was “…to explore the kinds of episodes that challenge Finnish school teachers’ occupational well-being and cause burnout and how teachers perceive the relationship between themselves and their working environment in these series of events” (Pyhalto et al., 2011, p. 1101). Their qualitative study found sources of teacher burnout vary between working contexts. When applied to the current study, school reconfiguration was creating changing working conditions and contexts. Schools are complex and are dynamic working environments that may constitute a contradictory experience for teachers. These stimulating environments can simultaneously offer
feelings of joy and satisfaction, along with feelings of inadequacy inside the span of 24 hours. Additionally, they found burnout develops in phases and progresses over the course of time (Pyhalto et al., 2011). What this study did not take into consideration was the variant personality types, and personal coping skills that each person possesses. It was believed that the current research would have benefitted by Pyhalto et al., (2011) investigating these personal coping skills.

While all teachers differ in their individual perceptions, beliefs, and values, each teacher organizes burnout and stressors cognitively in much the same way (McCormick & Kerry, 2011). A past study noted, “teacher burnout has long been recognized in the international research community as an important construct of study” (Fives et al., p 931). What burnout is, has been at the heart of many academic discussions. In the past, it has been characterized by symptoms such as: loss of energy, loss of enthusiasm and loss of confidence (Leiter & Maslach, 2005). A very general observation of school teachers is that burnout can be predicted by teachers perceptions of job demands- overload, students’ behaviours and physical environment (Fernet et al., 2012). By making such a vague comment, they attempted to describe a physiological phenomenon that requires further research.

In past years, burnout has been defined by three areas: exhaustion, cynicism and inefficacy (Maslach et al., 2001). Burnout is now regarded as a multi-dimensional construct, comprising of three facets: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and reduced personal accomplishment (Byrne, 1994). Even with recent findings, little is known about how correlations change over time, or how to predict changes in teacher burnout. Even though it is very difficult to predict, over the course of a school year, changes in teacher’s perceptions of the school’s demands and accessibility to resources are likely to predict changes in the three dimensions of teacher burnout (Fernet et al.,
This study’s purpose was not to further define burnout or educator burnout, but was to look closer at the perceptions of pro-active healthy initiatives that can be taken.

Recently, the three dimensions of burnout have been identified and discussed separately as to how they pertain to burnout. “Emotional exhaustion is a feeling of exhaustion that is not explained by excessive physical activity” (McCormick & Kerry, 2011, p 280). Many studies identified females being more prone to becoming emotionally exhausted. Depersonalization is a waning concern for others well-being. Typically, a service worker shows a decrease of concern towards clients within an organization (McCormick & Kerry, 2011). When teachers treat students impersonally, they experience a variety of negative emotions (McCormick & Kerry, 2011). These findings were interesting, although a limitation that was not mentioned included how they addressed teachers who were burned out and unable to participate in their research. As was earlier cited, burned out teachers are typically absent, costing districts valuable resources.

Emotional exhaustion and depersonalization both have been coorelated with identifying unhealthy teachers who are at risk for having a negative influence on their students along with leaving the profession altogether (Pyhalto et al., 2011). Personal accomplishment relates to being effective and making a difference (McCormick & Kerry, 2011). Usually a positive dimension, personal accomplishment can be perceived differently. A teacher’s inability to deal with student misbehaviours have led to experiences of a diminished sense of accomplishment (McCormick & Kerry, 2011). A teacher’s personal accomplishment can be influenced by their student outcomes, and accordingly indirectly effect stressors leading to burnout.

Purvanova and Muros (2010) drew conclusions that included burnout to be more of a female experience, noting that men are less likely to report signs and symptoms of burnout. The same study suggested that females often report symptoms whereas men often do not. Overall,
teachers who end up falling victim to burnout become less sympathetic towards other teachers, students and even principals, and have an negative well-being. This approach manifests itself in a lower tolerance for classroom disruption, less preparation for classes and less dedication towards putting in quality work (Byrne, 1994). In order to keep a healthy balance as a teacher, all three dimensions should be regularly attended to with appropriate interventions applied.

Stressors Leading to Burnout

Although, research suggests the main determinant of burnout is the working environment (Fernet et al., 2011), there is “little known about how burnout develops in teachers” (Pyhalto et al., 2011). Even among researchers, stress has sometimes been used to describe a host of environmental stressors, and sometimes to define an individual’s strain or distress caused by these stressors (McCormick & Kerry, 2011). A general understanding that many articles refer to is that stressors over time can lead to occupational burnout.

Not surprisingly, a number of studies link teacher stressors that can lead to burnout, to the teacher working environment. As stated by Pyhalto et al., (2011), teachers’ working environments provide a variety of circumstances for elevated burnout that can include student behaviour issues, emotionally draining situations, social isolation, time pressures and heavy workloads. The idea of educators working in the Qualicum District in new, unfamiliar contexts, combined with the usual social isolation is a recipe for stress. Within this school culture, teachers can also experience burnout due to demands that are far beyond their human limits (Owens, 2013).

Change can be a key contributor to teacher burnout rates. Johnston (2012) refers to schools always being in a state of change. School districts are constantly coping with the uncertainty that comes with yearly changes. Classroom and job positions are constantly being created, eliminated
and shuffled. Qualicum District educators experienced a year that was more transformational than expected. Not only were four schools closed and repurposed, but middle schools were also eliminated. Middle schools in this district had been operational for over 40 years, and accordingly many educators’ identities were tied up in these schools.

While change has been a constant at our district level, the June 2011 announcement of a *Personalized Learning Initiative* brought about the potential for future change and challenges unique to anything educators have faced up to this point (Johnston, 2012). Educational reform has been recognized as a potential stressor causing teacher burnout. Large scale educational reforms can be seen as additional change that teachers must balance (Fives et al., 2007). Some districts have been faced with compulsory reforms such as going grade-less, creating cross-grade programs and implementing new curricula. Again, neither of these studies cited personality types and the impact personal coping skills can positively have on dealing with stressors.

Fernet et al. (2011) found variations in teachers perceptions of school culture and environment over time can predict burnout. The study goes on to say burnout can be predicted by teachers perceptions of job demands such as overload and absence of resources. During the Qualicum reconfiguration, job action prevented teachers from properly packaging up their own personal classroom resources. Additionally, school resources were shuffled making for a very challenging school year start up in terms of resource preparation.

Teachers perceive social interactions as being the most challenging and problematic part of their work that in turn contributes to burnout (Pyhalto et al., 2011). Additional *causes* of stress related burnout found in a recent study include: class size and composition, lack of human resources, lack of time and sense of work-life balance (Johnston, 2012). Organizational factors and the delicate balance of personal demands can also be blamed for an increase in professional
burnout. Interestingly, another study found that social support and the social environment can act as a buffer against stressors that lead to burnout (Maslach et al., 2001).

**Teacher Self-Efficacy**

Teacher efficacy refers to all self-judgements teachers make regarding their own ability to affect student outcomes (Ross et al., 2012). These judgements occur frequently, and can be negative or positive. Teacher efficacy is related to teacher burnout. With positive experiences, burnout can decrease and self-efficacy can increase. With negative experiences, burnout can increase and self-efficacy can decrease. Overall, burnout does increases faster than self-efficacy (Pas et al., 2012) and so should be considered a threat to health.

Regardless of grade level taught, significant increases in efficacy can be witnessed. Thus, teachers require safe mastery opportunities with support to increase efficacy (Fives et al., 2007), which was an unattainable opportunity for many educators placed into new post-configuration contexts. A sense of efficacy increases because teaching ability improves as teachers gain valuable experience (Fives et al., 2007). When considering the valuable experiences change brings about, many educators should have a heightened sense of self-efficacy. This higher sense of teacher efficacy has been linked to teachers being more successful at adapting to future change (Ross et al., 2012). Finally, stressors can be limited by increasing efficacy and thereby decreasing the risk for burnout (Fives et al., 2007). Teacher preparedness and perceptions of affiliation to leadership were significantly associated with growth of teacher efficacy and reduced risk of burnout (Pas et al., 2012). This study looks to further define what leadership strategies (specifically during times of change) are most valued by all educators.
**Important Leadership Approaches**

Having strong leadership has been tied to helping overall student performance. “Research now shows that leadership is second only to classroom instruction among school-related factors that influence student outcomes” (Grogan, 2013, p.83). Findings have indicated that emotional exhaustion is associated with burnout and that administrators can be guided to help prevent these negative consequences from forming in teachers (Pas et al., 2011).

Various leadership approaches, including distributed leadership, can assist in preventing teacher burnout. There is a robust body of scholarly literature on the topic of distributed leadership (Cherkowski & Brown, 2013) and it has been growing in popularity, although there are still various interpretations of the term (Harris & Spillane, 2008). One definition offered by Cherkowski and Brown (2013) is: “practice gets distributed over leaders, followers and their situations and incorporates the activities of multiple groups of individuals” (p.27). Generally, there is recognition that this style of leadership has multiple leaders and the leadership activities are shared (Harris & Spillane, 2008). What makes this leadership style particularly desirable to members of organizations, is the promotion of mutual respect. There is focus on the interactions, rather than the actions of those in formal and informal leadership positions (Harris & Spillane, 2008). By paying attention and sharing responsibility, leaders become promoters of others’ expertise. The ‘so what’ of distributed leadership is the recognition that the core task of the formal leader is to support those with the expertise to lead, wherever they reside within the organization (Harris, 2013, p. 551). By sharing responsibility within a school, a more engaging culture is promoted where the leader can help reduce stressors that can lead to burnout.

Evidence suggests a leader who is in tune with the well-being of their staff and creates a safe, and engaging environment will promote the prevention of teacher burnout. Engagement and
satisfaction found by teachers within the school environment act as a buffer for experiencing stressors such as professional inadequacy (Pyhalto et al., 2011). Relational trust between teachers and principals can be central to shaping positive work climates. Teachers who had received more positive social support, namely from principals at their schools, report having higher job satisfaction (Brackett, Palomera, Mojsa-Kaja, Reyes, & Slovey, 2010). Being unaware of the needs of a staff can be very costly. Implied, but not mentioned within the previous study was that change can bring about a host of new challenges for leadership groups. These changes (such as district reconfiguration) need to be dealt with in a tactful manner, while showing care and consideration for all educators.

Six important areas associated with burnout have been identified as: appropriate workload, taking control, rewards, community, fairness, and values. (Leiter & Maslach, 2005). External support to help find appropriate balance within the six areas is important. A leader can play an important role in helping teachers find this balance. With added focus on educators, it is believed that new perspectives will help alleviate burnout in the future (Maslach et al., 2001). Many studies have made clear the need and importance of future research in regard to what can predict burnout, specifically teacher burnout. Although there will not be a formal burnout inventory used, it is hoped that this study can share meaningful pro-active approaches that educators currently utilize to deal with stressors.
Chapter Three: Procedures and Method

Description of Research Design

The current research design is aimed to contribute to the knowledge base that has demonstrated the negative effects of teacher burnout. Most significantly, this study investigated burnout, and gathered preventative healthy supports that can aid in preventing educator burnout. Recommendations of future research to determine variables which may be precipitators to the burnout phenomenon (Gaines, 2011) added to the importance of this study. The notion of burnout in the Qualicum District, led to the research question: What are the most important healthy supports that districts can offer educators during periods of considerable change?

The current study was developed as a research project that invited educators from all school levels within the Qualicum District consenting to participate in an on-line survey. As research strongly suggests leadership is second only to classroom instruction among factors influencing student related outcomes (Grogan, 2013), it was important to consider Qualicum District leadership when discussing burnout. The research design involved collecting qualitative data that included some descriptive statistics. Consenting educators responded to a three section survey via FluidSurveys, a safe and secure Canadian online service. Demographic information was provided in section one, in an effort to identify emergent trends. Section two of the survey collected educators thoughts about the working conditions, social environment and their own coping skills. Section three gathered teachers’ perceptions of important leadership approaches. The educators survey was kept succinct to minimize any added inconvenience for educators who had recently gone through a massive district wide reconfiguration.
Description of the Sample

Educators from all elementary and secondary schools in the Qualicum District were given the opportunity to participate in the survey. The district is geographically very large, stretching from Bower to Nanoose Bay, although small in terms of professional staff and students. Principals, district staff, teachers and support teachers were invited to participate. Approximately 280 educators work in the 12 schools, a number that fluctuates as job postings get posted and filled throughout the school year. Alternative schools were also included in this study. Of the total potential educators, 70 responded for a return rate of 25% which constituted a satisfactory return rate and sample size. Respondents ranged in age from 24-65. The sample comprised four district staff, four administrators, fifty-four teachers and nine support teachers. All the teachers lived in Qualicum, Parksville and a number of other surrounding communities including Nanaimo, Courtenay and Port Alberni.

Description of the Instrumentation Used

The current research design focused on teachers’ perceptions of healthy preventative measures that can help deal with stressors leading to burnout. The approved survey (Appendix C) was distributed and completed by consenting educators following a district wide re-configuration and reallocation of resources during the fall of 2014. FluidSurveys was selected as the method of distribution. FluidSurveys is an electronic statistical data analysis program that stored collected data on a safe Canada server.

The anonymous survey (Appendix C) consisted of three sections. In the introduction, all important terms were defined including burnout, stressors and educators. The survey started with basic demographic questions. Next, the researcher created a Likert style section based on three of the relevant determinants of health that contained questions about working condition, social
environment, and personal coping skills. Questions were created based on the twelve determinants of health as defined by The Public Health Agency of Canada (Public health agency of Canada, 2011). This section was followed by researcher-developed questions addressing leadership support and stressors, presented in an open-ended style.

The second section utilized a Likert style survey comprised of a 5-point scale that implemented 12 questions, ranging from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree.” A suggestion to simplify the survey and frame the questions as positively as possible was made by the district superintendent. Additional guidance from a local school principal was also offered. Positive statements were crafted using the twelve determinant of health, with a focus on working conditions (questions 1, 4, 7, 10), social environments (questions 2, 5, 8, 11) and personal coping skills (questions 3, 6, 9, 12). Questions were scored by adding up their values within the three created categories. The respondent’s scores helped to identify areas of interest for the involved school district. Next, four open-ended questions were generated to gather perceptions of stressors and district/educational supports. These questions were created by the researcher in hopes of gathering personal coping strategies teachers use. Section three offered respondents an open-ended opportunity to share their experienced connections to district and educational supports. Surveys included an opening consent form (Appendix A) outlining that participation was totally anonymous and could be halted at any time without their data being included. Additionally, the introduction clearly stated that completion of the online survey indicated free and knowledgeable consent to participate in this research study. Educators who completed all sections and selected the submit button received a statement that read: “If you would like to enter a draw to win a $100 gift certificate to Tigh-Na-Mara spa in Parksville BC, please e-mail Brad Davidsen at bdavidsen@sd69.bc.ca with the subject header: SD69 Educator Wellness Research. In doing so
your anonymity will become compromised in that the researcher will know you participated, but your survey responses will remain anonymous.”

The qualitative data that was collected from respondents was analysed for obvious and latent content. Several themes were discovered in this qualitative data and are presented in chapters four and discussed in chapter five. The descriptive statistical data was analysed and put into graphs and a final summary table.

**Explanation of the Procedures Followed**

The purpose of this study was to investigate the health determinants of teachers and find out about important leadership supports that may prevent stressors and educator burnout. Permission was initially granted by the Vancouver Island University Research Ethics Board (REB), then the Qualicum District Superintendent. A meeting with the Superintendent was set up in the fall of 2014 to revise portions of the research tool. This process allowed for data collection to commence in early January 2015. Participant consent forms (Appendix A) were included in all participant completed surveys. Next, senior-teachers from all 12 schools were identified and contacted via email. They were all asked the same question: “Are you willing to support a VIU research study by reading a script during a staff meeting, then e-mailing out an anonymous survey on my behalf?.” If they said no, an alternative senior-teacher from the same school was contacted. This researcher e-mailed all volunteering senior-teachers with a script outlining the purpose. This script was then read aloud during a staff meeting for educators consideration. Senior-teachers forwarded the survey link to all current staff. By selecting a senior-teacher to administer the survey, principals did not take on that role. This reduced any perceived power over the potential respondents. A reminder e-mail was sent to all SD69 currently employed educators by the
researcher to acknowledge those who had completed and offer another two weeks for those who had not yet completed the survey.

Electronic data collected from FluidSurveys was accessed by a password-protected account during the research. Upon conclusion of the data analysis portion of this study, all data was stored on a portable storage device, again with password protection. All collected data will be kept for two years in locked storage before being destroyed in June of 2016.

Discussion of Validity and Reliability

The overall research goal of this study was to determine the health and leadership qualities educators most value in preventing stressors that can lead to burnout. The research question covered the educational issue of educator health, and incorporated district supports as a method of proactive prevention. By differentiating between stress and stressors and directly connecting burnout to stressors in the introduction letter, it clarified which data this research was collecting. The current researcher presented a trial survey to seven out-of-district teachers to help encourage suggestions for further reliability and validity. Feedback was gathered using 3 focus questions pertaining to the structure and content of the survey. Some of the recommendations included clarifying wording, and making sure the Likert scales were visible during all questions.

In an effort to minimize threats to internal validity, the survey posed different types of questions. The Likert questions were developed based on a nationally acknowledged document of the factors influencing health. Discussions with the district superintendent and a school principal helped to improve the appropriateness of the survey tool. All researcher-developed questions were based on health, stressors and leadership constructs found in current literature. No personal information was collected on any of the survey questions. To acknowledge that personal burnout
strategies exist, a question was added to the open ended section to gather information about personal prevention strategies.

External validity was taken to be evident, as burnout is a major concern among professionals, and especially teachers due to the demands of their workloads and working environments (Fernet et al., 2011). Many British Columbia school districts have been in declining enrollment and are having to make difficult decisions of whether to reconfigure, close schools, or to reallocate resources. This study examined the perceived influences of mediating district supports in a timely manner.

Data collector bias was minimized by asking systematic and disciplined questions that only gathered necessary information. One such question asked respondents what district resources they value most. By gathering teachers’ perceptions of the district’s roles in burnout prevention, the survey front-loaded the most important question which asked respondents about meaningful leadership qualities they have experienced during significant educational change. It is not possible to be without data collector bias. One acknowledged data collector bias included an assumption that educators can accurately articulate the healthy district supports available. In defence of this recognized bias, the third open ended question prompted respondents to consider the three healthy determinants (working conditions, social environments and personal coping skills) this study focused on throughout.

Evident limitations came about during the analyses of data. Namely, the lack of time to incorporate a longitudinal focus. The data was gathered during a period of substantial change, and only two and a half weeks was offered to complete the survey with no pre or follow-up survey. A second limitation was the use of an on-line survey which typically does not garner high respondent
rates. Lastly, no opportunities to speak directly to respondents could have limited the perceived significance of the survey.

Data Analysis Techniques

The data in the current study was gathered to investigate educators health determinants while considering district supports they value. Demographic information was tallied and summarized. This researcher then processed the raw data using proven and valid data analysis programs to identify common themes. Data from the Likert style questions was tabulated and respondents were categorized based on their determinants. The mode, median and variance scores were calculated and organized into frequency graphs and tables, and compared to the demographic information. All open ended questions were coded and grouped based on pre-established and researched principal characteristics (Walker & Slear, 2011). Reoccurring themes were identified.

The data was shared with the local superintendent and offered to school principals as interesting trends to consider when developing pro-active healthy educator programs to combat stressors that may lead to burnout.
Chapter Four: Results

The purpose of this study was to investigate burnout, and find preventative healthy supports that can aid in preventing educator burnout. The current researcher collected information from educators (district staff, administrators, teachers and support teachers) within the Qualicum School District. The survey was generated by the researcher with guidance from the district superintendent and further direction offered by a school principal. Data was collected in three sections. The first collected basic demographic information, the second implemented a five-point Likert style asking respondents twelve questions, and the final section contained four open ended questions. The data was collected and analyzed using Fluid Surveys, a Canadian survey company.

Research was conducted to examine current pro-active healthy strategies educators utilize to prevent stressors using an on-line survey tool (Appendix C). Additionally, data was collected to explore common leadership strategies that educators value during times of considerable change. The results have the opportunity of informing school districts of important leadership strategies that educators’ find beneficial during periods of change. The results of this study will reveal important stress management strategies, in hopes of preventing future educator burnout. Three of the twelve determinants of health (as identified by Health Canada) were selected as most relevant to this study and were used to develop the survey tool. They were as follows:

- Social Environment
- Working Conditions
- Personal Coping Skills

A total of 70 surveys were returned for a return rate of 25%. Respondent gender has been compared to Ministry of Education data regarding The Qualicum District collected in 2013-14 in
Figure 1.1. Similar to the Ministry data, the survey revealed 71% females and 29% males. It should be pointed out that the Ministry data collected last school year is different from the current sampling taken in January of 2015. Based on this comparison to Ministry data, this study collected demographic information that accurately represents the Qualicum School District.

Figure 4.1

Another demographic question asked in the first section was, “what level of education does each respondent have?” Somewhat surprisingly, over 55% of respondents have their Master’s degree. Only 1% hold a PhD. While analyzing level of education and respondents data, a substantial trend was noticed. Over 83% of Master’s level educators value honest leadership, compared to only 7% of respondents with a bachelors/PhD. Comments from the open ended section shed some light on this finding, including: “being honest even if it isn’t what people want to hear,” and “a leader who… offers opportunities for honest, professional, solution-oriented conversation.”
Section two requested respondents to answer twelve open ended questions based on three determinants of health. Four questions related to each determinant. Table 1.1 shows the calculated mean for all three determinants along with their averages. The highest average mean was 3.8 out of a possible 5, and was found within the personal coping skills data. Working conditions had the lowest average mean at 3.62. The question with the highest overall mean of 4.04 referred to “employment has been achievable within my district” with a total of 88.6% of respondents identifying they either strongly agree or agree with the statement. The lowest average mean of 3.10 was when ranking the question “I make sure to take time for daily self-care” which had 28.6% of respondents either disagreeing or strongly disagreeing with the statement. Only 41% of females agree or strongly agree that they take time for daily self-care. Comparably, 85% of males take time for daily self-care. This finding is discussed further in Chapter Five. Another notable statistic included 38.5% saying they disagree or strongly disagree with “I am very satisfied with my working conditions.”
Table 4.1

*Calculated mean from Likert style questions based on the three determinants of health*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Determinant of Health</th>
<th>Totaled Mean From Determinant Questions</th>
<th>Averaged Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Working Conditions</td>
<td>14.47</td>
<td>3.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Environment</td>
<td>14.78</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Coping Skills</td>
<td>15.18</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. Questions 1, 4, 7 and 10 corresponded to *working conditions*, questions 2, 5, 8 and 11 corresponded to *social environment* and questions 3, 6, 9 and 12 corresponded to *personal coping skills*. Also, a maximum value of 5 was used to calculate mean for each Likert style question.*

The first question in the open ended section asked respondents to consider what pro-active steps they take in preventing stressors that could potentially lead to burnout. As found in Table 1.2, 66 educators answered the question. The top pro-active step taken is exercise, with 53% of respondents stating they do some type of exercise each week. Types of exercise ranged from yoga, to daily meditative practices to going to the gym. Other noteworthy steps taken included, turning to a friend/colleague for support with 38% and putting time limits on work at 33%.

Table 4.2

*What pro-active steps have you taken to prevent job related stressors from impacting your work?*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pro-Active Step</th>
<th>Number of respondents (n=66)</th>
<th>Percent of respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Exercise</em></td>
<td>35</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Friend/colleague support</strong></td>
<td>25</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*<strong>Time limits on work</strong></td>
<td>22</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>**<strong>Other</strong></td>
<td>11</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time for self</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Healthy eating/sleeping</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hobbies</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pro-d</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*“Taking time to use physical exercise to relieve stress- gym membership… however workload is so high that I rarely have any time to go”*

**“Discussing stressful matters with colleagues in order to centre oneself”**

***“I have made a concerted effort to not take on too much this year. I allow myself that gift”*
The three determinants of health incorporated within this study were considered, and responses were then classified into those categories. Respondents listed more personal coping steps than working condition and social environment steps combined, see Table 1.3 (with 52 total responses mentioning some type of personal coping skill).

Figure 4.3

The second open ended question asked educators “if you have experienced job related stressors, what district resources did you find most useful?” Of the 59 that responded, a substantial 39% either answered “none”, “n/a” or did not answer this question at all. As illustrated by Table 1.3, educators who were unable to identify any district resources available was the top response to this question. Further analysis found that a small percentage of respondents were able to identify district resources, including: MATA (union), administration, colleague, councillor, Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFAP) and sick days.
Table 4.3

*If you have experienced job related stressors, what district resources did you find most useful?*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District Resource</th>
<th>Number of respondents</th>
<th>Percent of respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>None</em></td>
<td>27</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MATA (local teachers union)</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Administration</strong></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em><strong>Colleague</strong></em></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Councillor</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>**<strong>EFAP</strong></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sick day</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. *All respondents who did not answer this question were counted under ‘none’*

**“Talking to administrators. This does not do a lot though, as they do not have the resources that are needed to help”**

***“I am not aware of any. I find the best resource are my colleagues- talking things through- knowing you are all in the same boat”***

*Note. ****EFAP is an employee and family assistance program*

Next, the researcher examined the influence colleagues can have on an educator’s working condition, social environment, and personal coping skills. The question was designed to gather information about their peers based on the three determinants of health. Educators revealed that they: “just have survival skills” (personal coping), “a colleague recommended taking sick days” (personal coping), “they maintain professional boundaries” (social environment) and “administrators suggesting they take time off for personal and stress related reasons” (working environment). It is worth mentioning that the tone in all answers was cautious and conservative.

One survey respondent stated:

*I am not sure how to answer this one really. I admire people who have boundaries and don’t let work consume them; however I also admire people who are extremely passionate about their work and enjoy being fully occupied by their job. I think most staff I work with*
recognize that we all have different working styles, boundaries and levels of interest towards our jobs and everyone seems to accept that.”

Finally, educators in the Qualicum District were asked to name some of the leadership strategies they value during periods of significant change. Respondents were able to identify a host of leadership strategies they value. A high percentage of respondents filled in more than one leadership strategy. This researcher decided to focus on the top six, and provided them in Table 1.4. Over 35% identified a leader that listens, while 27% believe a leader that supports, and 24% one that is an open communicator. The respondents who identified listening, specifically mentioned a leader who listens deeply and takes some sort of action based on their conversations.

Table 4.4

During times of significant change within a district, what strategies do you most value in an educational leader?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leadership Trait</th>
<th>Number of respondents (n=66)</th>
<th>Percent of respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Listens</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supports</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honest</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caring</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vision</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. This list includes 6 of the 28 strategies mentioned by respondents.

Of the 70 educators that responded, a high percentage of them were willing to offer very specific feedback to all questions. A discussion of some of the reoccurring themes regarding burnout prevention strategies and educator supports, during significant district reconfiguration and reallocation of resources, will be presented in Chapter Five.
Chapter Five: Summary and Conclusion

Summary and Discussion

This study investigated burnout, and gathered preventative healthy supports that can aid in preventing educator burnout. The research question and survey was motivated due to school reconfiguration and re-purposing of schools within the Qualicum District. This study sought to determine what current healthy initiatives are being applied by district educators, along with important leadership strategies educators’ value most during times of significant change. Of specific interest to the researcher was the relationship between stressors and leadership strategies. Research points out that the top three stress factors are: class size and composition, lack of human resources and time demands (Johnston, 2012). An important goal of this study was to identify key determinants of health within the education profession, and supports principals could be aware of during time of change to prevent educator burnout. Stress and burnout are overwhelming psychological phenomena (McCormick & Kerry, 2011) that impacts the educators.

The district superintendent was consulted regarding the research question and survey tool. The survey was developed to incorporate three of the twelve determinants of health as indicated by Health Canada. The three specific areas of health this study considered included: social environment, working condition and personal coping skills. These three specific determinants were selected by the researcher because of the relevance to stress and burnout prevention. This researcher hypothesized that educators will place an emphasis on the importance of a positive social environment in preventing burnout related stressors. Working conditions had drastically changed for a high percentage of educators, and by collecting educators’ perspectives on their current situations seemed very timely. In reference to personal coping skills, the superintendent and the researcher wondered what personal coping skills (or lack thereof) Qualicum educators are
equipped with. Effective coping skills enable people to be self-reliant, solve problems and make informed choices that enhance health (Public health agency of Canada, 2011), and it was believed this determinant would capture positive practices Qualicum educators value most, to help inform other educators and professionals in a meaningful way.

The on-line survey consisted of basic demographic information, twelve Likert style questions reflecting the determinants of health (used for descriptive statistics), and four open ended researcher developed qualitative questions. The last four questions delved further into educators perspectives on current social environments, healthy district resources available, pro-active healthy initiatives and valued leadership approaches. All Likert questions were tallied and mean was then calculated. The average mean was calculated and organized into the three determinants of health and checked for reoccurring themes.

Collected data reflected a very senior educational staff, the majority of which being females. Ministry data shows that in 2013-14 over 73% of educators had over 10 years seniority (Ministry of education, 2014). This study was accurately representative of those figures, with 75% having more than 11 years seniority. Over half of respondents had their masters. This reflects a district with many masters’ level educators that value continued learning at a high level. Also, those teachers with a Master’s degree understand the importance of research projects and feel it is important to contribute.

Social Environment

It has been identified that in Canada, “the importance of social support extends to the broader community. It is reflected in the institutions, organizations and informal giving practices that people create to share resources and build attachments with others. Social or community
responses can add resources to an individual's repertoire of strategies to cope with changes and foster health.” (Public health agency of Canada, 2011, p. Social environments). The importance of a positive social environment on preventing stressors led to one hypothesis: *educators will place an emphasis on the importance of a positive social environment*. The data confirmed that many committees and social events are valued in the Qualicum School District. Although when cross referencing all calculated mean values from the Likert style questions, it was found that *personal coping skills* had more educator emphasis. This reflects a district of educators that have learned coping strategies to deal with the day-to-day demands of a dynamic job.

There have been many recent challenges educators have faced, including recent job action and the closing/repurposing of four schools. During these difficult times, social supports are valued by most respondents. As a smaller district with only 278 educators, many professional development days are spent together as a district staff. This brings staff together and cultivates a natural support network. With the majority of staff being very senior, a familiar collegial atmosphere is promoted and the new staff seem to be welcomed openly. From the data, it would appear females (75% agree/strongly agree) have a supportive social network, while males (only 55% agree/strongly agree) tend to struggle to make the same social connections. As will be discussed, this does not automatically make females healthy and functioning at their optimal level.

**Working Conditions**

Fernet et al. (2012) points out, to prevent educator burnout, the work environment has been considered the main determinant. Another researcher found that the working environment provides multiple contexts for burnout (Pyhalto et al., 2011). Another study found the work environment to be considered the main determinant of burnout (Maslach et al., 2001). Varied working conditions are essential for districts to consider. Within the Qualicum School District,
working conditions changed for most educators during this research. In the fall of 2013, district staff begun the conversation towards school reconfiguration. After numerous consultations and meetings, a decision was made to close/repurpose four elementary schools, eliminate middle schools and switch to a grade K-7 elementary and 8-12 high school system. Combined with the end of school year job action, many educators found themselves in new school sites, new schools and even new communities. As was expected, there was a significant variance between perceived working conditions.

When asked what district resources they find most useful if they have experienced job related stressors, 59 out of 66 responded. Many of the answers were brief or one word answers, with only 14 responses being more than one sentence in length. In order to gather more feedback, this question could be rephrased to ask what district resources they know of regardless of whether they have experienced job related stressors. The data collected revealed that educators have a significant lack of awareness of available district resources. An unsettling 40% of respondents were unable to identify any district resources available to educators who require assistance dealing with stress and/or burnout. This result was one of the most statistically relevant findings. After analyzing responses and looking for general themes, it appears that many educators feel it is their responsibility to deal with stress on their own time. It can also be concluded that some educators feel they should not talk about feelings of stress and fatigue, because there are no clear means of dealing with symptoms.

The relationship of principals as the school leader, strongly and directly affects teacher’s attitudes which define school culture (Gaines, 2011), and can affect working conditions. Research done in the Southern Gulf Islands suggests the most desired administrator supports are communication, compassion and empowering staff (Johnston, 2012). This researcher found that
the most desirable leadership strategies during periods of significant change in order from most desirable were: listening, supporting, communicating, honesty and caring. Educators in the Qualicum School District value open and clear communication in various forms. One of the hypothesis for this study was that all educators will value strong and effective communication. That hypothesis was disproved with only 25% of respondents mentioning communication.

**Personal Coping Skills**

All educators cope with the day-to-day challenges. Teacher (and educators) are more vulnerable than other workers to burnout symptoms (Fernet et al., 2012). All educators sacrifice their own self-care at the expense of educating their students. Teachers take their jobs very seriously and accordingly, a majority of educators have very high coping skills. Once analyzing the collected data, it became very clear that educators have many good ideas of personal coping skills. Many responses included multiple pro-active strategies to deal with stressors. A noteworthy percentage of 88% shared more than one idea. A top coping skill was exercise, with over 50% naming a specific activity. Interestingly, the data was collected in early January at a time when many adults make exercise plans for the year ahead. This finding could also be explained by our temperate climate that allows outdoor activities.

Within the sub-topic of daily self-care, some surprising results were identified. Males were found to be twice as likely to take time for daily self-care. A possible reason is that males often depersonalize themselves (have separation) from their jobs whereas females invest more emotional energy. Personal coping skills were found to have the highest overall mean and lowest overall standard deviation when considering the three determinants of health. This illustrates a group of educators who recognize the benefits of making good ‘life choices’. The last Likert style question pertaining to personal coping skills asked if they feel they ‘have the ability to make choices that
enhance health’ and over 81% agreed or strongly agreed. Healthy coping skills refers to one’s ability to make choices that enhance health (Public health agency of Canada, 2011).

**Limitations**

There were three specific goals of this study. The first was to examine the impact of burnout on the education profession. Secondly, to identify key determinants of health within the education profession. Lastly, to determine some important *social environment, working conditions* and *personal coping skills* that formal and informal leaders could be aware of during district wide reconfiguration. While this study yielded some significant results that can help educators prevent stressors that lead to burnout, the limitations of this research must be addressed.

The study had an overall return rate of 25%, which left 75% of the educators in the Qualicum School District not identifying their pro-active strategies to prevent stressors that lead to burnout. Due to the implementation of an anonymous on-line survey, this return rate was higher than anticipated. However, a return rate of 25% is still considered a weak response. Determining factors could include: the amount of recent turbulent change educators had been dealing with, educators not knowing the researcher by name or simply deleting the email before giving it a full consideration. Therefore, even though a number of participants responded, the results cannot be generalized to a larger context or a different school district.

A switch from the proven Maslach Burnout Inventory to a researcher developed survey was made, to incorporate healthy determinants. Although the new survey tool was based on the determinants of health and approved by VIU research ethics and the Qualicum School District, it had not previously been implemented. This means a potential limitation must be acknowledged within the current survey tool. The method for gathering data should also be mentioned. It did
not utilize triangulation or a mixed method approach. The on-line survey was the only data gathering method. Finally, this researcher recognizes the lack of a pre-reconfiguration survey. By collecting data pre and post reconfiguration, it may have resulted in a higher validity.

**Recommendations for Practice**

This study suggests that close to 40% of respondents did not know of any district resources available to deal with stressors. An emergent theme found within the open ended section, was that many educators were unaware of district resources available. This is meaningful for a district that strives to promote health and wellness. One district resource that was not mentioned by respondents were the healthy living webinars. In theory this is a good idea, although they are only available during regular working hours. A first action could be to openly communicate available district resources to educators via email, posters and newsletters. Making sure district stress/burnout prevention programs are understood and easily accessible with a follow-up survey could be effective. Once the available resources are shared, this would hopefully open the dialogue towards other meaningful approaches that could be explored.

The current study also gathered specific leadership strategies that educators value during times of change. This researcher suggests sharing the top six leadership traits with school administration, along with respondent’s comments that apply to each. By doing this in a non-threatening way, they could potentially make small changes that could impact school cultures and ultimately lead to improved educator health.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

In times of budget shortfalls, school districts reconfigure and/or close schools. During times of change educators carry extra responsibilities and stress. The need to better understand
educator stress leading to burnout is important given the relationship between burnout and other significant consequences for individuals including ill-being, turnover and absenteeism (Fernet et al., 2012). Additional research should be conducted that explores an appreciative inquiry process (Halbert and Kaser, 2015) into the preventative approaches that promote health during periods of change.

Conducting pre and post surveys in a larger district would have more statistical validity and could help to move research on the topic forward. This could be done with interviews of teachers who have experienced stressors leading to burnout, conducted over a period of time (longitudinal study). The challenge would be tracking down those educators and convincing them to share their experiences.

**Conclusion**

It was accepted that health can be predetermined by the twelve indicators put forth by Health Canada. Another acceptance is that pro-active healthy strategies affect levels of stress that can lead to professional burnout. The relationship between taking pro-active healthy steps and preventing stressors can be supported by recent studies. Considering work-placed factors provides additional cues for preventing educator burnout (Fernet et al., 2012). Additionally, Pas et al (2011) acknowledged that teacher preparedness and perceptions of teacher affiliation with leadership were significantly associated with growth of teacher efficacy and prevention of burnout.

Findings suggest educators in the Qualicum School District have a mass of personal coping strategies, although a high percentage are pushed to their health limits and often do not take time for daily self-care. The reasons for this seem to be internal, as a small percentage of teachers seem to be able to find a harmonious balance of personal and professional life choices. Interestingly,
81.3% strongly agree or agree that they have the ability to make choices to enhance their health. Health is within the control of educators, and so is preventing stressors that could lead to burnout. Early detection is critical, because burnout affects educators around the world (Fernet et al., 2012). Although there was a recent significant change within the district, educators’ perspectives largely depended on their ability to adapt and focus on the positive potential in their new learning environments. Overall, by considering the positive impact of leadership on educator burnout, school reconfiguration can be a healthy change for educators. By considering stressors and burnout during district reconfiguration, this study contributed to current research relating to educator burnout.
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doi:[http://dx.doi.org.ezproxy.viu.ca/10.1016/j.tate.2011.05.006](http://dx.doi.org.ezproxy.viu.ca/10.1016/j.tate.2011.05.006)


doi:10.1177/0192636511406530
Appendix A: Recruitment Email to SD69 Educators

Email subject line: VIU Research Survey: Preventing Educator Burnout

You are being asked to voluntarily complete this survey as a part of a research study exploring educator burnout prevention in the Qualicum Beach School District. The research is being conducted by Brad Davidsen, a candidate from the Vancouver Island University, Masters of Leadership program.

This survey is open to all board office staff, school administrators, teachers and support teachers in SD69. Completion of this on-line survey should take 10-20 minutes. Your participation is completely voluntary and anonymous (anonymity will become compromised if you decide to enter the draw for the prize).

If you decided not to participate, please simply delete this e-mail. An opportunity to win a $100 gift card to Tigh-Na-Mara Spa is available for those who e-mail Brad directly at: bdavidsen@sd69.bc.ca. Please use the subject heading: preventing educator burnout.

Thanks in advance!

Link to the on-line survey:

http://fluidsurveys.com/

Sincerely, Brad Davidsen,
Appendix B: Invitation to Participate

Participating Educators,

Please review the following information carefully and then begin the survey.

To participate in this study, you must be employed by School District 69.

You are being asked to voluntarily complete this survey as a part of a research study exploring educator burnout prevention in the Qualicum Beach School District. The research is being conducted by Brad Davidsen, a SD69 teacher and current Vancouver Island University student in the Masters of Leadership program.

Completion of this on-line survey should take 10-20 minutes. Your participation is completely voluntary and anonymous. Your anonymity may become compromised if you opt to enter the draw to win a $100 gift certificate to Tigh-Na-Mara. If you submit any responses before you withdraw, the information you have provided cannot be removed from the survey results as your responses cannot be distinguished from other participants.

You may experience negative emotions when reading about teacher burnout symptoms experienced in the profession. If these strong emotions lead to distress, it is recommended that you call the Vancouver Island Health Authority Crisis Line at 1-800-494-3888. As well, it should be noted that BCTF has a 6 week support program promoting Educator Wellness at http://bctf.ca/LivingWithBalance.aspx.

All anonymously provided answers to the survey questions will remain private and confidential. Please do not offer any information that may identify yourself or others. The submission of your completed survey indicates your consent to participate in this research and for information you provide to be included in study results. The Fluid Survey site where the online survey is located is an online Canadian survey tool and server, which has privacy and security settings in line with Canadian Research ethics protocols. Email and IP address tracking has been disabled and data is stored on Canadian servers (See Fluid Surveys Privacy Policy for further information: http://fluidsurveys.com/about/privacy/). Fluid Surveys may allow persistent 3rd party ‘cookies’. As each browser is slightly different, to remove these cookies refer to AboutCookies.org’s “How to Delete Cookies” http://www.aboutcookies.org/Default.aspx?page=2.
Research findings will be shared in a presentation at a Masters in Educational Leadership (MEDL) conference and in a thesis paper as part of the requirements for a MEDL degree. If you have any question about this research, please do not hesitate to contact the researcher directly at bdavidsen@sd69.bc.ca. 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 or by telephone at (250) 753-3245 (ext. 2665).

By following the link provided below, you offer consent for the researcher to use your responses in the current study. Please print and keep a copy of this for your personal records.

**Thank-you in advance for completing this survey!**

Fluid Survey Link
Appendix C: Educator Survey

**Respondent:** Please review all provided important terms before beginning. The survey should take you 10-20 minutes to complete. Do not provide your name, school, or any information that may identify you in any of the answers you provide.

You may experience negative emotions when reading about teacher burnout symptoms experienced in the profession. If these strong emotions lead to distress, it is recommended that you call the Vancouver Island Health Authority Crisis Line at 1-800-494-3888. As well, it should be noted that BCTF has a 6 week support program promoting Educator Wellness at [http://bctf.ca/LivingWithBalance.aspx](http://bctf.ca/LivingWithBalance.aspx).

**Burnout** is defined as the result of prolonged exposure to job related stressors. *It manifests itself in three distinct dimensions: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and personal accomplishment.*

**Stressors** are events that may trigger a stress response including workplace stressors. A few examples of educator stressors could include: student misbehaviour, excessive workload or perceived student/colleague conflicts (Brown & Roloff, 2011).

**Educators** refers to employees within a school district. They may include: superintendents, upper management, principals, teachers or support teachers.

**Important Disclaimer:** I understand that completion and submission of this survey indicates my consent for data I provide to be used in this research. I understand that I can skip any questions I choose, and stop participating at any time. However, once I have submitted my completed survey, I understand that the information I have provided will remain in the study as it cannot be distinguished from information other participants have provided.

**Section One:** Basic Demographic Information

1) _____Male _____Female

2) I have been involved in education for:
   ____0-5 years ____ 6-10 years ____11-15 years _____15 years+

3) I am currently: _____District Staff _____Administration _____Teacher _____Support Teacher

4) Level of Education: _____Bachelor’s_____Masters_____Other (____________________)
Section Two: Closed Ended Likert Scale

Questions derived from The Public Health Agency of Canada’s 12 key determinants of health.

Scale-

1- Strongly Agree
2- Agree
3- Undecided
4- Disagree
5- Strongly Disagree

1. ______ Employment has been achievable within the profession
2. ______ My job demands allow me to maintain quality relationships
3. ______ I make sure to take time for self-care each day
4. ______ I have been employed in safe environments while educating students
5. ______ My school values and rules align with my own
6. ______ I can cope with the day-to-day challenges of being an educator
7. ______ I am very satisfied with my working conditions
8. ______ My job supports diversity
9. ______ I am capable of solving my job related problems
10. ______ I feel my job has appropriate levels of job security
11. ______ At my school there is a supportive social network
12. ______ I feel that I have the ability to make choices that enhance health

Section Three: Open Ended

Stressors and Educator Supports
1) What pro-active steps have you taken to prevent job related stressors from impacting your work?

2) If you have experienced job related stressors, what district resources did you find most useful?

3) In what ways have you witnessed a colleague promoting safe working conditions, positive social environments, and/or educator related coping skills?

4) During times of significant change within a district, what strategies do you value most in an educational leader?

You may have experienced negative emotions when reading about educator burnout symptoms experienced in the profession. If these strong emotions lead to distress, it is recommended that you call the Vancouver Island Health Authority Crisis Line at 1-800-494-3888. As well, it should be noted that BCTF has a 6 week support program promoting Educator Wellness at http://bctf.ca/LivingWithBalance.aspx.

If you would like to enter a draw to win a $100 gift certificate to Tigh-Na-Mara spa in Parksville BC, please e-mail Brad Davidsen at bdavidsen@sd69.bc.ca with the subject header: SD69 Educator Wellness Research. In doing so your anonymity will become compromised in that the researcher will know you participated, but your survey responses will remain anonymous.

Thank-you for participating!
Appendix D: Letter of Permission (VIU Research Ethics Board)

Dear Mr. Davidsen:

The Vancouver Island University Research Ethics Board (VIU REB) has reviewed the Application for Ethical Review of your research entitled “Preventing Teacher Burnout,” originally submitted for review on your behalf by Dr. Rachel Moll on April 22, 2014.

I am pleased to relay that your application, as revised and resubmitted on June 29, 2014, has been approved.

I will send a Letter of Approval for your signature shortly. In the meantime, this electronic notification will suffice to commence the research as approved subject to the minor revisions above.

Please also be aware of your obligation to carry out the research as stated in the revised application and to obtain approval from and comply with the regulations of the involved School District(s) prior to commencing your research.

Best wishes for your research!

Sincerely,

Lars Apland, on behalf of the VIU Research Ethics Board

Date of Approval: July 2, 2014
Expiry Date: July 1, 2015
Appendix E: Letter of Permission (Qualicum School District)

October 17, 2014

Brad Davidsen
School District 69 (Qualicum)

Dear Brad:

This letter is to give district approval for your research project entitled “Preventing Educator Burnout”.

I understand that your research will include asking educators to complete an on-line survey about their current perceived burnout rates as well as current pro-active strategies they use to prevent those stressors related to potential burnout. Please ensure that participant confidentiality is protected within the realms of the Freedom on Information and Protection of Privacy Act.

On behalf of the district, I wish you good luck with your project. I would be interested in reading a copy of your report when it has been completed.

Respectfully,

[Signature]

Rollie Koop
Superintendent of Schools
School District 69 (Qualicum)

RK/hc

Copy: SD69 PVP (via email)

Personnel file

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